

The Balkanization of Sudan: The Redrawing of the Middle East and North Africa

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Sudan is a diverse nation and a country that represents the plurality of Africa through various tribes, clans, ethnicities, and religious groups. Yet the unity of Sudan is in question, while there is talk of unifying nations and of one day creating a United States of Africa through the African Union.

The limelight is on the January 2011 referendum in South Sudan. The Obama Administration has formally announced that it supports the separation of South Sudan from the rest of Sudan.

The balkanization of Sudan is what is really at stake. For years the leaders and officials of South Sudan have been supported by America and the European Union.

The Politically-Motivated Demonization of Sudan

A major demonization campaign has been underway against Sudan and its government. True, the Sudanese government in Khartoum has had a bad track record in regards to human rights and state corruption, and nothing could justify this.

In regards to Sudan, however, selective or targeted condemnation has been at work. One should, nonetheless, ask why the Sudanese leadership has been targeted by the U.S. and E.U., while the human rights records of several U.S. sponsored client states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the U.A.E., and Ethiopia are casually ignored.

Khartoum has been vilified as a autocratic oligarchy guilty of targeted genocide in both Darfour and South Sudan. This deliberate focus on the bloodshed and instability in Darfour and South Sudan is political and motivated by Khartoum's ties to Chinese oil interests.

Sudan supplies China with a substantial amount of oil. The geo-political rivalry between China and the U.S. for control of African and global energy supplies is the real reason for the chastisement of Sudan and the strong support shown by the U.S., the E.U., and Israeli officials for the secession of South Sudan.

It is in this context that Chinese interests have been attacked. This includes the October 2006 attack on the Greater Nile Petroleum Company in Defra, Kordofan by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) militia.

Distorting the Violence in Sudan

While there is a humanitarian crisis in Darfour and a surge in regional nationalism in South Sudan, the underlying causes of the conflict have been manipulated and distorted.

The underlying causes for the humanitarian crisis in Darfour and the regionalism in South Sudan are intimately related to economic and strategic interests. If anything, lawlessness and economic woes are the real issues, which have been fuelled by outside forces.

Either directly or through proxies in Africa, the U.S., the E.U., and Israel are the main architects behind the fighting and instability in both Darfour and South Sudan. These outside powers have assisted in the training, financing, and arming of the militias and forces opposed to the Sudanese government within Sudan. They lay the blame squarely on Khartoum's shoulders for any violence while they themselves fuel conflict in order to move in and control the energy resources of Sudan. The division of Sudan into several states is part of this objective. Support of the JEM, the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), and other militias opposed to the Sudanese government by the U.S., the E.U., and Israel has been geared towards achieving the objective of dividing Sudan.

It is also no coincidence that for years the U.S., Britain, France, and the entire E.U. under the pretext of humanitarianism have been pushing for the deployment of foreign troops in Sudan. They have actively pushed for the deployment of NATO troops in Sudan under the cover of a U.N. peacekeeping mandate.

This is a re-enactment of the same procedures used by the U.S. and E.U. in other regions where countries have either formally or informally been divided and their economies restructured by foreign-installed proxy governments under the presence of foreign troops. This is what happened in the former Yugoslavia (through the creation of several new republics) and in Anglo-American occupied Iraq (through soft balkanization via a calculated form of federalism aimed at establishing a weak and de-centralized state). Foreign troops and a foreign presence have provided the cloud for state dismantlement and the foreign takeover of state infrastructure, resources, and economies.

The Question of Identity in Sudan

While the Sudanese state has been portrayed as being oppressive towards the people in South Sudan, it should be noted that both the referendum and the power sharing structure of the Sudanese government portray something else. The power sharing agreement in Khartoum between Omar Al-Basher, the president of Sudan, includes the SPLM. The leader of the SPLM, Salva Kiir Mayardit, is the First Vice-President of Sudan and the President of South Sudan.

The issue of ethnicity has also been brought to the forefront of the regional or ethno-regional nationalism that has been cultivated in South Sudan. The cleavage in Sudan between so-called Arab Sudanese and so-called African Sudanese has been presented to the outside world as the major force for the regional nationalism motivating calls for statehood in South Sudan. Over the years this self-differentiation has been diffused and socialized into the collective psyche of the people of South Sudan.

Yet, the difference between so-called Arab Sudanese and so-called African Sudanese are not that great. The Arab identity of so-called Sudanese Arabs is based primarily on their use of

the Arabic language. Let us even assume that both Sudanese ethnic identities are totally separate. It is still widely known in Sudan that both groups are very mixed. The other difference between South Sudan and the rest of Sudan is that Islam predominates in the rest of Sudan and not in South Sudan. Both groups are still deeply tied to one another, except for a sense of self-identification, which they are well in their rights to have. Yet, it is these different identities that have been played upon by local leaders and outside powers.

Neglect of the local population of different regions by the elites of Sudan is what the root cause of anxiety or animosity between people in South Sudan and the Khartoum government are really based on and not differences between so-called Arab and so-called African Sudanese.

Regional favouritism has been at work in South Sudan.

The issue is also compounded by social class. The people of South Sudan believe that their economic status and standards of living will improve if they form a new republic. The government in Khartoum and non-Southerner Sudanese have been used as the scapegoats for the economic miseries of the people of South Sudan and their perceptions of relative poverty by the local leadership of South Sudan. In reality, the local officials of South Sudan will not improve the living standards of the people of South Sudan, but maintain a klepocratic status quo. [1]

The Long-Standing Project to Balkanize Sudan and its links to the Arab World

In reality, the balkanization project in Sudan has been going on since the end of British colonial rule in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Sudan and Egypt were one country during many different periods. Both Egypt and Sudan were also one country in practice until 1956.

Up until the independence of Sudan, there was a strong movement to keep Egypt and Sudan united as a single Arab state, which was struggling against British interests. London, however, fuelled Sudanese regionalism against Egypt in the same manner that regionalism has been at work in South Sudan against the rest of Sudan. The Egyptian government was depicted in the same way as present-day Khartoum. Egyptians were portrayed as exploiting the Sudanese just as how the non-Southern Sudanese have been portrayed as exploiting the South Sudanese.

After the British invasion of Egypt and Sudan, the British also managed to keep their troops stationed in Sudan. Even while working to divide Sudan from Egypt, the British worked to create internal differentiations between South Sudan and the rest of Sudan. This was done through the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, from 1899 to 1956, which forced Egypt to share Sudan with Britain after the Mahdist Revolts. Eventually the Egyptian government would come to refuse to recognize the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium as legal. Cairo would continuously ask the British to end their illegal military occupation of Sudan and to stop preventing the re-integration of Egypt and Sudan, but the British would refuse.

It would be under the presence of British troops that Sudan would declare itself independent. This is what led to the emergence of Sudan as a separate Arab and African state from Egypt. Thus, the balkanization process started with the division of Sudan from Egypt.

The Yinon Plan at work in Sudan and the Middle East

The balkanization of Sudan is also tied to the Yinon Plan, which is a continuation of British stratagem. The strategic objective of the Yinon Plan is to ensure Israeli superiority through the balkanization of the Middle Eastern and Arab states into smaller and weaker states. It is in this context that Israel has been deeply involved in Sudan.

Israeli strategists viewed Iraq as their biggest strategic challenge from an Arab state. This is why Iraq was outlined as the centre piece to the balkanization of the Middle East and the Arab World. *The Atlantic* in this context published an article in 2008 by Jeffrey Goldberg called "After Iraq: What Will the Middle East Look Like?" [2] In the Goldberg article a map of the Middle East was presented that closely followed the outline of the Yinon Plan and the map of a future Middle East presented by Lieutenant-Colonel (retired) Ralph Peters in the U.S military's *Armed Forces Journal* in 2006.

It is also no coincidence that aside from a divided Iraq a divided Sudan was shown on the map. Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Somalia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan were also presented as divided nations too. Of importance to East Africa in the map, illustrated by Holly Lindem for Goldberg's article, Eritrea is occupied by Ethiopia, which is a U.S. and Israeli ally, and Somalia is divided into Somaliland, Puntland, and a smaller Somalia.

In Iraq, on the basis of the concepts of the Yinon Plan, Israeli strategists have called for the division of Iraq into a Kurdish state and two Arab states, one for Shiite Muslims and the other for Sunni Muslims. This has been achieved through the soft balkanization of federalism in Iraq, which has allowed the Kurdistan Regional Government to negotiate with foreign oil corporations on its own. The first step towards establishing this was a war between Iraq and Iran, which is discussed in the Yinon Plan.

In Lebanon, Israel has been working to exasperate sectarian tensions between the various Christian and Muslim factions as well as the Druze. The division of Lebanon into several states is also seen as a means of balkanizing Syria into several smaller sectarian Arab states. The objectives of the Yinon Plan is to divide Lebanon and Syria into several states on the basis of religious and sectarian identities for Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, Christians, and the Druze.

In this regard, the Hariri Assassination and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) have been playing out to the favour of Israel in creating internal divisions within Lebanon and fuelling politically-motivated sectarianism. This is why Tel Aviv has been very vocal about the STL and very supportive of it. In a clear sign of the politized nature of the STL and its ties to geo-politics, the U.S. and Britain have also given the STL millions of dollars.

The Links between the Attacks on the Egyptian Copts and the South Sudan Referendum

From Iraq to Egypt, Christians in the Middle East have been under attack, while tensions between Shiite Muslims and Sunni Muslims are being fuelled. The attack on a Coptic Church in Alexandria on January 1, 2011 or the subsequent Coptic protests and riots should not be looked at in isolation. [3] Nor should the subsequent fury of Coptic Christians expressed towards Muslims and the Egyptian government. These attacks on Christians are tied to the broader geo-political goals of the U.S., Britain, Israel, and NATO in the Middle East and Arab World.

The Yinon Plan stipulates that if Egypt were divided that Sudan and Libya would also be

balkanized and weakened. In this context, there is a link between Sudan and Egypt. According to the Yinon Plan, the Copts or Christians of Egypt, which are a large minority in Egypt, are the key to the balkanization of the Arab states in North Africa. Thus, the Yinon Plan states that the creation of a Coptic state in Upper Egypt (South Egypt) and Christian-Muslim tensions within Egyptian are vital steps to balkanizing Sudan and North Africa.

The attacks on Christians in the Middle East are part of intelligence operations intended to divide the Middle East and North Africa. The timing of the mounting attacks on Coptic Christians in Egypt and the build-up to the referendum in South Sudan are no coincidence. The events in Sudan and Egypt are linked to one another and are part of the project to balkanize the Arab World and the Middle East. They must also be studied in conjunction with the Yinon Plan and with the events in Lebanon and Iraq, as well as in relation to the efforts to create a Shiite-Sunni divide.

The Outside Connections of the SPLM, SSLA, and Militias in Darfour

As in the case of Sudan, outside interference or intervention has been used to justify the oppression of domestic opposition. Despite its corruption, Khartoum has been under siege for refusing to merely be a proxy.

Sudan is justified in suspecting foreign troops and accusing the U.S., Britain, and Israel of eroding the national solidarity of Sudan. For example, Israel has sent arms to the opposition groups and separatist movements in Sudan. This was done through Ethiopia for years until Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia, which made Ethiopia lose its Red Sea coast, and bad relations developed between the Ethiopians and Eritreans. Afterwards Israeli weapons entered South Sudan from Kenya. From South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which is the political arm of the SSLA, would transfer weapons to the militias in Darfur. The governments of Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as the the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), have also been working closely with the U.S., Britain, and Israel in East Africa.

The extent of Israeli influence with Sudanese opposition and separatist groups is significant. The SPLM has strong ties with Israel and its members and supporters regularly visit Israel. It is due to this that Khartoum capitulated and removed the Sudanese passport restriction on visiting Israel in late-2009 to satisfy the SPLM. [4] Salva Kiir Mayardit has also said that South Sudan will recognize Israel when it separates from Sudan.

The Sudan Tribune reported on March 5, 2008 that separatist groups in Darfur and Southern Sudan had offices in Israel:

[Sudan People's Liberation Movement] supporters in Israel announced establishment of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement office in Israel, a press release said today.

"After consultation with the leadership of SPLM in Juba, the supporters of SPLM in Israel have decided to establish the office of SPLM in Israel." Said [sic.] a statement received by email from Tel Aviv signed by the SLMP secretariat in Israel.

The statement said that SPLM office would promote the policies and the vision of the SPLM in the region. It further added that in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement the SPLM has the right to open in any country including Israel. It also indicated that there are around 400 SPLM

supporters in Israel. Darfur rebel leader Abdel Wahid al-Nur said last week he opened an office in Tel Aviv. [5]

The Hijacking of the 2011 Referendum in South Sudan

What happened to the dreams of a united Africa or a united Arab World? Pan-Arabism, a movement to unit all Arabic-speaking peoples, has taken heavy losses as has African unity. The Arab World and Africa have consistently been balkanized.

Secession and balkanization in East Africa and the Arab World are on the U.S., Israeli, and NATO drawing board.

The SSLA insurgency has been covertly supported by the U.S., Britain, and Israel since the 1980s. The formation of a new state in the Sudan is not intended to serve the interests of the people of South Sudan. It has been part of a broader geo-strategic agenda aimed at controlling North Africa and the Middle East.

The resulting process of “democratization” leading up to the January 2011 referendum serves the interests of the Anglo-American oil companies and the rivalry against China. This comes at the cost of the detriment of true national sovereignty in South Sudan.

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NOTES

[1] A kleptocracy is a government or/and state that works to protect, extend, deepen, continue, and entrench the wealth of the ruling class.

[2] Jeffrey Goldberg, “After Iraq: What Will The Middle East Look Like?” *The Atlantic*, January/February 2008.

[3] William Maclean, “Copts on global Christmas alert after Egypt bombing”, *Reuters*, January 5, 2011.

[4] “Sudan removes Israel travel ban from new passport”, *Sudan Tribune*, October 3, 2009: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=32776>.

[5] “Sudan’s SPLM reportedly opens an office in Israel – statement”, *Sudan Tribune*, March 5, 2008: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?page=imprimable&id_article=26251>.

ANNEX: THE ATLANTIC MAP OF THE “NEW MIDDLE EAST”



Note: The following map was drawn by Holly Lindem for an article by Jeffery Goldberg. It was published in *The Atlantic* in January/February 2008. (Map Copyright: *The Atlantic*, 2008).

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An award-winning author and geopolitical analyst, Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is the author of *The Globalization of NATO* (Clarity Press) and a forthcoming book *The War on Libya and the Re-Colonization of Africa*. He has also contributed to several other books ranging from cultural critique to international relations. He is a Sociologist and Research Associate at the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), a contributor at the Strategic Culture Foundation (SCF), Moscow, and a member of the Scientific Committee of Geopolitica, Italy.

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