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EDITORIAL NOTE

March 1996 was marked by two events of significance for those with a strong interest in the Sudan. On the 17th, at a ceremony in Rome, the great Bishop Daniele Comboni was beatified. Comboni (1831-1881) worked as a missionary in the Sudan and died in Khartoum, where he was buried. To mark the occasion of his beatification and in his honour, the Comboni Missionaries have issued a bibliography of the printed material concerning the Sudan which can be found in the library of the Curia Generalizia, Rome. This bibliography, compiled by Massimo Zaccaria, will be reviewed in a future number of *Sudan Studies*.

Four days after Comboni's beatification, Richard Hill died at Oxford, aged 95. I'm sure this gentleman and scholar would have seen the sweet irony of this timing, and having prepared and published his own bibliography some 57 years earlier, would have enjoyed perusing this latest addition to the bibliographical literature. Many members will have read the obituaries in *The Times*, *The Independent* and elsewhere, and this issue of *Sudan Studies* opens with a personal appreciation of Richard Hill by Douglas H. Johnson.

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Paul Wilson

RICHARD HILL: A PERSONAL APPRECIATION

A few years ago, just before he turned ninety, I attempted to persuade Richard Hill to agree to issuing a second edition of his Egypt in the Sudan. Knowing that he would be reluctant I canvassed the opinion of a number of international scholars, all of whom agreed to the need of a reprint, and many of whom were enthusiastic in their endorsement. I presented Richard with these testimonials and suggested that only the minimum of updating would be necessary, preferably in the form of a new biographical essay discussing the main publications on the Turkiyya since 1959 in Turkish, Arabic and various European languages. As Richard himself had contributed significantly to this literature I assured him that it was a task he could do easily, and better than anyone else. He looked at me with genuine bewilderment. 'But I haven't read any Turkish', he protested, 'for at least-two years!'

This was typical of Richard. He was genuinely modest about the exceedingly high standards of scholarship he set and achieved. He did not consider himself a professional scholar (that was only his. second career), and he held those who were in greater respect than they always deserved. Yet he brought scholarly interests and skills to his work in the Sudan from the very beginning, and few professional scholars acquired his range of languages or his knowledge of so wide a variety of archives. He learnt Osmanali Turkish from the chief Armenian merchant in Khartoum, in evening classes at 'Old Vanian's' shop, reading by the light of a pressure lamp manuscripts spread out among the refrigerators and electrical appliances. As an employee of the Sudan Railways he could travel cheaply along Europe's railroads; thus visiting many distant archives to track down obscure manuscripts before the World War divided Europe in two and inhibited such wide-ranging international research.

Richard's respect for the knowledge of others and the courtesy with which he conducted his professional relations won him many genuine friends throughout the world, and a letter of introduction from Richard was invariably warmly received. I learned this on a visit to Cairo on my way to the Sudan within a few months of my first

meeting Richard in Oxford, and I responded in kind years later when Gerard Prunier showed up at my gate in Juba, to all appearances just another international hitch-hiker, but bearing Richard's greetings. Over his long and active life Richard had the virtue of continuing to make new friends among younger researchers. We all of us depended on him for guidance and information, conscious that as far as the 19th century history of the Sudan was concerned many of us were building on aspects of Richard's work, but none of us had attempted to cover his range of sources.

In many respects Richard was irreplaceable, but that was not how he saw himself. When finally turning down my well-intentioned invitation to resurrect a book he had completed over thirty years earlier Richard disclaimed any lasting value to his own contribution. 'It is pretty well common experience that every political regime tends to vilify its immediate predecessor and, after a sufficient period, to admit that its predecessor was not devilish after all, but simply a step in human development', he explained. 'The *Turkiyya* was a case in point The first edition of *Egypt in the Sudan* was primarily an attempt to exhibit the regime in working order with emphasis on government structure-what else could you expect of an author who was a civil servant and, but for God's decision, might well have been a *kashif?*' Recommending that Anders Bjørkelo be urged to write a completely new and broader study of the Turkiyya he added, as an afterthought, 'English-speaking readers would almost certainly prefer a slightly Vikingized English prose to the horrors of Thames Valley Sludge, our local linguistic malformation'.

What he may not have fully realised is that his linguistic style is one of the attractions of his books. His language is precise, restrained and invariably sharp. Sitting at the back of a lecture theatre during the international Sudan conference at Durham, listening to a long and repetitive argument between two Sudanese academics, he leaned over to me and remarked, in some exasperation, 'They don't know how to compress'. This was the one writer's sin that he could rarely overlook. Richard's own publications were marvels of compression, and he maintained this quality right through his working life. At his

ninetieth birthday celebrations there were many speeches of appreciation, but the best speech, for its wit, humour and clarity, was Richard's own reply.

It was a great satisfaction to Richard and his friends that he lived to complete and see the publication of his final book, on the Sudanese in Mexico. It is a disappointment to my wife and me that he did not live to see the forthcoming publication of the Haklyut Society's *Juan Maria Schuver's Travels in North East Africa,* a manuscript which he much enjoyed in its earlier stages when he gave us useful advice, and which is dedicated to him. He appreciated the compliment, but thought the honour unmerited. We received the proofs shortly after he died and decided to leave the dedication as we originally wrote it and showed to him- dedicated to him personally, not to his memory. His intellectual presence is still very much alive, and our memories of him are very fond indeed.

Douglas H. Johnson

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SUDAN AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEIGHBOURS

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At the first international Sudanese studies conference back in 1968, Ali Mazrui presented a paper on Sudan's 'multiple marginality'[1].[1]It was concerned primarily with the development of dimensions of life within Sudan that were in large measure products of inputs into the country from various directions. His themes then were: Arabs as Afro-Asians; Sudanese as Afro-Arabs; the religious frontier of Islam and Christianity; links to West Africa; and language questions. As well as having a centripetal perspective, the themes were heavily cultural. This paper will limit itself to political questions, but will try to project a more symbiotic relationship between the internal and the external than that advanced by Mazrui. Nevertheless his pioneering discussion did point to the difficulty of isolating a consideration of Sudanese development on all fronts from its international context. At the same time, that context is itself complex since it involves not only north-east Africa, but that region's position in wider international politics, and both these dimensions are of significance in understanding aspects of the country's domestic politics.

While influenced from outside, the starting point for any analysis should nevertheless be domestic Sudanese politics, for it is there that the state has its core. Achieving that position was one of the rewards of independence, for hitherto the Anglo-Egyptian condominium had involved all the dimensions indicated above. Britain's position in Sudan was a dimension of its imperial role in the Middle East: while Egypt was concerned to take back what it for years regarded as its lost territory; and both were

[1] Ali A. Mazrui, 'The multiple marginality of the Sudan', in Yusuf Fadl Hassan (ed) *Sudan in Africa* Khartoum. Khartoum University Press, 1985(2nd. ed.)

actors within the Sudanese nationalist movement until it forced them out. After independence, the former co-domini were reduced to the status of being simply other states in the international arena, though obviously some states were more important than others. Importance is of course a two way process, and what matters to one may be of more or less significance to the other.

In the case of Sudan after independence, the preoccupations of politics lay in working out internal relations far more than developing new and active relations with neighbours. In the north that meant essentially the manoeuvres of political parties; and in the south the drift from an outbreak of violence that had preceded independence, to the sustained civil war that dates from 1962. Neighbours might be peripherally involved in these developments, as with Egypt in the north, and Uganda and the Congo (Zaire) in the south, but the central issues developed on the basis of relations between Sudanese. In consequence there was relatively little concern shown with foreign relations in Sudanese politics. This was generally as true in the period of military rule under Abboud, as it was under civilian rule: though there was the achievement of a new Nile Waters agreement under the former, and a brief fit of radicalism under Abbaud's immediate successors[2]. Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub was active in Arab diplomacy (especially with his hosting of the Khartoum summit of 1967) but his success stemmed largely from Sudan's disinterest rather than her central connection to the main issues of Arab relations in the wake of defeat. (His concern with the Arab world was paralleled by active prosecution of the war with the African south.)

[2] John Howell and M. Beshir Hamid, 'Sudan and the Outside World'. *African Affairs*, 68.1969.

As for the neighbours, Egypt had its fingers burned in Sudanese politics, and after Abboud's seizure of power made agreement on the Nile and largely abstained from meddling. African neighbours were concerned about the impact of civil war, but played a relatively inactive role while quietly allowing Anya-anya activities.

Following Nimeiri's seizure of power in 1969 relations became far more complex. While Nimeiri was to seek a range of clients in Sudanese society to underpin his military regime- the Communist Party, the South, and then the national reconciliators'- he also sought far closer ties with a range of international powers, including neighbours. A brief flirtation with the former USSR. was followed by reconciliation with African neighbours (especially Ethiopia) in an endeavour to hold the peace in the south; while continuing uncertainty in the Sudan army encouraged close links with Egypt that survived even Camp David. At the same time Sudan moved close to the newly enriched Gulf Arab states with her brief and unfulfilled prospect of becoming the bread basket of the Arab world. And as well as friends among her neighbours, Sudan was also making new enemies: Libya with whom relations rapidly deteriorated following the failure of the Egypt-Libya-Sudan union; and also Ethiopia following the latter's turn to Marxism and the USSR and especially with the re-opening of civil war in the south in 1983.

Friends and enemies had also to be viewed in a context of growing regionalism and internationalism. With the decline of Arab nationalism after 1967, 'statism' took over in the Middle East with countries manoeuvring around each other and in the process widening the circle of activity to include the periphery more directly. Libya, Ethiopia and South Yemen formed a pact in 1981 against the perceived conservatism of

neighbouring states. Associated with this was the fact that the superpower rivalry in the Middle East had moved outwards as well with the USSR supporting the radical camp in north-east Africa; and the USA becoming ever more deeply involved with Egypt and Sudan, as well as Somalia and Kenya (the theme of regionalism versus globalism was also much discussed in this context in Washington at this time, when there were also some allusions to an 'arc of crisis' stretching from Libya around the southern fringe of the Middle East through Iran to Afghanistan).

Following the downfall of Nimeiri and the restoration of party politics, the spotlight turned again to domestic affairs, but they were affairs that could not be as isolated from the external world as had been the case before 1969. Now the civil war raged more fiercely and widely than the earlier conflict. Ethiopia was perceived as a crucial player, but diplomatic efforts to separate her from the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) fighting in the South proved as difficult as direct attempts at peacemaking between the two belligerents. There was some success though with Libya, with which the new prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi had long had close relations; but this in turn led to growing suspicion in Egypt and the Gulf states. Sudan's economic decay also brought it into greater reliance on essentially Western institutions, especially the IMF and the World Bank. While its strategic position helped gain favourable treatment, the famine of the mid- 1980s highlighted the depth and complexity of Sudan's economic predicament. And with the decline in strategic importance by the end of the decade as the Cold War faded, there was less prospect of help with the economic predicament, and consequent worsening relations with the IMF in particular.

Though the situation in terms of superpower competition had eased by the time of the coup of 1989, the basic domestic political and economic problems and their international dimensions had been by no means mitigated. The coup that brought political Islamists to power was thus inserted in a complex web of relations with neighbours, into which was to be injected for the first time (excepting briefly 1965) in Sudanese foreign-policy making an ideological dimension that was to include challenging attitudes to at least some of Sudan's neighbours.

A new era

The coup of 1989 heralded a new era in that there was now a regime in power with a different approach to the question of the relationship between Sudan and its neighbours. Pre-1969 there was relatively little concern as far as the core of Sudanese domestic politics was concerned, while under Nimeiri manoeuvres were largely to relate other states to the evolving domestic politics of the country, but the rise of political Islam had a different agenda which was in origin ideological.

El-Affendi has shown the ideological background[3]. It was by no means straightforward, with the Muslim Brotherhood under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi having obviously welcomed the general rise of political Islam in the Middle East but also holding specific reservations about the Iranian Revolution, having had mixed relations with the Ikhwan in Egypt, and having also had connections with Pakistan, where Turabi was an admirer of the policies of Zia al-Huq. While the 'friends' were being identified, so too were the enemies, including the West which amongst other sins had imposed a divisive state structure on swathes of the world, Sudan included: and also backed many

[3] Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan*, London, Grey Seal, 1991. Ch.8.

of the existing regimes against which the Islamists were leading the struggle. At the same time, as in other areas of ideology, the Sudanese National Islamic Front (as it became after Nimeiri's downfall) was not a movement with a clear written ideology, but rather one which was highly pragmatic in its reaction to particular situations. Perhaps the most that could be said in advance was that the NIF would be broadly supportive of the Islamist movement, and would respond when and where it felt circumstances were propitious. This in itself was innovative though, for it implied a new dimension to Sudanese foreign policy in terms of seeking an active role outside the country, in contrast to the two broad 'earlier periods discussed.

Yet ideology was not enough. The maxim that foreign relations are a reflection of the structure of domestic politics remained as true after 1989 as it had been hitherto. There was still war, and economic decay, as well as a new regime which had seized power through a coup and had the backing of a minority party, the NIF. Thus the domestic position has to be added to the ideological in seeing the evolving context for relations with neighbours.

I would characterise the regime as one that combines both strength and weakness at the same time- though I would not like to allocate a measure since there are too many imponderables.

Starting with the strength, any regime that comes to power via a coup has to give high priority to security issues. In this the new regime has been more far reaching than any of its predecessors. While there have been reports of attempted counter-coups and discontent in the army, the overwhelming impression is of an institution that has been purged with a degree of ruthlessness never shown by previous rulers. Estimates of the

number of officers purged range from 600 to 2,000 (the latter figure being 40% of the officer corps). At the same time another new force has been established (the Popular Defence Force) which may have up to 150,000 and in which young people have received not only rudimentary military training but plentiful ideological propaganda as well. The PDF can function as a checking force on the army, as an additional instrument as in the civil war, and as a repressive body within Sudanese society: while the police force, never notable in Sudanese politics, is now 'shadowed' by new Popular Militias. It was reported that during the riots of October 1993 it was the PDF and the PM on which the regime relied to restore 'order'. (There are also a plethora of often rather shadowy security agencies at loose in the country.)

The regime has also taken a firm grip on the civil service. Here too there has been a considerable shakeout of personnel which appears to show more concern for ideological correctness than administrative experience and competence. Thus for the first time since independence (with the partial exception of the period 1969-71) there has been an overt attempt at the politicization of the state. With this has gone a proclaimed introduction of federalism allegedly decentralising the state, while at the same time building a non-party democracy from the grassroots. However reports on the functioning of the system suggest that federalism in Sudan approximates more to the old USSR than to the USA; while instead of democracy being guided by an official single party, in Sudan it functions through the power of an officially nonexistent one.

The Islamic revolution has also extended deep into education and culture, involving both structure and content in a variety of ways including most obviously Islamization and Arabicization. These developments have played a substantial role in weakening old

centres of opposition. Educational institutions, especially the University of Khartoum, have long been central to the expression of opposition in Sudan (including the uprisings of 1964 and 1985) and the measures taken have been partly with the intention of checking these in the short term and changing society in the longer run away from the growth of secularism hitherto associated with what has been essentially Western education and to an Islamic understanding of the pursuit of knowledge instead. (As El-Affendi put it the NIF was out 'to make a bid to control the state and impose their norms on society and hope to succeed where their opponents have failed by defining a new Sudanese community based on Islam'[4].)

Repression of opposition was also conducted more generally through attacks on the institutions of 'civil society' as well, some of which, such as Sudan Human Rights Organisation, had regime replacements set up in their stead. It was especially ironical in the case of SHRO since the regime swiftly established for itself the worst human rights record since the Mahdiyya of a hundred years ago. (In fact the Mahdiyya has been lauded by this regime which has sought ideologically and physically to take Mahdism away from the banned Umma Party.)

On the economic front the regime's position has also been strengthened by the continuation of the process of domination of Islamic banks and Islamist businessmen. The emergence of the former had been clear before the coup of 1989, while the relative strengthening of the latter is a reminder of the financial rewards so common from the exercise of political power in Sudan, as elsewhere, and has been often at the expense of merchants associated previously with the Unionist and Umma parties.

[4] Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan*, London, Grey Seal, 1991. Ch.9

Yet what is strength is also weakness, sometimes as a corollary. The security forces may be more reliable in terms of regime security, but this has not ensured the pacification of the country. Civil war in the south may have seen the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) weakened by factional divide, but it has not delivered military victory to the government. Elsewhere in the country, especially in Nuba Mountains and Darfur there are repeated indications of continuing violence of various kinds. As well as insecurity, administrative inexperience has also been reported as young ideologues are parachuted in to attempt to run local administration in rural areas (and sometimes ministries in Khartoum as well). Political opposition within the country may be largely repressed but it has led to large numbers going abroad; where though they may appear fractious and impotent, they nevertheless maintain a cacophony of criticism which reaches influential ears.

Tight control of education and culture does not assure quality or compliance. All reports indicate that while the quantity of education has expanded, there has been a sharp drop in quality which bodes ill for the country's future development for which a cadre of skilled manpower is required. Many of Sudan's leading academics have left the country, sometimes after periods of detention without trial and having suffered torture. The harsh puritanism promoted has sometimes offended long established cultural mores, as with reports of forced entry into wedding parties to seek compliance on new regulations curbing music and dancing.

Financially the regime's supporters have done well, but real living standards for the majority of the population appear to continue to fall in the face of limited supplies and spiralling inflation. This seems as true for farmers, who have seen forcible government

intervention in the market, as for urban dwellers. There have been demonstrations, and the government has been forced to adopt rationing procedures (sometimes also a guise for political control) but it would be reasonable to assume that this overall situation is winning the regime few friends in the country at large.

Having briefly reviewed the domestic scene, it is now possible to try to relate that to the external relations, especially with neighbours[5]. The obvious starting point is the aforementioned one that Sudan has a regime that perceives itself as having a message for others. One dimension of that is in seeking to project itself as a model Islamic state, and though it has often said that process is still underway, it has taken the opportunity of hosting guests and delegates to a variety of conferences concerned with themes in this process. It has also taken in what it describes as 'refugees' from North Africa, including Omar Abd al-Rahman, the leader of Egypt's Islamic Jihad, as well as others from Tunisia and Algeria.

At the same time the Islamic message was to be sent out through a new international body, The Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC) that was founded in 1991 in Khartoum. Hassan al-Turabi was elected its permanent general secretary, and the PAIC soon became a mouthpiece for radical views. The older Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as well as the Arab League were criticised for not standing for the people; and various pronouncements were uttered on international affairs. It was no coincidence that the PAIC was founded in the wake of the Gulf War in which Sudan had earned the wrath of her Arab neighbours by supporting Iraq; or that one of its early

[5] This paper is not a detailed review of Sudan's relations with its neighbours. That was provided by Charles Gurdon 'Sudan's foreign policy', *Sudan Studies*, 12. July 1992. While events have moved on since 1992 the picture remains broadly as Gurdon described it.

denunciations was of the Madrid peace talks. There should have been little surprise in Sudan therefore when in 1992 the OIC re-located its conference that had been scheduled for Khartoum.

Sudan's role as an international centre for Islamic activism also extended to African states. There were efforts with Iranians to promote Islamic relief in Somalia; while as far south as Tanzania Sudanese proselytisers were discovered and expelled. Uganda, where the explosive history of religious politics is well known, was also concerned at the threat of political Islam from Sudan, especially since some of Idi Amin's fellow Muslims were also still in southern Sudan. But Eritrea and Ethiopia proved areas of restraint, for the regime in Sudan had good relations with the new governments there and they were aware of the political divisiveness threatened by political Islam. In 1992 the Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement went as far as to claim that the Sudan government had forced it to end operations and flee to Saudi Arabia.

With all this, it was really not surprising that Sudan became linked to accusations of terrorism, however vehemently the Sudan government denied it. Given that it had numerous military training camps, especially for the new Popular Defence Force, as well as training its regular army, and that various factions from north Africa with 'refugees' in Sudan were conducting armed struggles in their own countries, it was difficult not to think a connection likely. In the end it was not until 1993 that the United States put Sudan on its list of 'terrorist-sponsoring states'; but the surprise was less that

it happened than that it took so long - certainly in the view of several of Sudan's neighbours[6].

Sudan has also been vocal as a critic of the West, most obviously over the Gulf War. This included both indirect and direct criticism, with the former being targeted particularly at those conservative regimes in the Arab world most directly associated with the Western effort a situation that was sharpened by accusations of Sudan's military involvement with Iraq. Though less outspoken on the West's backing for the Israeli-PLO agreement of 1993, Sudan's response might be described at best as ambiguous.

Yet Sudan's domestic weaknesses also influenced her external relations. The civil war's continuation made security needs still a high priority. This led to the search for arms which contributed to relations first with Iraq and later with Iran. As well as seeking military aid there was the need to try to square neighbours around the south. As seen, in Ethiopia from 1991 this involved playing down support for Muslim political movements such as the Oromo. In Kenya and Uganda it centred on trying to limit support to the SPLA, especially once the latter had lost the support of Mengistu, and could in the case of Uganda include the scarcely veiled threat already mentioned.

Security took an unexpected turn on Sudan's northern border with the reopening of the Halayeb issue. As the only state with which Sudan has a major territorial dispute, and one resurrected by the pursuit of minerals in the disputed area, the wider context of mutually suspicious relations already mentioned did little to help the pursuit of a

[6] For repeated accusations of supporting terrorism see *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, and for rejection of the charges the London Embassy's *Sudan News*.

settlement which instead degenerated into sabre rattling. Sudan's endeavour to take the issue to the UN met with little response.

Aside from security the other outstanding problem was economic. (Indeed the two were related since it has been estimated that the war has cost as much as half a million dollars US per day to prosecute.) In total Sudan had a debt of over $13 bn. and found itself desperately struggling for foreign exchange. As a major defaulter to the IMF, and one with no friends in Washington (despite hiring a P.R. firm), its alienation of Gulf Arab neighbours, especially from the Gulf War, brought little help. There were of course hopes of Libya, but Qadhafi in his usual capricious manner was not to be relied upon, especially when he started to express concern about fundamentalism in his own country. The most obvious manifestation of this financial predicament was the repeated shortage of oil right across the country.

The weakness of Sudanese agriculture was another major problem. The main export crop, cotton, fell substantially in quantity and value. The regime trumpeted a rise in the volume of grains for domestic consumption (and some sorghum went for export) but prices remained such that real living standards fell and there were reports of at least regional food deficits. But the alleged political threat to neighbours coupled with Western denunciation of Sudan's human rights record meant that virtually no aid for development was available. Emergency aid was still on offer, but acceptance of it was at best grudging, since the government was reluctant to concede a need; and when it was admitted, distribution was hedged around with political difficulties.

Overall Sudan's combination of external ambition and internal weakness has left it with a number of contradictions. In the UN it seeks support against alleged Egyptian

incursion in Halayeb: while it finds itself formally condemned by that body for its human rights record. It condemns the West in general, especially its Middle Eastern policies; while seeking to court the IMF for some further debt relief and credit. It claims to wish for peaceful relations with its neighbours: but openly offers 'refuge' to those who pursue terrorism against some at least of them., while denying that that amounts to support for terrorism.

Sudan is not unique in this, it is a potential position for any would-be revolutionary regime which is at the same time partially dependent on others in the international community. Stalin was in the same position as he sought the technical requirements for rapid industrialization from Western companies and built socialism in one country, while still promoting a revolutionary ideology and seeking to export it via the Comintern. Iran too seeks expanding financial and commercial links with the West while also still encouraging Islamic radicals throughout the Muslim world, as its involvement with Sudan testifies. Sudan's problem is not in its uniqueness but that it remains a weak state contending with civil war and economic collapse, for which (however reluctantly) it needs foreign help: hardly an ideal base from which to pursue an ambitious revolutionary foreign policy.

Conclusion

Leaving aside Sudan's promotion of the Islamist cause internationally, one might ask overall what has changed? The border dispute with Egypt is not new, it has just lain dormant for many years never having been resolved. Regional economic co-operation still remains along way off on any significant scale, especially as the Junglei project remains a casualty of war. The involvement of neighbours in each others' affairs

continues, albeit with things somewhat shuffled round so that Egypt and Sudan now denounce each other, while there is a new found friendship with Ethiopia; meanwhile relations with East Africa arising from civil war are essentially unchanged. The most significant change has been the end of the Cold War and the marked reduction of a strategic interest by any superpower in developments in Sudan.

Yet all is not simply the same: the quarter century since Ali Mazrui wrote on Sudan's 'multiple marginality' has served largely to show the intensification of the themes he outlined. Arab nationalism in the classic model of the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s may have declined as a vibrant ideology, but Arabism has persisted and if anything deepened. That has been the case in Sudan with the creeping Arabicization of public affairs of all kinds in the intervening period having been greatly accelerated since 1989. The awareness of the discriminatory repercussions of this, especially for the education of southerners, appears to have risen commensurately. Sudan's identification with the Arab world internationally has however changed. In so far as Iraq has tried to breathe life into Arab nationalism, Sudan has been identified with that; but it is a sentiment that sets the country predominantly at odds with most of the Arab states, indeed in greater isolation than has been the case hitherto.

One of the several contradictory themes in recent policy has been the linking to both the old enemies, Iraq and Iran. Sudan's rapprochement has centred around Iran's assistance in the civil war which has served to intensify it as a conflict on Mazrui's religious frontier, however varied may be the themes that analysts have identified in the origins and development of that conflict. Indeed there are reports of at least some of the units sent to the south, including those from the Popular Defence Forces, regarding it as a

Jihad. Small wonder that there has equally been a growing perception of a beleaguered Christian minority facing at least discrimination and on occasions persecution, however much the regime may protest otherwise when it deems it necessary to do so for international consumption.

Mazrui's reference to West African connections may be a less central theme of Sudan's marginality, yet the involvement with Chad in particular has grown. Indeed there has become almost a Chad-Libya-Sudan triangle developing with both Chad's present ruler, Idris Deby, and his predecessor, Hissein Habre, having staged their successful assaults on power from Darfur. (Deby in particular has relations with the regime currently in power in Sudan.) Sudan has also looked to Nigeria in the peace-making efforts in the civil war, not least because Nigeria too can be seen to reflect the same religious frontier, which is a continuing dimension of that country's politics as well.

Perhaps the most worrying feature of this brief review is that on all Mazrui's themes of marginality the situation within Sudan has been exacerbated rather than ameliorated with the passage of time. Instead of perceiving these themes as a challenge to be met by seeking to form a national identity that would aim to embrace them, successive rulers seem to have accelerated the pace at which they contribute to confrontation and marginalization: so much so that if we are to meet in another twenty-five years, it may not be as one community of scholars of Sudan- unless a regime comes to power that seeks to bridge and unite, rather than exploit the divisions within the country.

Yet perhaps we should be unsurprised, for Mazrui's centripetal view of Sudan's marginality may really be much more significant than its recent attempts to become a centrifugal force. The rise of a narrow-based Islamist regime endeavouring to 'impose

their norms on society' may be the outcome of the marginality Mazrui outlined. Instead of an integrating outcome embracing major dimensions of marginality, a regime has taken power that seeks to reject much of Sudan's past and diversity in the name of the National Salvation Revolution at home and the promotion of the Islamist agenda abroad. 'Multiple marginality' has contributed to a narrow regime and programme seeking to repress rather than embrace the reality of Sudan; but one which in doing so has simultaneously marginalized itself in the international community of states.

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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DESERTIFICATION DEBATE: WHITE NILE, SUDAN, 1980 1992

by H.R.J. Davies

There has been much debate in the literature as to what is 'desertification': and whether it exists at all in the Sudan. Mainguet (1991) equates 'desertification' with 'land degradation' and argues that years of low rainfall have merely made overt a crisis situation that has existed covertly for a long time. By contrast, Thomas and Middleton (1994) consider 'desertification' to be largely a myth. In 1977 the United Nations Conference on Desertification identified the White Nile region between Khartoum and Kosti as an area with 'high risk of desertification' (Fig 1). Wherever the truth may lie in the academic argument, some substantial changes have occurred on the White Nile rainlands during the 1980s and early 1990s. The following summary is based upon surveys carried out in 1980, before the droughts of 1983 and 1984 (Davies, 1986), and in 1992 (Alredaisy, 1993).

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES:

There have been a whole series of significant changes on the White Nile rainbands:

1. On the rainlands *dura* (sorghum) production had virtually ceased by 1992, and has been replaced by *dukhn* (millet) because of the latter's ability to cope with drought. In 1980 there was a considerable production of *dura* on clay rainlands, though millet was always dominant on the sandy qoz.

2. Whereas response to drought and lower yields had been to increase the area under cultivation in 1980, by 1992 the response had changed to reducing the area under cultivation.

3. In 1980 rainland farmers were growing some sesame as a cash crop. In 1992 virtually no one was growing sesame (or any other crop for cash) on the rainlands.

4. Many of the rainland farmers of 1980 had given up farming there altogether by 1992, and were finding alternative work on irrigation schemes or in town.

5. In 1980 a survey of cheese factories was carried out. None were operating in 1992.

6. Our 'inspired' guess is that the livestock population bad been halved especially on the rainlands. As a result available milk was now being used for the family rather than being sold for cheese making.

7. There did not appear to be any serious food shortages in l980. 1n1992 these were widespread, not only on the rainlands, but even on the irrigated areas of

the White Nile due to temporary migration for work from local rainlands, and from more permanent migrants from western Sudan.

8. In 1992 almost all families interviewed on the rainlands had relatives away working elsewhere, often to support families at home. The average was more than 2 per household. Most migrants, apart from those looking for seasonal jobs, had migrated to Khartoum and the Gezira (93%) and 3% had gone to Saudi Arabia. The main reasons given for migration by migrants interviewed in Ed Dueim were: Drought and lack of food, 68%; looking for work, 17%.

9. In 1980 drought coping strategies relating to family and community support were much more significant than in 1992. A greater sense of 'individualism' was abroad in 1992. Traditional community mechanisms had been stretched to breaking point.

10. The people seemed far less secure in themselves and much more dependent on the outside world in 1992 than they had been in 1980.

REASONS FOR CHANGE:

The question arises as to whether these radical changes were due to desertification as 'land degradation' or so other factors. Some of these changes appear to relate to rainfall which has certainly shown an apparent decline since the 1960s. Figure 1 shows that the average annual rainfall at Ed Dueim in the 1980s was 35% below the 1921-50 figure. Examination of figures for White Nile rainfall shows that there have been a series of fluctuations during this century and that the 1921-50 period was much wetter than earlier and later periods, and is probably anomalous. It could be argued that the changes outlined above are simply prudent adaptations of land use practice.

A second factor is population change. Between the 1955 and 1983 censuses the population of the region increased by 120%. This has clearly led to increased pressure on land near the desert margins, made possible in part by an increasing number of rural water supply points, particularly of deep bores. Mohammed (1985) has demonstrated clearly the results in land degradation, that such a programme created in Northern Kordofan through land clearance, over cultivation and overgrazing. A similar situation has developed in the White Nile rainlands as much of the development of improved water supplies was carried through in the 1960s before the drought of 1968-73. On the White Nile rainlands the result was a pushing back of the desert margin for agriculture, and a breaking of the ancient balance between numbers of people and animals on the one side and rainfall on the other.

A third significant factor has been the development of alternative sources of livelihood either within the White Nile area or nearby. There has been a considerable expansion of irrigation on both banks of the White Nile to the extent that both banks are lined with pump schemes, some of which such as the Kenana sugar scheme at 150,000 feddans (1

feddans = 0.42 hectares) are large even by world standards. They have restricted very severely access to river bank grazing during the dry season and have provided a strong demand for new labour. Government policy relating to mechanised farming has rendered rainland *dura* cultivation uneconomic.

The creation of new administrative authorities in the Sudan together with the expansion of irrigation has raised the status of Ed Dueim substantially as an administrative, marketing and distributive centre. Migration to it is then not surprising especially as a result of the 1983/1984 drought.

The improved means of communication through road construction have linked the region ever more closely with the Capital Region (comprising the Three Towns of Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman) and with the Gezira. Not only does the Capital Region provide work opportunities, but with a population of 3.5 million in 1990 (or about 18% of Sudan's population) (Abu Sin and Davies 1991), it creates a demand for food and fuel. The first of these has proved a stimulus for irrigation schemes. During the 1970s cheese production expanded rapidly to meet the demand from the Capital Region. This also led to a large expansion in livestock numbers. The main source of fuel used in the Capital Region, is wood and charcoal, commodities in short local supply in a desert margin region. Both these demands have had a deleterious effect upon the rainlands of the White Nile by encouraging a serious over-use of local resources. This is particularly important in the light of a complete lack of any planning policy for rainland management for the White Nile area.

In a similar way it can be noted that demands for labour in the Gezira have expanded. Since 1957 the area of the Gezira Scheme has doubled from 1 million to 2 million feddans. The generally high level of education in the Gezira, due to social and education development programmes there, has caused many young men to aspire to white collar jobs in towns created by the expanding administrative frameworks created after Independence. The reduction in size of tenancies from 40 to 20 feddans in the 'old' Gezira Scheme and to 15 feddans in the Manaqil Extension also encouraged tenants' sons to look elsewhere for employment. The whole process here has been made worse by the demands for labour at all levels from the oil-rich Saudi Arabia and Gulf States. The result has been the emergence of what EI-Arifi calls 'landlordism' in the Gezira (Arifi 1975). This means that tenancies continue to be held by tenants and their families, but employ labour from outside to do the necessary work for them. The western Sudan, including the rainlands of the White Nile, have supplied this labour.

CONCLUSION

The White Nile Region, including both the river bank and rainland areas are on the fringes of the triangle between Khartoum in the north, Kosti in the south-west and Sennar in the south-east which is the economic heartland of the Sudan. As a result it has experienced the advantages for growth through its proximity as well as receiving some

of the exploitative effects of proximity to, but being not quite a part of, the most economically developed area of the Sudan. Such, together with changing environmental conditions, are the factors which have moulded the present situation in the White Nile rainlands. Whether this area has suffered true desertification in the sense that there has been an irretrievable loss of biomass capability remains to he seen. What is clear is that the area has suffered severe exploitation with everything being taken out and nothing being put back in due to a lack of any co-ordinated policy to manage these important desert margin's resources.

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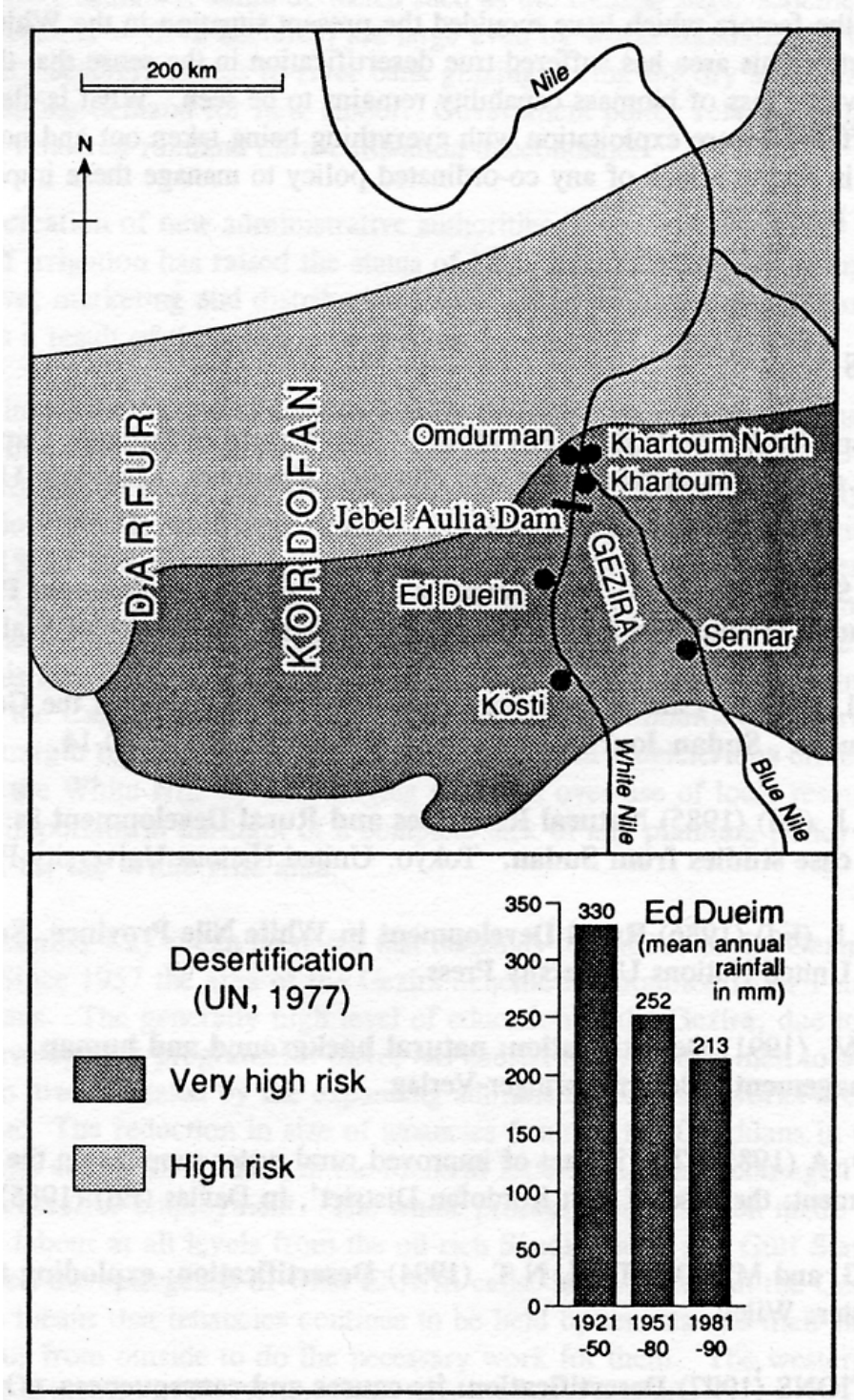

Figure 1 White Nile

EXAM STRESS

Siege fever had taken grip of the teacher's 'mez'. Ustaz Abd Ar-Rahim, mild mannered head of geography at Abri Boys' School, had stacked the space under his bed with Molotov cocktails. And Mahmoud, a history teacher from Ed Dammer, had procured a three foot iron bar which he too stowed away at easy reach beneath his mattress.

This general alert amongst my colleagues had been triggered by ominous rumours emanating from the school boarding house. The Sudan Certificate exams were only into their second day and our pupils were not happy.

They had entered the history exam, the first on the timetable, with expectations of. a liberal invigilation regime about to be rudely shattered, Ten minutes into the paper, the first of an endless stream of cheating students was detected and confronted. One irate boy caught with a crib note reportedly raised his chair above his head threatening to strike the invigilator with it.

Unable to consult their smuggled papers in the examination room, pupils filed out to the toilets in droves, hoping to glance over their pre-prepared notes there. Most were intercepted, frisked and relieved of their illegal scraps of paper. Evidence that some boys had succeeded could be seen in the form of torn strips of pages, patterned in scrawls of algebra, history and English, fluttering from the toilets, carried out towards the empty horizon on the hot breeze.

By the end of that first day hundreds of crib notes had been seized and threats from the pupils had been heaped upon us. If the strict invigilation policy persisted we would be on the receiving end of their wrath.

The second day of exams passed in the same fashion as the first and that evening the school carpenter came to warn us of an imminent attack on the 'mez'. This had prompted Abd Ar-Rahim's hurried manufacture of Molotovs and those other, preparations, not usually associated with the teacher pupil relationship.

At first we thought the sounds to be the pattering feet of a cat in the yard. But this illusion lasted for only a second. The first few stones cast were followed by a barrage of rocks and pebbles, raining over the wall of the yard and crashing onto the roof above us.

Mahmoud, with his iron bar, got to the door of the yard and held it shut. The rest of us stayed under cover while the missiles and angry cries were hurled at us. The attack lasted about five minutes and the mob only moved off to pursue two teachers whom they'd spotted taking flight out of a window.

The doctor's car, which doubled as an ambulance, had been in the street outside our house and was badly smashed up by flying stones. But no human casualties resulted from the students' action. The ferocity with which their displeasure had been expressed shocked only me. My colleagues quickly acknowledged that their resolve to invigilate without compromise went against the grain at Abri.

Over the years apparently, Abri had gained a reputation for being a laid back examination venue. Parents and some local teachers cited Abri's remoteness as one justification. Their children needed a head start they argued, to make up for the poor resources on offer at the school. Teaching time was always lost during the year due to closures, water shortages, student strikes and various logistical problems. In order to put their sons on a level footing with the rest of Sudan when exam time came around, it was necessary to allow a certain amount of blatant cheating, the argument went. However, what was true of Abri in terms of limited facilities was equally true of hundreds of other schools around the country.

The step my colleagues had taken led in only one direction. We abandoned our invigilation duties and took ourselves by lorry to the regional education office at Dongola, to submit a statement, put together in conjunction with the teachers' union. While we were going through the motions, our headmaster, an Abri man, had recruited primary school teachers and government workers from local offices, to take over management of the exams. Those candidates identified as cheats were reinstated as far as we could tell and Abri's results in the end, seemed to be respectable enough.

I found it impossible to return to teach in the northern province the next year. Presumably because I'd left Abri in solidarity with the other teachers. However the division of the education administration into academic and technical sections allowed me to switch sides and swap Abri Boys' [academic] School for El Ghaba Boys' Commercial (technical] School, which was still in the north.

Far less remote than Abri in the heart of Nubia, El Ghaba was close to Dongola and I looked forward to a smoother time teaching there. Abd Ar-Rahim had moved to El Ghaba too and we settled into our new post without incident. We often reminisced about the tumultuous end to our Abri careers. On the whole relations with the pupils had been very good. Perhaps the deeply held aversion to examinations had little to do with lack of school facilities and everything to do with an acute dearth of university places, even for those few students who emerged from the school system with good exam results. A neighbour in Abri had summed

up the extent to which school was seen as an irrelevance when asked what he intended to do on leaving. He was going to devote all of his energies he told us, to getting a visa for a Gulf country, where he could earn large sums for doing fairly menial jobs.

My hopes that El Ghaba would be different eventually started to crumble. Solitary missiles would occasionally soar across the wall into the yard of our house. One rock cut through the air like a bullet, bounced off a table around which a group of colleagues were playing cards and landed at their feet without harming anyone. Compared to the mass charge that night in Abri, this was low intensity harassment and we lived with it day to day for some time.

One night we heard the clatter of yet another projectile hitting the roof under which six of us were trying to sleep. In the morning the precise nature of this latest salvo could be seen. Lying on the ground were the shattered pieces of a smashed bottle, around whose neck, a dark stain in the sand showed where the bottle's contents had leaked out. A singed bung of cotton wool lay in the same place. Clearly what had struck the roof the previous night had not been a stone but a Molotov Cocktail. Confirmation that the academic year had come full circle. It was the morning of the first day of the Sudan Certificate Exams.

***** All names have been changed.

Iain Marshall

SLAVES, STREET CHILDREN AND CHILD SOLDIERS

Human Rights Watch Africa Children's Rights Project

This slight paperback contains 88 pages of text and a 22 page appendix. It is a dreary but commendable compilation of the effects on children of the slow disintegration of the Sudanese state which was born in relative optimism on January 1st 1956. It documents abuses of children both by government and by rebels. The appendix is the text of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of September 1990, which sets out laboriously what right-thinking people believe children should be entitled to, wherever they live. One of its signatories was the current government of Sudan. The report also makes recommendations to the government, the SPLA, SSIA, UN, US, EU and other concerned countries.

Sections of the report cover street children, slavery, forced labour, denial of religious freedom, military recruitment and child soldiers. It is illustrated by personal testimonials from a number of children, mostly boys. The substance of the report, whilst it might be challenged in detail, seems broadly correct. Its publication late in 1995 did not attract much comment or denial. The problem with it is that those who have power in Sudan - government or rebels - are not generally concerned with the oppression it details. Whilst they may agree at meetings or in the abstract that children need particular protection in the current situation in Sudan, they have shown little inclination to give it outside their own families, whose younger members are often far removed from the conflict or the risk of recruitment.

Militarised, unelected, unaccountable and uncontrolled, those who wield power across Sudan today seem to inhabit a different world from those who pass resolutions on child rights or describe the lack of them. Is there any point in writing rules for people who ignore them? The answer is yes - it is only by recording our aspirations for civil rights that we have a gauge to measure the shortfall; hence the Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the international campaign to ban landmines.

When and if peace comes, at least those who abused their power have had their names written down by others far removed from the conflict. They cannot claim that there are no rules, even if they are quite ignorant of them. It is not unthinkable that some might be held accountable for what they did. This has happened to an extent in Ethiopia and Bosnia and may yet become reality in Arusha, where the Rwandan trials are to be held. Such painstaking documentation is thus important not just for Sudan, but for Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique and Angola in Africa alone. But it does not make happy reading.

Philip E. Winter

AZ-ZOUL SUDANESE CULTURAL FORUM LIMITED

Az-ZOUI Sudanese Cultural Forum is a recently formed London and Manchester-based charity, committed to bringing the richness and diversity of Sudanese culture to the attention of the wider world. It is the initiative of a small group of Sudanese living in Britain and The United States. It has two basic aims:

- to provide **a cultural lifeline to Sudanese communities in Britain** by providing a forum where Sudanese can explore and celebrate their common and distinct cultural heritages. We seek to do this by sponsoring small scale local exhibitions, seminars and workshops on all aspects of Sudanese life. Among our wide-ranging projects, we hope to involve Sudanese women and children in schemes which may enable them to develop artistic or literary careers based on their heritage and to encourage the growth of small businesses based on Sudanese handicrafts and produce. We aim to sponsor activities accessible to all ages and backgrounds and to provide a permanent record of Sudanese customs and traditions which are falling into decline.

This can only be achieved if Az-Zoul remains rigorously **non-political and entirely independent**. Our board of directors reflect our commitment to pluralism, with members from Northern, Western and Southern Sudanese communities. Every event will seek to appeal to both Northern and Southern Sudanese.

- to enrich the non-Sudanese communities in which they live by making Sudanese culture accessible to all. Of the many ethnic communities in Britain, the Sudanese have been perhaps under-represented at local borough level. We would like to sponsor small scale projects, such as packs on Sudan for use in primary and secondary schools, exhibitions, musical evenings, poetry readings, recounting of folklore, exhibits of fine arts and costume. In this way we hope to present the best of Sudanese culture to those more familiar with images of poverty, war and intolerance associated with Sudan. Our projects will contribute to greater understanding among the non-Muslim community of Islam and African Christianity. They also represent a positive challenge to racism.

As a launch event, Az—Zoul are planning a 'Celebration of Sudanese Costume and Culture' featuring an evening concert by the famous musician Mohammed Wardi. The day's events will include opportunities to experience Sudanese music, dance and poetry, folklore and traditional handicrafts and textiles from around the Sudan, and nomadic artifacts. There will also be Sudanese costume modelled by Sudanese from all corners of the country, reflecting Sudan's African and Arab heritage, as well as a display of Sudanese women's arts and crafts such as hair- braiding, henna application, and traditional beauty treatments using oils, perfumes and scented woods.

If you are interested in learning more about Az-Zoul 's activities or can contribute in any way - we are in need of funding to carry out our work! - please contact:

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