

The History of Direct and Indirect Colonialism of Sudan between 1889-2019

The background history of colonialism of Sudan is important for us to understand, but also the history of governance in the region of Sudan itself. It has been argued that British Imperialization in the 19th century created the conditions that have encouraged Sudan to be divided and in conflict.

Until the early 19th century the region operated as a series of small sultanates including the Funj Sultanate and Darfur Sultanate. The nature of governance in the Ottoman era in non-urban areas was not one which attempted to control every aspect of life. However, Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt tried to bring the whole of Sudan under his control in his attempt to enhance his power so that he could eventually secede from the Ottomans. Sudan remained under the control of "Ottoman Egypt" until around 1882.

Britain thereafter occupied and colonised Egypt in 1882 and later colonised the Sudan in 1899. This was due in part to the fierce imperial competition Britain had with France over the 'scramble for Africa'. The Scramble for Africa was the invasion, conquest, and colonisation of most of Africa by seven Western European powers driven by the Second Industrial Revolution during the late 19th century and early 20th century in the era of "New Imperialism": Belgium, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The British were therefore intent on securing control of Egypt and the Nile because of it being one of the two trade routes to her colonies in India and South Africa.

Sudan's strategic importance is obvious from its geography. It is part of the Africa Transition Zone/Sahel (a term that can encompass Sudan but is more commonly used for the area to the west of the great continent including Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Guinea), but it is also part of Sub-Saharan Africa more generally. It is also one of the countries in the Nile Basin region - and forms part of the west coast of the strategically important Red Sea.

Thus, the strategic importance of the Sudan to Britain and the securing of strategic waterways for her economic interests was the primary reason that resulted in the military invasion of Sudan in 1898 with 24,000 Anglo-Egyptian forces. British Imperial Forces including the likes of Sir Winston Churchill battled against Sudan's Khalifa's army in the battle of Omdurman. This involved the capturing of the capital city of Khartoum under the Anglo-Egyptian leadership of Hebert Kitchner.

Anglo-Egyptian forces were able to fully establish their existence and influence within the colony of Sudan through the action of several treaties and administrative policies establishing the Anglo-Egyptian combined condominium power with the Sudan under the leadership of both the British Crown and the Egyptian Khedive. In theory, Egypt shared a governing role, but in practice the structure of the Condominium ensured full British control over the Sudan. The governors and inspectors were customarily British officers, though technically serving in the Egyptian Army, and key figures in the government and civil service always remained graduates of British universities and military schools. This ultimately became the mechanism by which Britain controlled Sudan until the formation of the sovereign, independent state of the Sudan on January 1, 1956.

Darfur on the other hand was invaded and occupied by the British in 1916, occupying the capital al-Fashir. The sultan of Darfur, Ali Dinar, was seen to be too pro-Ottoman during World War One. From that time until 'independence', Darfur remained annexed to Sudan. Britain let go of direct control in 1953, but conflict followed as ever it did where the British had formerly been occupiers.

The British controlled the region through a classic divide and rule approach, both ethnically and religiously. The more "Arabised" communities in the north were empowered over the more "African" communities of the west and south. British administrators divided the country into two distinct regions, North and South Sudan. Through a process called the 'Southern Policy', South Sudan was administered separately from the more economically developed North. Where animist religious beliefs were present in the south; Christian missionary activities were established.

Hence, modern day South Sudan which seceded from Sudan in 2011 is 60% Christian, 34% animist, and 6% Muslim.

These are the same tribal divisions that have been fault lines over the past two to three decades.

According to Graham Thomas in his 1990 work *Sudan: Struggle for Survival*, "The continuation of the North-Side divide was enhanced by the decision of Kitchener that the Southern Provinces should be permitted to be converted to Christianity, while the Northern Sudan remained Muslim." The Southern Policy coincided with the Closed District Ordinance of 1922 that restricted the movement of non-Southerners within Southern Sudan.

Following British aggression and colonisation from 1896 CE until 1956 CE, the decades to follow would see Sudan face indirect political and cultural colonialism, the spread of rotten capitalist values, and the struggle of old and new colonialism between Britain and America.

Sudan consequently as a country has been in a perpetual state of conflict and violence from independence in 1956 until today through the massive injections of weapons which have magnified ethnic and political divisions by America and Britain.

America in particular, has used the army to carry out many coups ever since the Nimeiri coup in 1969. Sudan was under America's influence with a strong political alliance with the United States from 1972. President Jafaar Nimieri visited the US five times on private visits and one official working visit between 1979-1985. He was only ever one of two Presidents of Sudan to visit the US.

In 1979, the U.S oil company Chevron discovered petroleum deposits in the Bentiu District of the Upper Nile. Nimeiri denied the south's ownership of the oil at the time.

Sudan's oil adventure started with the American oil company Chevron soon after the first civil war between the North and the South that ended with the Addis Ababa peace accord in 1972. During the Jaffar Nimeri (1969-1985) period as a US agent, he naturally welcomed stronger diplomatic relations with the US. In 1982, Sudan received more U.S aid than any other country in the sub-Saharan Africa – 160 million and 100 million in military aid. In the 1983 visit of Nimeiri to the US, Ronald Reagan emphasised the importance of Sudan under US influence where he said, "We applaud the Sudan's efforts to reinvigorate its private sector and reform governmental policies that hinder economic progress. Economic development is of utmost importance to the people of the Sudan and in this endeavour the United States is happy to lend a hand to a friend".

It is well known that the United States oversaw the implementation of the separation of Southern Sudan in 2011 under the Obama administration and the establishment of the Republic of South Sudan. This was after the US created a separatist movement called the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) in 1983, led by its agent, John Garang who worked to contain all the rebels and their movements into a single movement.

Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi who was the head of the National Umma Party was known for his allegiance to the British. He headed the Sudanese government between 1986 and 1989 and was removed by Al-Bashir's coup after that. In 2005, the Bashir regime and the SPLM/A signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Peace talks had started in the early 2000's under the auspice of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development under Kenyan leadership, supported by a 'Troika' of the U.S, U.K and Norway. The CPA established a one-state, two-system rule, in which the North imposed sharia law while the south remained secular, and it eventually led to South Sudan's independence in 2011. A year later, the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) was signed.

Thus, it was America who brought President Omar al-Bashir and his clique into power in 1989 until 2019, to concentrate U.S. influence in the country, and then to implement the idea of separating the South. Consequently, Sudan both north and south, became a total settlement of U.S. influence.

Nevertheless, Europe, particularly the British due to her influence in the former Sudan and her agents in the country, kept trying to intervene whenever possible, to regain her influence in Sudan, or at least try to share it with America, even if it was just a little. For example, when America established John Garang's SPLA/M movement in 1983, Britain tried to infiltrate her men into this movement. During that period, Riek Machar who was in Britain studying industrial

engineering and strategic planning at the University of Bradford returned to Sudan to join the SPLA/M. However, at the time there was conflict and fighting between him and the SPLA/M leader John Garang, forcing him to leave the movement in 1991.

John Garang accused Riek Machar of being a British agent together with Riek Machar's wife, Emma McCune who was English and had been working under the cover of a UNICEF-funded British/Canadian relief organization, Street Kids International. She was accused by John Garang to be working with British Intelligence until Garang named the War that took place between him and Machar the Emma war. She was killed in 1993 in a traffic accident in Nairobi. Machar then tried to find his way to secede away from Garang's movement and to form another of many named separatist movements, especially in 1997 when he began talks with Omar al-Bashir as an independent separatist, however, he failed to achieve this.

The Sudan's People's Liberation Army/Movement led by Garang continued to remain the most prominent and influential movement and as a result Machar, motivated by the British, tried to return to it. Due to the heavy influence of his "Nuer" tribe, America agreed to his return even though they knew of his reality being a British agent. America instructed Garang to consent to his return in order to control and contain him under his leadership because America knew of his weight due to the existence of the tribe behind him, the second largest tribe in the south. However, their differences in the movement continued and Garang choose not to appoint him as a second man in the movement, but instead, he appointed lower ranked Salva Kiir.

The current president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit is a true agent to America and any opposition to his leadership has been silenced. However, Riek Machar who was vice president of South Sudan from 2011-2013 continued to exist in what is called the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLMA) with the intention of containing them and putting them under its supervision, because if they remained in different movements, then these movements outside of its control would be a gateway for rival European countries, especially Britain, and subsequently this would be a source of hindrance for America's projects.

So many of Sudan's current problems can be seen as an absence of Islamic civilisation in the world and in the region. There is a direct correlation with human suffering. However, the future can be positive. It is not a false dream to think of Islam and the Khilafah (Caliphate) State as a solution. Rather it should be a real aspiration. Before the Messenger of Allah (saw) entered Al Madinah, the tribes of Yathrib - Banu Aws and Banu Khazraj - were at war for years. Other tribes in the region, like Banu Nadhir and Banu Qurayzah, used to play them off against each other to benefit themselves.

Yet the arrival of Allah's Messenger changed that. Islam was established as a system. The mercy spread from there. And Allah (swt) reminded us to hold to Islam - the Rope of Allah - and not to be divided. Because the division between them was like they were on the brink of a pit of fire, only saved by establishing the Guidance of Islam.

﴿وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ﴾

"And hold firmly together to the rope of Allah and do not be divided. Remember Allah's favour upon you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so you—by His grace—became brothers. And you were at the brink of a fiery pit and He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be 'rightly guided.'" [Aal-i Imran 3:103]

Sudan has suffered under capitalism, more than most. It has prospered in every sense under Islam – and certainly can do so again.

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