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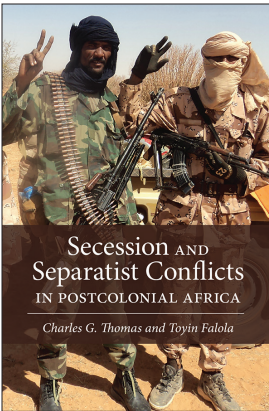
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## SECESSION AND SEPARATIST CONFLICTS IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

By Charles G. Thomas and Toyin Falola

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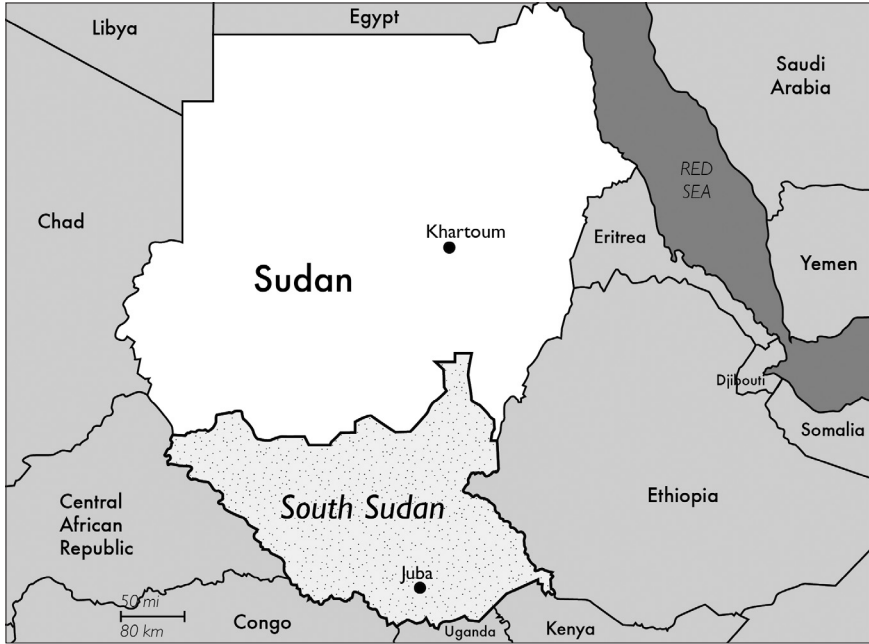
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## *Map of Sudan and South Sudan*



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# The Secession of South Sudan, 1955–2011

The longest self-determination conflict in Africa lasted for over fifty years, with only small pockets of respite marking periods of either compromise or exhaustion on the part of its combatants. Over the course of this time, the struggle of the South Sudan against the Khartoum-based, Northern-dominated government underwent radical changes that make it uniquely suited to this study. Although at its core the struggle has always been about the self-determination of the people of the South Sudan, the goals have altered throughout its prosecution, alternating between representation, separatism, and secession as different generations involved in the struggle were brought to the fore. Given that the final result has been a referendum and formal secession of South Sudan from the North, it might be easy to simplify this long conflict into a singular secessionist event. However, the history of this struggle is far more complex and the years of conflict offer an excellent in-depth case study of the cross-ethnic alliances, the fluid political ideology, the pursuit of a protracted guerrilla conflict, and finally the flexible and complex end goals of the mass movements involved in the secessions.

## EARLY HISTORY

The beginning of the first Southern Sudanese struggle for self-determination is, like many of the separatist struggles in Africa, inextricably bound to the colonial era and the decisions made during the process of decolonization.

In fact, it is within this initial period of colonization that the implicit separation of the North and South was established, along with the antagonistic relations between the two. Egypt was the first power to expand into the Sudan. Muhammed Ali, the Albanian adventurer placed in control of Egypt by the Ottoman Empire, expanded his realm into the *Bilad al-Sudan* (the Land of the Blacks) in 1821.<sup>1</sup> Fuelled by dreams of greater empire and personal power, Ali quickly and firmly established Egyptian power along the riverine North. Using this region as a base for further expeditions, Ali's men penetrated further south in search of resources and, above all, slaves. The black Sudanese were renowned as military slaves and were seen as a precious resource by the ambitious pasha. His slavers agreed and rapidly expanded slaving operations not just for the military but for sale abroad.<sup>2</sup> While Ali died in 1849, these practices did not end. Even as Egypt drove itself further into debt in its own modernizing campaigns of the mid-nineteenth century, the Sudan remained lightly developed. While the riverine North received light development, it remained economically dependent on the slave trade drawn from the completely undeveloped South. The debts owed by Egypt occasionally obliged them to try and reform the south for the comfort of their European creditors, but the numerous European "governors" assigned by the khedive rarely made any lasting difference. By the late nineteenth century the North remained lightly developed while it preyed on the completely undeveloped South, with expansion downriver still blocked by the trackless morass of the Sudd.

The catalyst for changing this system began in Egypt as a wave of nationalism inflamed the army in Cairo and Colonel Urabi of the Egyptian Army seized control of the government in 1881. Fearing the loss of the strategic Suez Canal, the seizing of their financial investments in the country, and even the undermining of Britain's global standing, the British landed an invasion force under Sir Garnet Wolseley, who decisively defeated Urabi's army at Tel El-Kebir on 13 September 1882. The debate over the continued sovereignty of Egypt lasted for months, but when the dust settled the British remained firmly entrenched within Egypt and would essentially run Egypt until its independence following the Second World War. However, when Britain occupied Egypt it also inherited all of Egypt's holdings and difficulties, including the Sudan. Already concerned with the slave trade that sustained the Sudan, the British continued to send governors

to the Sudan, this time backed by larger-scale military forces to aid in the anti-slaving operations. While these efforts seemed poised to take effect, they were swept away by the Mahdiyya, the powerful Islamist movement led by Muhammad Ahmad bin Abd Allah, the self-proclaimed Mahdi.<sup>3</sup> The Mahdi's army dealt the British-led Egyptians several defeats, including the annihilation of William Hicks' Egyptian army at the Battle of El Obeid in 1883. The Mahdi's advances culminated in the much-romanticized death of General Charles Gordon during the fall of Khartoum in 1885, leading to the British abandonment of the whole of the Sudan for the next thirteen years. However, when they returned in 1898, they were far more prepared for the struggle, and the Mahdi had died in the interim. The result was the crushing of the young Mahdist state at the Battle of Omdurman and the reimposition of the Anglo-Egyptian administration over the whole of the Sudan, where it would remain until 1956.

It was under British Rule, from 1899 to 1956, that the very real division of the Sudan occurred. While there had always been a cultural and geographic separation, the Arabic language had begun to bridge the gap and trade had existed to continue to process of cultural integration. Both of these processes were arrested under the British administration, with a conscious decision having been made to develop the North while keeping the South in a suspended state—a practice that would be called the Southern Policy amongst the British functionaries who would govern this newly divided land.<sup>4</sup> As early as 1917 the British founded the Equatoria Corps, an all-Southern Sudanese military unit, to remove the need for Northern troops in the South.<sup>5</sup> This effectively removed one of the only major areas of cultural interaction between the two regions. The remaining contacts were slowly severed over the next decade, with the 1922 Passports and Permits Ordinance allowing the British administration to deny Northerners access to certain regions of the South.<sup>6</sup> This was taken a step further with the 1925 Permits to Trade Ordinance, which gave the British the sole right to grant trade access to the South, effectively making them the final arbiters of the relationship between the South and North. By 1930 the separation of the administration of the two regions was formally declared, with the North remaining a primarily Islamic, Arabized, and slowly developing society that looked north to Egypt while the South, it was hoped, would develop

into an Anglicized, Christian buffer area between the Muslim north of Africa and the British holdings in East Africa.<sup>7</sup>

These hopes were dashed with the advent of nationalist sentiment that coalesced before the Second World War. In 1938 a number of intellectuals joined together in the North to form what they called “the Graduate Congress,” an organization that signalled the rise of Sudanese Nationalism in the modern era.<sup>8</sup> These intellectuals argued for a single idea of “Sudanism,” a single identity for the myriad people living within the immensely large territory under Anglo-Egyptian rule.<sup>9</sup> This unitary ideal held substantial appeal for the populace of the Sudan, but by effacing the difference of experiences that had occurred from the slaving period to the present, the Graduate Congress glossed over the necessarily divergent identities of North and South. This led the congress to having only a small proportion of its membership claiming Southern extraction and therefore being culturally dominated by the North. It was a cycle that would repeat itself numerous times throughout the Sudan’s history, with a group claiming to represent a unitary Sudan and yet lacking in Southern representation. As it was, given the isolation of the South, during the critical wartime years Sudanese nationalism would develop with a pronounced Northern Sudanese slant, something that would haunt the South when in 1945 political parties formed in the Sudan without significant Southern participation. This was exacerbated when in 1946 the Southern Policy was reversed and the South was thrown back into contact with the North on the eve of self-determination within the Sudan.<sup>10</sup>

The British were not entirely unaware of the unease this reunification caused the South. For over twenty years the South had been administered completely separately by the British, and before that the dominant memory of the South was that of the brutal slaving expeditions of the North. Thus the Juba Conference was set up in 1947, wherein the British, North, and South came together to discuss the future North-South dynamics as the Sudan edged toward independence.<sup>11</sup> However, the South was unprepared for such discussions, with their delegates to the conference having been chosen by the British and no consensus bloc having been established. While the South successfully used the conference to articulate their fears of Northern domination, they were still corralled into a choice of conditional unity with the North. While they pushed for several safeguards against



Northern political control, none were binding and the Southern delegates were left feeling isolated. This was exacerbated by the formation of the legislative assembly the following year wherein no such safeguards were adopted and the South was left with an extreme minority of representatives and no power to enact protective measures. By the dissolution of the assembly in 1952, the South was weak, isolated, and fearful of its future within a unified Sudan. While the South was to produce its own unified political party in 1954, this party was not able to exert any recognizable pressure on either the British or the Unified Sudanese Government before the Sudan declared its complete separation from Egypt in 1955 and its full independence in 1956. However, by this point the first few steps in the Sudanese Civil War had already been taken.

## THE FIRST SUDANESE CIVIL WAR (1955–1972)

While the Sudan was not fully independent until 1956, the incident that is regarded as the beginning of the struggles of the South took place in 1955. At its heart was the Equatoria Corps, that body of Southern professional soldiers that had enforced British rule in the South since 1917. By 1955 the Sudan had been united and the military was in the process of its own unification. Tensions had been mounting during the previous year, with the rejection of a federal system and the rapid replacement of British administrators with often abrasive Northern officials. This was worsened in the Equatoria Corps when all senior ranks that had been filled by the British were awarded to Northern officers.<sup>12</sup> The Southern senior NCOs were awarded just nine junior slots within the military administration, and resentment was already boiling. It finally burst on 18 August 1955, when the Southern soldiers of the Torit garrison mutinied against their Northern officers.<sup>13</sup> Waves of violence wracked the Torit region as the garrison turned on its officers and seized its weapons. Other, smaller mutinies arose in the South in response, with garrison soldiers in several other regions revolting and joining the general struggle. The response of the North was immediate, with the Royal Air Force helping to transport large numbers of Northern troops to the South to put down the mutiny. With government reinforcements pouring in and the mutineers' hopes for British intervention on their behalf dashed, the conflict appeared hopeless. Following a

call from Governor-General Knox for a ceasefire and his guarantee of fair trials and clemency, the mutineers' resistance collapsed. While many of the Equatoria Corps surrendered, a significant number instead took their arms and deserted, fading into the deep South or across the border into Ethiopia or Uganda.<sup>14</sup> These deserters did not trust the North to keep their word following the removal of British authority, and their fears proved well founded by the end of the year, when a number of those who had surrendered were executed. While the deserters, now outlaws and exiles, were not organized or even particularly politically motivated, they would form a central part of the resistance to the North that would continue to grow over the next fourteen years.

In 1956 the Sudan passed officially into its independence, with the British removing their administration and with the government of Premier Abdullah Khalil becoming the official government of the Sudan. Despite assurances that the concerns of the Southern Party would be given full consideration upon independence, the Khalil government continued to spurn the ambitions of the South, with Khalil instead touring the South demanding full recognition and obeisance to the 1947 Juba agreement. Demands for increased development of the already underdeveloped South, federal status for the South, or even a plebiscite to be held under UN auspices increased as proceeds from the bumper crop of cotton of 1956 were spent almost entirely to finance the increasing irrigation and development of the North. By 1957, the Khalil government was using increasingly authoritarian strategies to contain the discontent of the South and was faced with a more serious challenge when the Southern Political Bloc managed to form in the newly elected National Assembly with enough votes to force itself to be heard.<sup>15</sup> Despite views ranging from increased representation to federalism to outright secession, the bloc directed its effort specifically to driving for a federal structure for the Sudan. When this was rejected, the bloc increasingly reached out to "Africans" of the North, gaining increased support for their plans of federation and representation amongst the less represented peoples of the North by 1958. However, the political turmoil engendered by the increasing power of the South was never effectively brought to bear against Khalil's government. Already beset on all sides by economic and political failures, the Republic was swept away in

a military coup led by General Abboud, the commander in chief of the Sudanese Army.

Despite the change in leadership, the neglect of the South continued, with little to no representation given to Southerners and less capital for development emerging from the central government. Incidents of violence and protests increased over the following years, leading increasingly to the arrest of Southern political leaders. In addition, the armed Southerners who remained from the mutiny continued to stage armed raids throughout the Sudan, although these were alternately characterized as acts of banditry and acts of rebellion.<sup>16</sup> These were accompanied by increasingly violent incursions involving old ethnic rivalries, which increased the tensions of the already fragile South and convinced the Abboud government to resort to increasingly harsh measures to suppress the populace. This crackdown served as a catalyst for the formation of a party-in-exile amongst the Southern politicians, who found the Sudan increasingly hostile to their presence. In 1962, a cadre of these politicians formed the Sudan African Closed Districts National Union, professing a platform of complete Southern independence.<sup>17</sup> The SACDNU hoped that its political manoeuvring abroad with the UN and OAU could force this solution on the Abboud government, which itself was already undergoing several challenges within the military itself. Unfortunately, despite several attempts to draw attention to their cause, the SACDNU (renamed the Sudanese African National Union [SANU] in 1963) could gain no traction internationally and the increasing dissent between the politicians within its ranks precluded any more forceful actions. However, while the political outlook was apparently increasingly fractured and troubled, the actual struggle on the ground was just beginning to draw serious attention.

The various groups of armed mutineers had in the intervening years managed to draw more recruits from the disaffected peoples of the South.<sup>18</sup> The draw usually depended on the region they were occupying, with each band usually attracting the young men whose homes were nearby. By 1963 these groups had begun to slowly pull themselves into a cohesive whole, calling themselves the Land and Freedom Army (LFA). Led by General Emilio Tafeng and divided into different regional commands under local leaders, the LFA became the first concerted military resistance to the Sudanese government. However, it was not generally known as the Land

and Freedom Army, and by the end of its struggle it was simply identified by its adopted name, “The Anya-nya,” meaning snake venom in several of the regional languages.<sup>19</sup> In 1964 the first true Anya-nya attacks occurred and rapidly grew into a vicious guerrilla struggle between the Sudanese armed forces and the Southern insurgents.<sup>20</sup> While initially the LFA seemed to hope simply to attract international attention, with the failure of this strategy the two sides dug in for a prolonged conflict. The North responded to the initial attacks by increasing the strength and presence of its armed forces and cracking down on the remaining Southern police, prison, and military personnel. Subsequently the Anya-nya’s ranks were bolstered by the almost en-masse desertion of these personnel to their side.<sup>21</sup> The Northern troops then settled into a pattern of responding to the uncoordinated attacks of the Southerners with harsh reprisals,<sup>22</sup> which, coupled with the Anya-nya’s efforts to curb the banditry in their own ranks, increased the popularity of the insurgents significantly. This pattern was to repeat itself until the end of 1964, when the government of General Abboud was finally toppled by popular protests and a power struggle between Abboud and the premier of the caretaker government that had been placed around him to bolster the state. By the beginning of 1965 Premier al-Khalifa was in control of the government and Abboud had resigned.<sup>23</sup>

Khalifa had already managed to calm the cycle of reprisals in the South and now was attempting overtures to what he understood to be the political leadership of the struggle, SANU. SANU had begun to exercise authority over the Anya-nya movement and managed to get a ceasefire of their own implemented over elements of the LFA in an attempt to win concessions from the now more reasonable central government. Khalifa’s government offered amnesty and autonomy for the South under a federal structure for the Sudan in late 1964, but these terms were rejected by SANU, who had been emboldened by the struggle to insist on complete secession from the North. A series of abortive and piecemeal negotiations was attempted, with the government finally suggesting a complete round table meeting for 15 February 1965.<sup>24</sup> Due to the inconsistent nature of the SANU leadership and the political struggles within Khalifa’s own government, the meeting was postponed until 16 March. While SANU attended the Round Table Conference in Juba, Anya-nya activity around the city remained consistent and violent, undermining the attempts of SANU delegates and the

emerging Southern Front party.<sup>25</sup> By the end of the conference on the 29th, no decisions had been reached and the only lasting legacy of the conference was the final splintering and demise of both SANU and Khalifa's government. The disparate goals, philosophies, and egos of the leadership finally shattered the Southern political coalition, with the main splinter group being the Azania Liberation Front (ALF). Over the following months ALF would absorb most of the remnants of SANU and the smaller splinter groups and proclaim its own leadership over the Anya-nya. Khalifa's government, meanwhile, lost its support base in the elections of 1965 and was replaced by that of Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub.<sup>26</sup> The demise of both leaderships was to thrust the country away from diplomacy and bring the fighting (which had never really stopped) back to the fore.

The following four years would bring little change to the situation. Protracted guerrilla warfare continued in the South and was met by limited and mostly unsuccessful counter-insurgency campaigns by the North. While a few major operations were attempted, such as a sweep of the Sudanese armed forces into Equatoria in May 1966, these rarely yielded effects commensurate with their effort, much less proving decisive. By September 1966 the remnants of the round table committee produced a resolution that a central form of government was no longer tenable for the Sudan, but this had even less effect on the conflict; the North would not give up its central control and the Southern guerrillas were already effectively ignoring the manoeuvrings of the "paper cabinets" of politicians that claimed to command them. This was just as well, as Southern leadership continued to splinter, with ALF and SANU remaining but with the creation of the Southern Sudan Provisional Government in 1967.<sup>27</sup> The new SSPG contained much of the long-standing political leadership of the Southern struggle and as such claimed leadership of the Anya-nya, but the distances involved and loose networks of allegiance amongst the disparate insurgent groups meant that only nominal direction could be given. It seemed that the war had somewhat dissolved into a general conflict blending together old regional rivalries as well as hopes for reform, autonomy, or even complete separation for the South, among both the political and military leadership of the South.

1969 was to see a radical change come over the conflict, dispelling the confused political and military pattern in the South. On the 25 May the

Maghoub government was overthrown in a bloodless coup by the “Young Officers” led by Colonel Gaafar Mohammed al-Numeiry.<sup>28</sup> The new Revolutionary Council tacked to the left of the political spectrum as opposed to embracing the Islamic parties that had wielded so much influence in previous administrations. Soviet military advisers appeared for the first time in the Sudan and questions were raised as to the effect these new players would have on the struggle in the South. However, Numeiry had already proclaimed that there was no military solution to the rebellion of the South. This did not mean that he brought the war to a close, but instead that he saw the military assistance brought to him by the Soviet mission as a means of bringing more coercive power to bear on the South.<sup>29</sup> His military embarked on a series of offensives against the South, which were disrupted only by the continuing upheavals he had to deal with within his own power base. However, by the time Numeiry had safeguarded his own position, the chance to cow the remaining splintered Southern factions into an agreement had passed. By 1970 the Southern factions had been mostly welded together on a military level by a Southern commander named Joseph Lagu, who had been associated with almost every one of the various Southern movements before consolidating his own base.

Lagu was able to bring together all of the remaining military factions through the simple expedient of having become the sole source of outside arms for the struggle. Israel, having been already dissatisfied with the Islamist tendencies of the Sudan central government, finally in the late 1960s had begun to filter weapons and expertise to the South. Lagu, already having created his own power base in Eastern Equatoria, managed to make himself the recipient of their largesse.<sup>30</sup> By drawing on his own base and supplying those who allied themselves with him, Lagu managed to pull together the various struggling bands and command them through their needs for materiel. Perhaps his second decisive move had been to effectively shut out the political leadership that had existed since the start of the struggle. Time and again various political groups, both within and without the Sudan, had claimed leadership of the military struggle, but none was able to truly aid in the consolidation or arming of their military manpower. Instead, each claimed the credit for the ongoing efforts while generally staying aloof from the fragmented war and manipulating the selection of military commanders for their advantage. Lagu himself had been spurned for command

by the SSPG, and so it is not surprising that he rejected the continual calls for political affiliation from the various groups. Instead, Lagu was strong enough and centralized enough in 1970 to absorb his neighbouring group, the Nile Provisional Government, and then continue to consolidate his hold over the remaining Anya-nya National Armed Forces (as the military had been known under the SSPG). By 1971 his singular power and control led him to declare a unitary command known as the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and set about the business of directing an armed resistance.<sup>31</sup> The melded command was able to more effectively fight the Northern offensives and blunt the new Soviet edge of the Sudanese forces. Slowly Lagu built a social administration amongst his forces, and by 1972 several challenges of rivals had been beaten off and Lagu was in complete control. This was just in time to receive the offer of a ceasefire from the Numeiry government on 3 March, which Lagu accepted on the 6th, marking the successful completion of heretofore unheralded diplomatic efforts. The representatives of the SSLM and the central government had been meeting since 1971 in Addis Ababa under the auspices of Emperor Haile Selassie. While diplomacy had already been tried throughout the conflict, this time there were no rival movements strong enough for Khartoum to deal with to split the Southern base, leading to far different circumstances.

The ceasefire, when finally implemented by both sides in early 1972, led to the widespread application of the Addis Ababa Agreement and the first lasting peace the Sudan would know in sixteen years. Both Numeiry and Lagu hailed it as a triumph for their side, although it was in the end a flawed agreement that continued many of the same tensions that had drawn the South into war in the first place. In terms of a political settlement, many of the most ardent of the Southern combatants were disappointed. Even from the outset the hopes for complete separation had been abandoned, with a federal solution between the North and South as the primary goal of negotiations.<sup>32</sup> However, the South had to settle for even less than this, gaining their own regional government but no guarantee of power sharing in the central government, which remained staunchly Northern in character.<sup>33</sup> The North still had essentially unopposed power in the overall state. In addition, the military settlement was again a disappointing compromise. The initial hopes of the South for its own military were flatly rejected by the North, who feared a consolidated and independent Southern force.

Instead a generous portion of the Anya-nya military formations would be integrated into the Sudanese military.<sup>34</sup> These forces would be based in the South and be mixed into a matching number of Northern troops who would be based throughout the regions.<sup>35</sup> While this offered employment for a great number of the combatants, it still left a number of fighters out in the cold following their service to the South. In addition, the integration was pushed at a much faster pace than the South had anticipated, leading to increased tensions between the Southern soldiers and their new comrades, who had barely stopped shooting at each other before they were placed in the same units. Finally, the question of economics was left off of the table, as the SSLM delegation was too limited to deal with the question at the time. However, for all of its flaws, the Addis Ababa Agreement was the first binding accord between the North and South and at least assured a certain amount of autonomy for the Southern regions. As the covenant went into effect, the country slowly began to piece itself back together.

## A TROUBLED INTERLUDE

From 1972 to 1983, the North and South were officially at peace with each other. However, this often only meant that there was no sanctioned military action currently occurring,<sup>36</sup> as the balance of political power still meant that the South was in a considerable amount of economic distress. Having gained no particular control over their own economic situation in the Addis Ababa Agreement, the South was generally a spectator to such decisions as the central government investing much of its capital into mechanized farming in the central Nile region. This left the South further behind in terms of development within the nation. In addition, the political situation continued to deteriorate. While the South could indeed elect its own regional government, the Northern-dominated central government could and did influence the elections. Often in the tightly contested elections for the presidency of the High Executive Council of the South, Numeiry's influence would prove to be key in the success or failure of a candidate, meaning that Numeiry essentially had veto power over the leadership of the mostly autonomous Southern region.<sup>37</sup> Finally, while the integration of the military had been completed in the prescribed five years, the process had not been a smooth one. Violent confrontations between former enemies



occurred with startling regularity, and even when these were absent the Southern soldiers often felt ill at ease in their new military structures and many still held grudges both for the previous conflict and the low ranks they had been given upon integration.<sup>38</sup> Thus, three primary areas of the state, those of politics, economics, and security, all were under increasing strain throughout the first decade of the peace. Even before the shooting officially started again in 1983 there were desertions and increased insurgent activity in the South, with an increasing number of both Northerners and Southerners becoming disillusioned with the current situation. Finally, in 1983, the dam burst again and the Second Sudanese Civil War had begun.

## THE SECOND SUDANESE CIVIL WAR (1983–2005)

Although, as mentioned, there had been low levels of violent resistance, including the continued desertion and armed struggle of Southern troops from the army, the Second Civil War is formally held to have begun with the mutiny and desertion of the 105<sup>th</sup> Sudanese Battalion, which was stationed at Bor, Pibor, and Porchalla.<sup>39</sup> In an echo of the original Torit mutiny in 1955, the Southern battalion protested violently when ordered to transfer its station to the North. The 105<sup>th</sup> considered this a contravention of the Addis Ababa Agreement and asserted that the government did not have the right to order it to leave its home region of the South. The commandant of the Sudanese military academy, a Southerner named John Garang, travelled to Bor on the pretext of negotiating with the protesting unit.<sup>40</sup> However, upon his arrival, Garang instead followed the prearranged plan to lead the unit from protest to desertion, and the 105<sup>th</sup> and its sister unit the 104<sup>th</sup> both went over to join the already brewing insurgency in the South.<sup>41</sup> However, while all previous units had begun their new struggle under the sobriquet of Anya-nya II, Garang welded together several of these units along with his own command to form a group called the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), with its armed wing taking the name the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA).<sup>42</sup>

Garang had been a lower-ranking officer in the Anya-nya at the end of the first struggle, where his formal education and military skill had seen him rise rapidly in the ranks of the insurgency and postwar integration of the armed forces.<sup>43</sup> However, this service had also made him aware of

the numerous flaws in the Anya-nya structure responsible for the deep divisions and indecisiveness that had prolonged the struggle against the North. Garang was adamant about not replicating these patterns within this new conflict and quickly established himself as the sole head of the SPLA and the font from which the military and civilian aid would flow via his relationship with Mengistu's Derg in Ethiopia.<sup>44</sup> While several of the more veteran commanders from the Anya-nya period who had themselves taken up arms protested Garang's elevation over themselves, their Ethiopian allies were adamant about his status as head of the new SPLA. As such, dissenters were forced to either subordinate themselves to Garang or strike out on their own without patronage as another band of Anya-nya II.

This unity of command and purpose showed impressive results within the first several years of the struggle. The leadership of the SPLA was conscious of several other dissident groups throughout the Sudan and made active efforts to join their efforts to the other anti-Numeiry groups, not only within the South but within the North and West of the Sudan as well. Garang, echoing the strategy used by Lagu in the First Civil War, used his plentiful military supplies to continue to reach out and integrate further armed dissident groups in the South. However, unlike Lagu, Garang insisted on their being integrated into the SPLM itself as opposed to simply placing them under the loose authority of his movement.<sup>45</sup> This saw the SPLM/SPLA rapidly grow to be the strongest of any of the dissident movements, even as it brought it into conflict with the existing Anya-nya II forces that rejected SPLM hegemony in the South. However, despite conflicts with both uncoordinated Anya-nya groups and the Sudanese military, during 1983–1986 the SPLM consolidated its armed forces and managed to create several civil administrative regions throughout the South through battalion-sized “task forces” of SPLA fighters.<sup>46</sup> Newer regions of the Southern half of the country, such as the Nuba mountains, were added to the territorial control and civil administration of the SPLM.<sup>47</sup> Increasingly the SPLA was even able to reach out even to Anya-nya groups and integrate them into their structure.

The successes and increasing expansion of the SPLA had far-ranging effects on both the government of the Sudan and how it prosecuted the struggle. Counter-insurgency measures had never completely halted even throughout the interlude between civil wars, and with the advent of the

SPLA the Numeiry government attempted to redouble its efforts. However, the regime had already been facing increasing challenges to its reign. In September 1983 the Sudanese government had promulgated the “September Laws,” which introduced certain aspects of Sharia law into the legal framework of the Sudan,<sup>48</sup> and this was followed by increasing attempts at Islamization of the laws in July 1984. These efforts made the central government increasingly unpopular, as the failure of these measures incited the Islamicist elements and Numeiry’s championing of them aggravated the more secular elements of the government. In early 1985 he began to arrest political opponents of his regime, including over 100 members of the Muslim Brotherhood in March. This proved to be the last straw. In April his government was formally overthrown. In 1986, Sadiq al-Mahdi, the Islamist leader of the Umma party, was selected as the new prime minister of the Sudan. The coalition he came to power under shared the goal of an Islamic Sudan and the continued inevitable conversion of the state to Sharia law.

This alteration in government had two major consequences for the conflict in the South. The first was that the members of Sadiq’s coalition by and large did not endorse the earlier Koka Dam Declaration, which had been born out of a meeting between the parties of the North and South (including the SPLM) in the period after the fall of Numeiry. The declaration had called for a constitutional convention to deal with the difficulties of the Sudan overall and was seen as a step forward in terms of resolving the conflict.<sup>49</sup> However, neither the Democratic Union Party (DUP) or the National Islamic Front (NIF, the Muslim Brotherhood), key supporters of Sadiq, attended the meeting or agreed with its goals. The Koka Dam agreements were thus essentially moot in the wake of the election of 1986. The second major alteration was Sadiq’s increasing reliance on local militias to prosecute the war.<sup>50</sup> While this was not an entirely new development, the level to which Sadiq’s government armed the tribal militias, especially of the Baqqara, was unprecedented.<sup>51</sup> These militias immediately began to raid their economic competitors in the South with abandon, committing numerous human rights violations. From their initial widespread usage in 1986 until the cessation of the conflict, the militias would represent a central dynamic of the conflict, often working alongside the formal armed forces. However, it was also their indiscriminate violence that often turned public

opinion in the South away from the central government, and this image problem would have severe consequences in the direction of the conflict.

In fact, as early as 1987 the militias had grown to be such a problem that the SPLA was finding ready allies in regions outside what had formally been the South and thus found themselves in the position to move the struggle beyond the region where the first war had been fought. SPLA units began to draw the struggle into the regions of the Blue Nile, Kordofan, and Darfur, all of which had been outside of the First Civil War.<sup>52</sup> In addition, with the militias becoming increasing threats throughout the South, Garang's movement found diplomatic solutions with a number of the fragmented Anya-nya II forces suddenly plausible, which allowed the SPLM to continue to successfully institute a civil framework over its home base areas, clear the border with Ethiopia, and even establish themselves within the Ecuatoria region, which throughout the conflict had been hesitant to accept the SPLM, for reasons that will be discussed later. These gains again drove the North to the negotiating table in 1989, with Sadiq facing increasing pressure from his military to both find a solution to the conflict with the South and attempt to halt the now dozens of small-scale local conflicts occurring across the Sudan. Sadiq acquiesced and, now again in a coalition with the DUP and his own Umma party, began the peace process anew with the SPLM. While progress was underway, the increasingly radical NIF denounced the proceedings and broke from Sadiq, eventually backing several radical Islamic officers in a coup that halted the peace process, removed Sadiq, and brought Omar al-Bashir to power.<sup>53</sup> The war would go on.

## THE COLLAPSE OF ETHIOPIA

A great deal of the unitary success of Garang and the SPLM was due to the material and logistical support offered to them by the Ethiopian Derg. Much as with Lagu's Israeli patrons, the Ethiopian aid meant that Garang could exercise a great deal of control over his subordinate commanders, since the continuance of the struggle in its current incarnation was dependent upon his patrons. However, by 1990 the Derg regime that had sustained the SPLM was rapidly crumbling.<sup>54</sup> Already the SPLA had been called upon numerous times to help the Derg combat the various insurgencies that were threatening to tear their government apart, specifically

the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Gambela People's Liberation Front (GPLF), which were supported by the Sudan.<sup>55</sup> However, while the SPLA was able to help contain these guerrilla movements, the far more organized and motivated Tigrayan People's Liberation Front and Eritrean People's Liberation Front were annihilating the Ethiopian military in the field. Even as they began their final advance against Addis Ababa, Garang refused to treat with these powerful insurgencies, meaning that once the defeat of the Derg was final later that year, the SPLM found itself isolated and in the position of needing to rapidly evacuate its numerous training camps and rear bases in Ethiopia.

In addition, the removal of Ethiopian support had far-flung political consequences for Garang and his movement. The SPLM had relied heavily on coercive power to maintain a unitary vision for the struggle. Throughout the war there had been little fragmentation of the movement, despite its extremely diverse and expanding membership, primarily because Garang could call upon Ethiopian security forces as well as Ethiopian supplies to back up his leadership. On several occasions challengers to his leadership had been arrested or otherwise dealt with by his Ethiopian patrons. Now, this security too was gone. In short order, challenges to Garang's sole control of the SPLM/A arose from within.

Two of the regional commanders in the Upper Nile, Riek Machar and Lam Akol, declared against Garang in August 1991. Their faction quickly became known as the SPLA-Nasir after the town around which they were based, and they sent out a call to all other regional commanders to overthrow Garang and join their cause.<sup>56</sup> Specifically, they included a message of their intention to fight for secession, something that the SPLM had not done up to that time, given Ethiopian sensitivities. However, despite their initial hopes of drawing a large contingent of allies with their pronouncement, they found that most of the SPLA regional commanders either stayed loyal to Garang's faction (which became known as SPLA-Torit) or at the most stayed on the fence to see how the struggle would play out. Violent confrontations were the general rule between the Nasir and Torit factions, which, due to the regional affiliations of Machar and Akol and the nature of the troops of Garang's SPLA nearby, led to what has been viewed as a Nuer civil war.<sup>57</sup> However, very swiftly it became apparent that Garang's faction remained a viable force in the field and maintained the allegiance

of most of the SPLM. In fact, although Machar and Akol were able to draw in many of the pro-secession elements of the Anya-nya II, they found themselves quickly on the shorter end of the equation in terms of manpower and equipment. This development brought an unexpected element to the fore in even the earliest days of the internal struggle: the SPLA-Nasir faction was being supported and armed by the Khartoum government it was trying to secede from.<sup>58</sup>

The SPLA-Nasir was certainly not the only Southern dissident group being supported by the Sudanese government as a “spoiler” against their main antagonists. Between the numerous Anya-nya II, SPLA-Nasir (later rebranded SPLA-United when they incorporated more Southern elements), and other forces, Bashir’s government had many unexpected allies already in place during their counteroffensive of 1992. This offensive saw the Sudanese armed forces push Garang’s group out of many of their newest gains, including parts of Ekuatoria, and forced their withdrawal from Juba, the Southern city at which the SPLA-Torit had launched a partially successful offensive at the end of 1991.<sup>59</sup> However, the government’s offensives were halted in 1992–93 by concerns over the imposition of no-fly-zones during the Somalia crises, and by 1994 Garang and the SPLA had recovered their footing in part because of the sea change in the diplomatic context of the conflict.

With the final end of the Cold War in 1991, the Sudanese conflict took on a much altered nature in the eyes of the international community. The Cold War binary that had defined the struggle between an SPLM that was supplied by Marxist Ethiopia and a capitalist/Western aligned Sudan was no longer applicable. Instead the Sudan found itself within a newer context of being part of an axis of Islamist extremism under the control of a military dictator, while the SPLM could legitimately point to their efforts to reach out to other dissident groups in the struggle for reform. In short order the North found itself isolated amongst the global powers, while their opponents had a raised profile.<sup>60</sup> The SPLM had been able to sustain itself largely through the effectiveness of the social structures they themselves had built in the first decade of the struggle, but now they found themselves as welcome participants in the political dialogue surrounding the Sudan and its neighbours. This was hastened by the Sudan’s seemingly unlimited ability to alienate the countries around it, with previous allies Eritrea and

Ethiopia both finding themselves rejecting the NIF government and its efforts to supply Islamic insurgents in their states. In a mere four years after the fall of the Mengistu government, the former combatants in the Horn were working together against Bashir's government and subsequently offering the SPLM succor.

This renewed diplomatic status for the SPLM/A also meant that there was increasing pressure to come to an understanding with the SPLM-United faction. Garang's forces, christened SPLM-Mainstream, remained the much stronger faction, and although they made overtures and continued to open up their leadership structures, the SPLM/A-United refused to formally overcome their differences. However, United's failures to sustain their strength even in their home areas led the faction to rebrand itself the Southern Sudan Independence Movement in 1994 and to reaffirm its support of complete secession from the North while casting out those members who supported a less complete split. This precipitated a series of fractures throughout the organization that were only made more severe by the signing of a series of agreements between the SSIM and the Sudanese government.<sup>61</sup> By 1996 the majority of the splinter groups had either come to an understanding with the SPLM, had been reabsorbed, or were fighting amongst themselves. By the end of the year the SPLM/A was again effectively unchallenged as the Southern representative in what had become a greater struggle against Bashir's increasingly isolated government.

The military struggle saw continued offensives from the SPLA and an increasing emphasis on defeating the Khartoum-sponsored armed militias and what was now called the South Sudan Defense Forces.<sup>62</sup> However, the far more important actions were finally taking place at the conference table. Since 1994, the opposition to Bashir's government had agreed on a Declaration of Principles that established a baseline for self-determination and other reforms that would be required for a cohesive attempt at peace.<sup>63</sup> These had not only established a legitimate structure for the seeking of peace but also drew international attention as a means to end the conflict. While considered somewhat weak by the parties involved, they set the stage for further talks under the auspices of the governments of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and eventually the United States.

The United States had been increasingly involved in the issues of the Sudan. Since the end of the Cold War the US relationship with the Sudan

had undergone a profound realignment. While during the 1980s and early 1990s the Sudan had been seen as a strong regional ally against the Eastern Bloc, by the mid-1990s its Islamist government was now looked at with suspicion. In 1997 the United States placed sanctions against the Sudanese government as a regional supporter of terrorism and a human rights abuser. This deprived the Sudan of significant investment capital, weakening the region and serving as leverage with which the United States could exert pressure upon their putative ally. This was exacerbated by the discovery and early exploitation of oil within the Sudan in the year 2000. The oil was discovered within the notional border regions disputed by the combatants but without United States investment, and with the continued conflict between the Sudan and its Southern antagonists, it could not be effectively exploited by either side. However, this coincided with the continued efforts of the United States, wherein the George W. Bush administration was pushing the Sudan for a settlement and helping to draft the documents necessary for the agreement. This would in theory allow for possible relief from sanctions, allow for the development of the North's oil deposits, and also allow for an agreement for access to the oil within the South Sudan's boundaries. Although the definition within the proposed settlement of self-determination for the South and what forms it could take and how such a process would be decided initially caused concern amongst the SPLM, eventually a solution was found. By the end of 2004 the agreement for the ending of the Second Civil War was in place and was signed by Garang and Bashir on 9 January 2005. The signed agreement established benchmarks on government employment for Southerners, the imposition of Sharia law in the North but not the South, the splitting of oil revenues, and finally a plebiscite to be held in 2011 to determine the status of the South within or without a greater Federal Sudan. The war had ended, but the final question of secession, separatism, or federalism was delayed for six years when the South voted overwhelmingly to secede completely from the North, with the blessings of the United States and the United Nations.



## SECESSION, SEPARATISM, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF STATEHOOD

Of course, having narrated the history of the Sudan's conflicts between North and South, it is now apparent that secession and separatism have had roles to play within the conflict, but rarely at the same time. While secession would eventually be completely achieved, it would be wrong to consider that this was the inevitable end goal for these decades of conflict. In the context of this work, it is perhaps most important to understand that the historical arc of the secessionist/separatist desires of the South is irrevocably bound to both the methods of struggle the actors had chosen and the continental and global context that each stage was taking place in.

Following the independence of the Sudan, there was little known about the actual motivations of the fighters who would become the *Anya-nya*, although eventually they would become synonymous with the goal of secession and complete independence for the South. On the other hand, the early Southern political representation made every effort to propose their own initiatives for dealing with what they saw as gross inequality in the political and economic development of the South. Even in the earliest days of independence, the Southern elected officials pressed for recognition of their desire for a federal structure that would see a degree of self-determination fall to the South itself.<sup>64</sup> This motion followed the failure to attract UN or British support for a demanded plebiscite before independence in 1955. Unfortunately, by 1957 the National Assembly declared that a federal structure was unworkable in the Sudan. Although rebuffed, the Southern Political Bloc began reaching out to other "non-Arab" groups such as the Beja and Fur for support of a federal structure. These efforts appeared to be bearing fruit in 1958 but ended up being lost in the coup that removed Premier Khalil from office.

With the change in government and increasing government repression under General Abboud, the methods of pursuing Southern representation changed. At this point it had become apparent that a political settlement into a federation was no longer a plausible option. The advent of the 1960s then saw new attempts to bring power and representation to the South. In 1962 the more prominent members of the Southern political class had removed themselves from the Sudan to avoid the increasingly widespread

arrests of political dissidents. From Kinshasa they declared the creation of an opposition movement for the South, the aforementioned SACDNU, which quickly changed its name to SANU.<sup>65</sup> No longer relying on the North to negotiate a settlement, SANU demanded complete separation of the South into its own sovereign country.<sup>66</sup> However, they had no armed forces of their own and decried the methods of the “rebels” in the bush.<sup>67</sup> Instead, they placed their faith in transnational organizations such as the OAU and the UN. In the 1960s the United Nations was still dealing with the Katanga crisis and the OAU had just been formed, with territorial sovereignty as one of its core principles. The diplomatic calls for secession or plebiscites were made toward parties not yet willing to expend the energy necessary to support SANU.

It was coincidentally at this point that the Anya-nya formally integrated itself and began its first halting steps toward its organized insurgency.<sup>68</sup> However, its successes in the first years of its struggle were limited at best, and SANU tried to remain as aloof as possible from the guerrillas until such time as their own efforts failed to reach fruition.<sup>69</sup> At this point SANU tried to align itself more closely with the Anya-nya and therefore gain a certain amount of direct contact with the still active secessionist struggle in the South. However, given the decentralization of all Anya-nya efforts, it was always a question of exactly how much cohesion there was between the political and military arms of the struggle. By 1965 the two groups were present together as a united front at the Round Table Conference called by Premier Khalifa’s government following the fall of the Abboud government, but despite agreeing to a ceasefire the local Anya-nya kept fighting. However, this conference is important in tracing the continued thread of secessionist thought. Despite Khalifa’s government offering federal autonomy directly to the South, SANU and the Anya-nya insisted on secession from the Sudan itself. Interestingly, they declared “there could be no settlement of differences until separation and independence had been granted [to the South] . . . . Apart from posing a threat to African peace, the Southern problem has the seeds of damaging Afro-Arab relations. To avoid this, the Southern Sudan must be given its own independence if further damage is to be avoided.”<sup>70</sup>

What can be drawn from this is the idea that the South felt that it had the political and military strength to win on the battlefield far more than

it had even wanted at the outset of the conflict. However, the question may be asked, why? Why would the South feel that it could do better than federation in the critical period of 1962–1965? Put succinctly, the door had not closed on secession in Africa yet, and the South looked to be gaining strength even as the North was dealing with increasing internal dissension. In terms of international understandings of secession, Katanga had only begun its integration into the still chaotic Congo at the time and the definitive rejection of secession, the fall of Biafra, would not occur until 1967. Given the historical separation between two regions and the increasing turmoil in the country itself, it is not too far of a stretch to imagine that the South felt they could indeed achieve the complete independence they longed for. Thus there was no reason to legitimize the concept of a federal solution at the time.

However, following the Round Table Conference, the political leadership split. SANU was essentially reduced to a single representative, William Deng, while new factions such as the Southern Front (which appeared before the round table), the Sudan United Party, the Southern Sudan Provisional Government, and others appeared, and each claimed a different political goal for the struggle.<sup>71</sup> SANU and the Sudan United Party both now advocated for a united Sudan. The SSPG wished for complete independence for the South and attempted to align themselves with the Anya-nya, who, regardless of the political manoeuvring of the political groups, remained staunchly in favour of secession. For a brief period the SSPG held the most sway amongst the factions and had drawn itself generally into alignment with the commanders on the ground, but by 1969 they too had split. The political turmoil in the South can be somewhat attributed to the lack of coordination between the military and political sides of the struggle. All too often the political leadership proclaimed intentions of separatism or secession yet had no means to actually attain these goals. Meanwhile, those armed combatants in the field remained committed to a singular goal but rarely had any higher coordination than a regional commander.<sup>72</sup> This meant that no concerted efforts could be made to attain their goals either.

This dynamic continually asserted itself through the succession of Northern-dominated central governments. The North simply did not have the political or military strength to bodily draw the South into a united Sudan, but the South did not have the political or military cohesion to force

the North to accept their secession. By the rise of the Numeiry government in 1969 the South found itself in essentially a stalemate. While even with the influx of Soviet military equipment and training the Numeiry government could not defeat them in the field, the Anya-nya still did not have the structure to effectively do more than survive in the South.

Two factors would alter this balance: the emergence of Joseph Lagu's Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and Israel's infusion of arms and supplies to that organization. Lagu, as mentioned, forced military cohesion through his access to Israeli arms and forced political cohesion through the simple expedient of ignoring the politicians.<sup>73</sup> Lagu's SSLM represented the closest the South had come to a unified front against the North, and nominal efforts to create a civil administration occurred at the same time as an increase in the guerrilla campaigns against the North. Throughout 1971 there were increasingly frequent raids in support of the secessionist agenda of the SSLM in its role as the central font of Southern resistance. And then in early 1972, the SSLM acceded to the Agreement for Autonomy for the Southern Sudan, which set the stage for an autonomous South under the Government of the Sudan.<sup>74</sup> The agreement was certainly not initially popular, despite Lagu's comments that he was satisfied with its provisions. Even amongst his ANAF there was widespread dissension, as most had been under the impression they were fighting for full independence. While after it was signed as the Addis Ababa Agreement it was generally followed, it was certainly not the secessionist end that most factions of the now sixteen-year-old movement had been promoting.

So despite the call for secession, why did the First Sudanese Civil War fail to achieve it? A central part of the answer must simply be that for a state to be independent it must be recognized, and for the duration of the struggle international recognition was either not forthcoming or impossible. As in the case of Biafra, post-1963 and the creation of the OAU there was essentially no chance that an African country would intercede to offer substantive recognition to a seceding Southern Sudan. Beyond this, as noted in the Katanga chapter, following the Congo Crisis and the establishment of the OAU, the international community tended to see African struggles as a regional issue and therefore within the purview of the OAU, which as noted was actively hostile to political measures to insure secession.

However, as the case of Eritrea would prove later, a military solution could force the hand of the parent state government and ensure secession via the recognition of the very government the new state was seceding from. Given the fragility of the Sudanese government and its extremely diverse populace, was a military solution out of reach? The answer must be seen as a yes due to structural reasons. Despite the weakness of the North at varying times, the Southern insurgents made several critical mistakes throughout the conflict that left them in an isolated and weak position. The first mistake was essentially in keeping the conflict a parochial one; the Southerners were certainly not the only group that was discontented within the Sudan. The multiple coups and demonstrations in the North pointed toward numerous examples of various interest groups that were often opposed to the government's initiatives. This is not to say that all or even the majority would have been sympathetic to the Southern cause, but between the large population of Southerners living in the North and the other large non-Arab populations, there were a significant number of potential allies. Yet none of these groups was seriously approached by the South after the earliest days of the conflict. This meant that the North could focus the vast majority of its security apparatus on the South, making the struggle that much more difficult.

The second error compounded the first. With the conflict concentrated in the South and with the increasingly repressive measures undertaken to control the region, the conflict seemed as if it naturally could take on the aspects of a protracted war, such as those fought in Vietnam and Eritrea. The majority of the terrain favoured it, the populace had reason to be mobilized, and the imbalance of forces would seem to point toward its logic. However, one never came about. This is not to say that guerrilla tactics were not used, but this was for the most part the fullest extent of the application. Unity of command eluded the struggle for the vast majority of its tenure, leading to fighters who would not fight outside of their home regions, uncoordinated campaigns, and overall an effect that was far more likened to "banditry" than a protracted guerrilla campaign.<sup>75</sup> It is the last of these that had the longest-ranging effect, as the cornerstone of any protracted liberation struggle is popular support, which is mobilized by political education and community building. These actions then create a support base for further struggles through the provision of food, information, more fighters,

and sanctuary when necessary—as put so elegantly, the people become the “sea” that the guerrilla “fish” swim in. Although piecemeal efforts at education, community building, and mobilization were made after Lagu consolidated the fronts, these were never particularly widespread. Thus, the popular base for the South’s struggles was never fully utilized and they remained militarily weak. In the end, the consolidation of the ANAF and SSLM and the provision of weapons and equipment from Israel were necessary steps, but they served more to sustain the conflict at its deadlocked levels than to create a decisive end. With the war still fully ongoing in the South and no further outside aid likely to appear, a military solution was impossible as well. This in the end doomed any attempts at the full secession of the Southern Sudan.

However, the same failures that bedeviled the forces of the South in the First Civil War would certainly be issues in the Second Civil War. At its start in 1983, the prevailing international attitude had certainly not changed toward the secession of a territory from an African state. If anything, the intensification of the Cold War made any tangible change in the international order almost less likely than at any point previous. The OAU had clamped down on almost all anti-statist movements and the United Nations had essentially referred such questions to the regional authorities. Even the hegemonic powers of the United States and the USSR had no interest in fostering the South’s conflict. The United States backed the North for strategic reasons in the region and had not yet begun their worry about “Islamic” states. Meanwhile the Soviet Union was far more concerned with minimizing their role in sub-Saharan Africa, and their resources were already sorely taxed by what they saw as the more vital struggles for Ethiopia and Angola.<sup>76</sup> In addition, little had seemingly changed about the South and its structures. The leadership tended to be fragmented and parochial, the goals of the various groups tended to be at odds with each other, and finally, while there was discontent with the North, there was little else that defined the South as a strong, independent society that could stand alone against the omnipresent structures of the central government.

It was in the Second Civil War that the South would overcome each of these difficulties, but often only by the careful negotiating of the regional political context in which they were operating. The continuing issues of the South and its unity were dealt with through a variety of measures.

The first, and perhaps paramount, factor was simply the material advantage Garang and his force exhibited in the first eight years of the renewed struggle. Much as Joseph Lagu had been able to leverage his connections with the Israelis and their supplies to dominate the Southern political and military actors, Garang used his connections with Mengistu's Ethiopia to outfight and outlast the other regional fronts. Even veteran groups like the Anya-nya II could not effectively compete with an opponent that was better supplied and who had safe Ethiopian bases to retreat to when threatened.<sup>77</sup>

This is not to say that Garang's only initial advantage was through his weapons caches. While the Anya-nya II again articulated a secessionist creed, the SPLM/A instead called for a revolution of the whole of the Sudan.<sup>78</sup> This message, of an armed struggle aimed at reforming the state to represent all of its inhabitants, found greater purchase both domestically and abroad. Secession was a narrow goal and one that isolated the Southerners from the rest of the Sudan. Reform, on the other hand, not only served as an attainable goal for those already fighting but was a reasonable and even desirable goal for the diverse populations of the South and even other dissident populations in Darfur and parts of the North. Garang's forces attracted a broader coalition than the reborn Anya-nya and proved to be far more durable. Ironically, the SPLM/A's initial rejection of secession as a goal made it far more possible in the later years of the struggle.

Had the regional power balance remained the same, Garang and his front might well have won a victory as a reform insurgency. The Northern government was having increasing difficulty dealing with the SPLM/A on its own, much less with the new dissident fronts that its increasingly aggressive allied militias were fomenting. The combination of the weakness of the Northern government under al-Mahdi, the steady flow of arms from Ethiopia (who in turn rejected secession as a goal), and the SPLM/A's diplomatic manoeuvring regarding both the remaining fragments of the Anya-nya and previously neutral populations seemed to offer a way past the stalemate that Lagu and his forces had experienced. However, this was not to be: the 1991 collapse of Mengistu's regime in the face of the EPRDF and EPLF coalition effectively ended the possibility of Garang leading a united Sudan under a reform-minded representative regime. Without the logistical support and bases that the Derg had provided, Garang's movement lacked what had been a vital component of its success. Supplies became

far scarcer, large populations of refugees were expelled from Ethiopia and had to be dealt with (including the families of SPLA fighters), and Garang's authority over his movement fragmented. This, combined with a newly emboldened Northern opposition, saw the majority of the gains that the SPLM had made since 1983 disappear.

While 1991 marked a significant setback to the South within the context of the civil war, it also marked a significant realignment within regional dynamics that would ultimately allow the South to secure the victory it had sought for decades. While the SPLM/A was battered during 1991–1994 it was not broken and instead found new havens within the South to ride out the new offensives from the North. Its splinter groups found that although they could call on support from their home regions, they too were underequipped and undersupplied and ultimately turned to the North for succor in their war against Garang's faction.<sup>79</sup> While they were able to reconcile their alliance with the North with their declarations of secessionist goals, these groups were delegitimized in the eyes of the Southerners through both their associations and their actions. This meant that by 1994 Garang's forces, while much reduced in scope and in holdings, had survived the worst of the collapse and emerged again as the sole force fighting against Northern domination in the South.

This re-emergence coincided with the dramatic change in regional and international relations. The end of the Cold War had brought about not only the collapse of Mengistu's Ethiopia but an international re-evaluation of politics in Africa. As noted earlier, the Organization of African Unity had to struggle with its role beyond the Cold War strictures that had shaped it. The ideological lens through which wars had been viewed crumbled away. Regional rivalries reignited as regimes were reshaped following the fall of the USSR. Finally, the remaining superpower, the United States, began to rethink its posture on the continent. All of these had significant effects upon the Sudanese case. Garang kept the SPLM/A ahead of the curve by insisting on a National Convention in 1994. This gathering was intended to bring a more representative and inclusive dynamic to the SPLM/A and to critique the previous eleven years of fairly autocratic leadership. While Garang and his allies emerged still at the head of the movement, its rhetoric had moved beyond that of the earlier Marxist revolutionary conceptions and now contained appeals to democracy and human rights. In addition,



new structures within the movement did allow for more participation on the part of the general populace of the South. Essentially, the 1994 National Convention allowed for the reshaping of the SPLM/A into a popular democratic organization that appealed to the international community. In particular, this transformation played a large role in shifting the perception of the United States with regard to the South's aspirations. No longer stridently Marxist, and standing in opposition to a fiercely Islamist regime that was harbouring international terrorists, the South now seemed to be not only an acceptable regional partner but one that embodied much of the American rhetoric about an oppressed people fighting against an oppressive and radical regime. American support would pay dividends in the diplomatic arena in the coming years.

In addition, the recent regional realignments began to pay dividends for the SPLM/A. Shortly after the expelling of Garang's front from Ethiopia, the movement sought refuge in Yoweri Museveni's Uganda. Because of regional affinities as well as the SPLM/A's continuing conflict with the horrific Lord's Resistance Army, Museveni had offered their families refuge across the Uganda border. Over the next few years this partnership deepened and soon Uganda was offering significant aid to the Southerners. Uganda was not alone for long in their support of the Southern fighters. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea were supporting the SPLM/A's efforts against the North. Eritrea had, along with Uganda, clandestinely met with Garang in the early 1990s and pledged support against the North. The new regime in Ethiopia took time to gain their footing following their overthrow of Mengistu's government, but it also offered support in the later 1990s.<sup>80</sup> For both Ethiopia and Eritrea this support was sparked by Bashir's regime supporting Islamic dissident groups within their nation, causing both to turn against the Sudan in favour of the insurgent Southerners. Thus, although 1991 had seen the collapse of the Derg's support for the SPLM, by the end of the decade the new political rivalries in the region had gained Garang back significant support from several regional powers. The influx of material support helped the SPLM/A regain the initiative while the expanded border regions for operations led to a broadening of the operational space for the South Sudanese. This in turn led to a reconnection with the dissident Northern groups such as the National Democratic Alliance and the Beja Conference.<sup>81</sup> These allied groups expanded the scope of the

struggle and put increasing pressure on the military capabilities of the Bashir government.

While 1991 had almost seen the destruction of the SPLM/A, by the end of the decade the insurgent group had undergone a complete change of fortune. Compared with the Anya-nya in 1972, the SPLM was in a far stronger position. While the Anya-nya had had a unified command structure and the support of Israel, Garang's SPLM had a unified command structure that was truly representative of the South Sudan. In addition it had multiple regional allies, several allied Sudanese dissident groups, international sympathy, and the initiative against a government that had rapidly turned itself into a pariah. However, while the conditions were set for a military victory, why would it necessarily be one that included secession? Beyond this, why would secession even be seen as a possibility now, when it had been anathema since the formation of the Organization of African Unity?

This simple answer is that the international regime that had rejected any and all secessionist causes throughout the 1960s was no longer in place. The blossoming of nationalism following the end of the Cold War was generally accepted in Africa as well. Beyond this, as noted earlier, the North had found itself isolated within the international community, with its Islamist government now regarded as an oppressive dictatorship, increasing scrutiny on its actions in Darfur, and fewer African states willing to support their actions. Thus, while it was unlikely that the SPLM/A would ever be able to overthrow the Sudanese regime, their demands for a separate regime and perhaps even complete secession would now be acceptable to the Sudanese government. This in turn would lessen the international pressure on Khartoum and allow them to pivot to their other current areas of concern in the North as well as finally fully develop their oil industry, which offered new economic possibilities for their country. With this in mind, as well as the continuation of the rivalry along other axes, Khartoum was willing to negotiate with the SPLM/A and create a delayed plebiscite with the potential of either a rejection of secession in the South or at least time to prepare for and perhaps undermine its new neighbour. Much as in the Eritrea situation, secession was conscionable now because the host state gave its permission and the international climate that had prohibited secession previously now was willing to accept it, at least in some particular

cases where popular opinion allowed significant leeway toward the seceding territory.

Under these circumstances, the secession process was essentially negotiated and begun in 2005. The combatants had been drawn to the negotiating table by the internal pressure that the SPLM/A and allied dissident groups could bring to bear against Khartoum and the external dynamics that had turned international sentiment against the Northern regime. The South had endured the long wars and managed to forge a resilient social structure that carried it through to the end of the Cold War and past the collapse of its regional allies. While they would wait six more years, the plebiscite would take place and the South would become its own state, joining Eritrea as the only successful secessionist fronts in African history. This was not an easy path, but South Sudan now stands as an independent and sovereign state of Africa. However, this period has not been a pacific one, despite the emergence of an independent South Sudan. The tensions already inherent in the secessionist political and military leadership did not disappear with the achievement of their goal. Since independence, the South Sudan has been wracked with a series of internal conflicts and outright civil wars, and no singular effective political order has emerged to lead the now-independent country into the future. Its travails up to the present will be covered in the Conclusion.

