THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND STATE-BUILDING THAT DIVIDED THE SUDAN INTO TWO STATES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract- This paper explores the politics of language, identity construction and state-building that the pre- and post-colonial regimes adopted in the Sudan to address the debated problems of language, identify and state-building. The paper examines to what extent such policies (since the Turco-Egyptian rule in 1820 until the separation of South Sudan in 2011) were responsible for perpetuating the north-conflict, and ultimately for the separation of South Sudan from the Sudan. To do so, historical processes adopted by the pre- and post-colonial regimes to make Arabic or English the national languages at different intervals, and the policies of constructing an Arab identity and state-building adopted by the latter regimes are reviewed. The findings show that under both regimes two distinct policies had a knock-off effect on the separation of South Sudan from the Sudan: whereas the latter regimes kept the Southerners isolated for colonial divide-and-rule ideologies, the latter regimes adopted, firstly, coercive Arabicisation policies to exterminate the native languages in South Sudan as well as to Arabise the originally African South Sudanese. Secondly, the post-colonial regimes embraced make-or-break policies with the aim of excluding the South Sudanese form playing a genuine role in mutually building the state whereby they could maintain their identity and equally be a part of decision-making. Consequently, the South Sudanese resisted the policies and opted for separation from the Sudan not because the separation was for them an end in itself, but because they felt that the North Sudanese power wielding elites were deliberately pushing them to separate.

Key words- Language Policy, Identity Construction, State-Building, Separation, South Sudan And The Sudan.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1956, the Sudan celebrated independence from the British rule, but it did not survive the post-independence syndrome that plagued many African countries for centuries. It inherited from the British political and social crises that were perpetuated in forms of, to name some, ethnic conflicts, political disagreements and identity problems. However, colonialism cannot solely be blamed for the perpetuation of these problems. Under the successive postcolonial regimes, the north-south conflict which had started in 1955, a year before the Sudan gained its independence, continued to devastate it at different intervals and magnitudes. By the very virtue that the elites who took up the reins of power after the independence were predominantly Muslim Arabs in the north, state-building politics was based on the Islamic ideology that they essentialsed to Arabise the Sudan. To make that happen, coercive language policies, notably Arabicisaion, were imposed to exterminate the Sudanese native languages.

For the South Sudanese, identity construction and state-building ideology which the Arab-dominated elites employed to Arabise the Sudan was far from their expectations. They perceived of that as an internal colonialism (Jernudd, 2015) against which they fought in the fifty-year long conflict. Except from 1972 to 1983, during which the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972 kept the South Sudan locked in stalemate, never were the north and South Sudanese at ease with each other. Disagreement over power and wealth distribution modalities and over identity issues persisted to kindle the conflict until the government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA/M) concluded the Comprehension Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. The CPA paved the way for the separation of South Sudan in July 2011, making it the youngest independent state in the world.

The fact that the Sudan is a multiethnic state and its failure to resolve problems rising from this multiethnicity exacerbated the north-south conflict under all the post-colonial regimes. By the very virtue that the post-colonial elites who ruled the country were driven by Arab-Islam ideologies, the north-south conflict was legitimised on the bases of the same grounds. In particular, the religious dimension of the conflict was sharpened under the present regime which topped the power in 1989 by a coup d'état. It was under the jihad against the pagan or Christian southerners that the regime legitimised the twenty-two-year long war (1983-2005) to found its *Al-mashru Al-hadhari* (civilization project). The 'project' excluded the South Sudanese from power centres; and it lacked the national consensus on the state-building and good governance issues. Never was there in the post-colonial history a consensus between south and north Sudanese on issues of what the identity of Sudan is and how the country should be ruled (Deng, 1995).

As Deng (2007: 1) argues, "the conflicts in the Sudan indicate a nation in painful search of itself, striving to be free from historical discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, and culture". This paper analyses the threads of this rhetoric which was believed to be

crafted to the detriment of creating a national cohesion and consensual state-building. The paper further looks into how exclusivist policies led by the northern elites had a knock-off effect on the separation of South Sudan on 9 July 2011. Given this picture, the paper will seek answers to these questions: To what extent were language policies responsible for, in regard to the identity problem, producing divisive positions between the south and north Sudan? Have the postcolonial regimes ever been successful in building a nation/state having a consensual identity?

II. THE SUDAN IN CONFLICTS

Before the separation of South Sudan, the Sudan was territorially the largest African country and one of the ethnically richest. It was home for about 570 ethnic groups and between 100 to 142 languages (Jernudd, 1979; Abu-Manga and Abubaker, 2006). At present there is no accurate statistics on the number of ethnic groups or languages in each Sudan, but South Sudan must have gone with almost a half of the languages spoken in the Sudan before the separation. For the convenience of this paper, I crudely dichotomise the ethnic groups in the Sudan and South Sudan into two groups according to: languages they speak, their ethnic origins, religious beliefs and physical outlook. South Sudan populations speak diverse native languages, purely of African origins, Christian or pagan and are quintessential native Africans; whereas the populations in north Sudan are predominantly Arabophones, Muslims, of Arab origins or Arabised groups with an archetype hybridised complexion.

`Since 1955, the year Anyanya Movement in South Sudan declared war against Khartoum, the Sudan was embroiled in the south-north wars until May 2005. In 1963, the Anyanya Movement together with other political movements formed the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement. With it, a collective antipathy towards north Sudan was actualized and the conflict took a politicized juncture. For the southerners, it was a chequered conflict waged against the centre in search for political participation. In 1972, the Addis Ababa Act was signed between the South Sudan political oppositions and the government of the Sudan and, accordingly, the southerners were given regional autonomy. However, the two Sudans were again dragged into another conflict in 1983 when Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army was founded under the leadership of John Garang. As Harir (1993) notes, the Southerners opted to fight due to their dissatisfaction with the domination of north elite-led Islamic ideologies on decision-making and political hegemony. Until the CPA was signed in 2005 between the government of the Sudan and SPLM/A, South Sudan experienced devastation.

The post-CPA political environment was charged with high unity-evoking expectations which were foreshadowed by idioms of the "New Sudan" the CPA signatories prophesied. The "New Sudan" initiative promised to liberate "the whole country and [create] a New Sudan, in which there would be no discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, culture or gender" (Deng, 2007: 3). However, no sooner did John Garang, the charismatic southern leader, die than the simmering political discontent among the new southern leadership turned into secessionist tendencies. Consequently, aspirations for the unified "New Sudan" were immediately doomed to death, bringing the Sudan again on the edge of a new war. Afterwards, the issue of unity between the south and north Sudan hinged on the referendum which was scheduled to take place on January 2011—five years after the conclusion of CPA—during which a make-or-break situation was created by the north and south leadership alike. Ostensibly, however, the Sudanese government hailed the CPA and officially propagated for it under the theme 'Attractive Unity' which was innovated to build peace through the CPA. But the unity project was challenged by, on the one hand, undeclared but secessionist positions of the government in the north and, on the other hand, the long-hoped aspirations for independence among the new SPLM/A leadership.

III. THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE POLICIES

This section looks into the development of language policies in the Sudan throughout its contemporary history. The narrative is relevant because language can be responsible, though not per se, for the making or unmaking of group or national identities. Language, Johnson (2011: 268) argues, is "one aspect among many socio-political processes that may perpetuate social inequality" in the Sudan. At this point it is crucial to define what language policy is. Johnson (2011: 268) defines it as:

activities that influence the structure, function, use, or acquisition of language; [whether they] are intentional and unintentional, overt and covert, de jure and de facto; and are engaged in by agents across multiple levels of language policy creation, interpretation, and appropriation, from the macro-levels of national planning and policy to the micro-level of language use.

Such a process, if rationally managed, will lead to shifting from minority languages to the dominant group language (Safran, 1992).

The penetration of Arabic into South Sudan dates back to the early nineteenth century when the northern Sudanese merchants, known in South Sudan as *mondokoro*, established trading routes to South Sudan. Under the Turco-Egyptian regime (1820-1885), the number of Arabs who were engaged in slave trade in South Sudan increased. That practice soured relations between the native southerners and

the Arabs in the north. As a result, opportunities for voluntarily and conducive assimilation between the two regions were not made available, and the spread of Arabic in South Sudan was delayed (Gray, 1961; Nyombe, 1997). It was around that time, and subsequently by interaction with military staff serving in the south, that Juba Arabic—a pidgin Arabic spoken in South Sudan—was developed (Mahmud, 1983; Jernudd, 2015).

During the colonial eras, language policies were alternately made by the British and the Turko-Egyptian regimes, whereby South Sudan was the focus of these policies. Apparently, and due to political motives, the colonial regimes legally proscribed Arabic and made English the official language. But more significantly, that policy was forged to proscribe Arabic for purely hegemonic and religious interests (Mahmud, 1983; Nyombe, 1997; Mugaddam, 2002; Kevlihan, 2007). Tangible evidence supports this argument. The British adopted many measures, notably, initiation of the Rejaf Language Conference (RLC) of 1927 and creation of the Closed District Ordinance of 1929, all of which were adopted with the aim of impeding the advancement of Arabic by physically isolating the South Sudanese from their compatriots in the north. In 1947 the Juba Conference was convened, featuring the first political benchmark of its kind in the history of South Sudan that recognised Arabic as a lingua franca in the entire south. Following that conference, Arabic gained, Abu-Manga and Abubaker (2006) maintain, an elevated status compared to that it had in the 1930s. Recommendations of the Juba Conference were implemented by launching illiteracy campaigns which were not only intended for propagating the use of Arabic in public domains, but also for spreading its use in official domains in South Sudan.

However, the most radical and far-reaching language policies were embraced during the post-independence regimes. Under these regimes language policies were more of a factor in Arab-Islam ideologies than mere language planning measures at their own. On the wake of the independence, the nationalist regimes introduced Arabisation as a top-down process by perfecting Sudanisation, which in its narrow sense also meant giving jobs to the nationals only, to challenge the vitality of local southern cultures and languages in the long run (Nyombe, 1997; Sharkey, 2012). In 1963, the Sudanese Ministry of Information and Labour issued a circular stating that native languages in South Sudan were limited and would add no cultural value to the country (Ibrahim, 2001). To empower the value-laden language, i.e. Arabic, antipathy against English also continued to grow until it was climaxed in 1964 when all the English-medium missionary schools were expelled from South Sudan. The policy of proscribing English, Nyombe (1997: 111) argues, "may have been more political than religious but were probably both". It was not until 1969 that the ex-president Jaffer Numeiry issued a presidential decree whereby Arabic was declared the medium of instruction in South Sudan. However, some vernaculars were allowed to be scripted in Arabic alphabet and used in teaching, besides English, in the first two years in remote primary schools.

In 1989, Arabicisation of tertiary education was imposed by the present government under Omer Al-Bashir. Ever since, Arabic has been the state-sanctioned language. The most ever matter-of-fact language policy, purportedly a necessity, but linguistic right-wise a setback, was the establishment of the National Assembly for Language Planning (NALP) in 1997. It was officially commissioned to strategise for language planning, promoting the spread of Arabic as the language of wider communication, and empowering it to negotiate the economic, social, intellectual and political development of the country.

The patchy north-south language policies were phased out in 2005 upon the conclusion of the CPA between the government of the Sudan and SPLM/A. The significance of the CPA emanates from the fact that right to reserving native languages of the South Sudan was enshrined in it and, unlike the former policies, were politically manifested (Miller, 2006). Consequently, native languages and cultural heritages of South Sudan were incorporated into the Interim Constitution of South Sudan of 2005 (ICSS). The ICSS gave great emphasis on the issues of language and identity in the Sudan. Chapter 1, article 6 in the ICSS stipulates that all the indigenous languages in South Sudan are national languages and should be respected and promoted, and that Arabic and English should have equal statuses at all official circles.

The above chronological account on language policy features the extent to which the language issue was problematic in the politics of multiethnicity and identity in the Sudan. This crisis looks similar to the Hindi-Urdu language problem that divided India and Pakistan into two states, the problem which, as Aneesh (2010: 93) notes:

> … chiefly relates with three problems: first, a language was required to take birth in order to fulfill growing nationalist aspirations; second, this future language was to carry out an impossible task of binding an emerging nation together, of taming the cultural profusion of more than 100 languages and a whole spectrum of religious practices; and third, the above tasks were to be performed without coercing the already existing linguistic subnationalisms informed in turn by the cognitive frame of total closure.

Aneesh (*ibid*: 106), accordingly, attributes "… the separation between Hinduism and Islam as the

primary cause for the formation of India and Pakistan as two nations." Such language policy and state-building was dilemmas were also experienced in the Sudan.

Even though the South Sudanese speak different languages, which is also true in other peripheries, the government introduced Arabicisation to the detriment of native languages in the country (Sharkey, 2012). These policies were imposed, as Jernudd (2015:125-126) states, by the Arab elites in Khartoum through means of "… actively imposing, top-down, and matter-of-factly using in discourse, Arabic, and reject communication in other languages, possibly disdaining local varieties thereof". The approaches that Khartoum set to consolidate unity between the south and north through spreading Arabic in South Sudan and for achieving national cohesion were not palatable for the southerners. "Ultimately, what northern politicians regarded as national unification looked like cultural colonialism to the Southerners, who had no input into policy-makers". (Sharkey, 2012: 436).

IV. LANGUAGE POLICIES ON NATIONAL IDENTITY

Language plays an instrumental role in building a state. Similarly, language and ethnicity are interdisciplinary lines and they reciprocally operate in the processes of group identity construction and nation-building because "…language expresses identity, for identity is language," (Rothman and Rell, 2005: 11). In today's nation-states language factors in the processes of facilitating political and social convergence or divergence within groups and in countries. For this reason, when addressing language policy, for example standardisation of the dominant group language, the whole policy may turn out to a political idiom that linguistic minorities would see it as a policy to disenfranchise them from their linguistic rights and, by extension, denial of their ethnic identities. From state-building point of view, handing language issues in a multilingual state requires practicing a discrete policy. In the Sudan, language policy precipitated a politicised identity problem. Language, Safran (1992: 397) contends, can trigger political consciousness among ethnic communities and can, equally, be "…manipulated, elevated, and transformed in the interest of the state". Theoretically, the policy of standardising one-language—Arabic in the case of the Sudan—to create a unified state looks an outright utopian concept, but practically, the policy does not lack sophistication.

Theories on language planning postulate that for a government to build into its ideological, political and cultural systems, it has to assign one national language (Hobsbawn, 1992; Safran, 1992; Kevliahn, 2007; May, 2008). When this happens, ethnolinguistic groups may have to dovetail their aspirations with the state-sanctioned language and its byproducts. This has been the ultimate goal in the Sudan. Language planning has never been ideology-neutral, as Arabic was empowered at the expense of other native languages. For example, Hurreiz (1978: 36), the prominent Sudanese linguist argues that Arabic should be adopted as a national language because:

> …language imposition is not only a natural process and inevitable which most bilingual nations have passed through, but it is even sometimes necessary…. Thus, language [Arabic] imposition is justifiable, and though it unites people at the expense of further alienation, it is still a necessity.

Through history, Arabic has been the only lingua franca in the Sudan and been empowered to negotiate the social, linguistic and cultural transformations through Arabicisation. In its ideological framework, Arabicisation was a tool for spreading the Arab identity and culture in the Sudan through coercive language policies that risked the death of native languages and shift to Arabic (Tongun, 1998: 79; Abu-Manga and Abubaker, 2006; Sharkey, 2007; Sharkey, 2012; Abdelhay *et al.*, 2011, Garri and Mugaddam, 2015). The policy was one of the grounds on which the conflict between the two Sudans was reasoned. Deng (2007: 4) argues that Arabicisation which the government adopted as a vehicle for constructing a national identity was a two-pronged problem:

> Sudan's crisis of national identity is reflected in two major distortions that require correction of the system of governance. One is the racial and cultural self-perception of the dominant ethnic groups as Arabs, despite the obvious indicators of racial admixture. The other is the imposition of Arab-Islamic identity as the framework for national identity, which is inherently stratifying and discriminatory.

Though linguistic Arabicisation, i.e. shift to using Arabic as a medium of teaching and communication, was successful, it sharpened anti-Arabist identities which did not only challenge the very foundations of national cohesion, but triggered civil conflicts as well (Sharkey, 2012, Jernudd, 2015).

The problem of identity in the Sudan, however, goes beyond language planning or Arabicisation policies to issues of marginalisation and historical periphery-centre disagreements over the national identity and power sharing. Al-Afif (2007) argues that what makes the question of identity remained mooted in the conflict literature is the emergence of marginalisation theory among the South Sudanese elites on the wake of Addis Ababa Act collapse in 1983. The second north-south conflict which started the very same year was perceived of by the

southerners not only as a conflict over just power devolution, but also as a conflict over identity and religious ideologies. Historically, South Sudan remained geographically isolated from the north. Cultural and political thinking of constructing a unified national identity was absent; and if it was there, rather unauthentic. As İnaç and Ünal (2013) maintain, identity making must happen, first, through interactive continuity of ethnic elements within their historical contexts in which identity is being constructed; and, second, through adopting the holistic transformations in the identity units which would take place in the course of time. Elements of such a shared identity construction were missing in the Sudan.

V. POLITICS OF STATE-BUILDING

Looking into the development of language policy in the Sudan essentialises looking again into how state-building processes would take place in a multilingual, multiethnic and religiously diverse state like the Sudan. Through the history of the Sudan, there has been no holistic approach in theoreising on the interconnectivity between language, identity and culture on the one hand, and their dynamics on state-building, on the other hand. The crux of this dilemma crops up in the inherent inability of the northern elites to mobilising ethnic composites to mould a national identity, "…which in turn rendered the project of nation-building extremely precarious. The post-colonial agents of nation-building in Sudan must therefore grapple with this reality" (Bereketeab (2014:307). As such, I would be tempted not to bypass looking into the concepts of state-building in the Sudan for brevity purposes. Needless to say here that these two concepts are distinct: "several rivalling nationalisms may exist within one nation-state; usually, one of them is dominant and may refer to the others as 'ethnic', 'secessionist', 'regionalist' or even 'tribal' ideologies [inverted commas original]" (1992: 315).

Literature on ethnicity, identity and state-building are fraught with diverse definitions stemming from differences in the fields of their investigation. To take some, ethnicity is seen as resting on the concept of inherent primordialism, though now becoming under attack; instrumentalism which holds that ethnicity is both an inherent human capacity and a valuable trait; constructivism which premises that ethnicity is a globalised construction; and institutionalism which holds that ethnicity is shaped by prevailing societal and governmental institutions to achieve political purposes (Anderson, 1991; Eriksen, 1992; Varshney, 2007; Brubaker, 2009, Bereketeab, 2014). Ethnic units from which a state and/or nation are built would undergo multi-phased makings until the nation is born. When an ethnic entity springs from the primoridialist thinking that values ethnic or religious diversification, state-building then becomes under direct threat of disintegration (Smith, 1987; Hutchinson, 2000). While primoridialism in this sense is believed to be a factor in pulling apart the architecture of a nation, modernism, on the other hand, premises that ethnic constructions are shaped by civic identity, which itself based on secular, territorial, and political norms which would mainstream ethnic groups into different forms of nationalism. These forms are manifested in social organisations, political bodies or cultural specificities and all together make possible the construction of a unified nation with a common identity (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1992; Bereketeab, 2014).

Examples of state-building in the majority of the colonised African countries show that the constituents of a state are primarily architected on bases of political boundaries rather than on ethnic homogeneities. This is true in the countries where the making of nationalism differs from the norm. Theories on nationalism postulate that national consolidation is hinged on the modalities of social homogenisation or differentiation that takes place within a region or a state. Kevlihan (2007) maintains that the stronger the social homogeneity in a nation, the most salient the precursors of its integration and vice versa. To abandon the ethnic-based structures and mainstream into a state, it requires that, Varshney (*ibid.*) maintains, ethnic groups must internalise the ownership of a territory in the state under which they could demand from the government for taking an affirmative action to gain their rights. However, Varshney argues, in authoritarian regimes ethnic conflict may erupt when measures the state take to address ethnic groups' demands could no longer be tolerated by the ethnic minorities. Such state politics may create hotspots within ethnic groups or against the government and may spill over the state. The north-south conflict in the Sudan is an example of such hotspots which rendered nationhood a putative one.

Power wielding elites in north Sudan identify themselves with an Arab blood lineage, and so did many ethnic groups in other regions of the Sudan, that is traced to remote ancestries in the Arabian Peninsula. Identification with the Arab lineage was further essentialised by the elite through Islam as an immutable factor in the construction of an Arab identity. This ideology rendered identity making in the Sudan a primordialistic process. This perception, however risks a persistent oversimplification of the identity problem in the Sudan. The birth of nationalism in the Sudan as such looks like the emergence of nationalisms in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century during which, Anderson (1991: 109) notes, official nationalisms emerged. These nationalisms, Anderson further argues, were

constructed out of bottom-up linguistic-nationalisms and were "…responses by power-groups—primarily, but not exclusively, dynastic and aristocratic—threatened with exclusion from marginalization in popular imagined communities…".

The Sudan is corroded by state-building deficiencies which are manifested by the rise of political oppositions and armed movements. In the this context, Kevlihan (2007) points out that discontent of the South Sudan elites over the makings of nationalism before for separation was galvanized by the unilateral sate-building policies placed by Khartoum on South Sudan. They were top-down and exclusivist policies, resulting in genocidal wars in South Sudan and Darfur (Deng, 1995; Nyombe, 1997; Deng, 2007; Ahmed, 2003; Jernudd, 2015). Conflict zones in the Sudan are home for ethnic groups characterised by ethnolinguistic vitality, and thus eruption of conflicts in these zones might reflect the persistent identity and language problems in these zones. Combined with the internal exploitive colonisation, Jernudd (2015: 127) argues, "identities from elsewhere in the country [the peripheries in the Sudan] have been sharpened, and positions have been formulated in response".

As Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015) notes, sub-Saharan Africa suffered from inherent identity problems arising from multiethnicity, multilingual and cultural diversity, and because the political components of these countries are established on ethnic bases as well. Saha (2010: 235), on the contrary, contends that ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa "…should be viewed as a civic identity, not a primordial ancient vice." I would argue that the Sudan could best be labeled right under the former description. Accordingly, I would further argue that the South Sudan did not separate voluntarily; rather, they were embroiled in a make-or-break situation that they had either to succumb to it, or to secede. Battery of evidence supports my assumption.

In terms of respect for minority linguistic rights, never were the native languages in South Sudan recognised by the state. To the contrary, they were labelled by the Ministry of Education since 1963 as inferior, despised and had no cultural value to the country (Ibrahim, 2001). No evidence is clearer than the lack of meaningful documentation of South Sudan oral folklore as it was the case with much local folklore in north Sudan. The exodus of the southerners to the capital Khartoum in early 1990s marked the worst experiences for them. It was for the first time they realised that their limited proficiency in Arabic was a barrier to getting them recruited or socially integrated. It was against such linguistic and cultural grievances that Garang "extolled the idea of a 'New Sudan' that would not only tolerate but also respect and celebrate the country's linguistic and cultural diversity" Sharkey (2012: 441). Many examples indicate that top-down acculturation processes were problematic to today's nation-states. May (2008) argues that language proscription acts were unsuccessful in, for example, Zealand to make English the medium of instruction instead of Maōri, coercion of native Australian Aboriginal languages, prohibition of the Catalan and Basque languages in formal domains in Spain, and the proscription of Tibetan language. The resistance of the South Sudanese to the proscription of their languages seems be the norm.

As internally displaced persons (IDPs), the southerners were accommodated at isolated make-shift suburbs of Khartoum and elsewhere. They remained powerless and subjugated and had no choice except taking menial jobs which rendered them subservient, economically disadvantaged, and educationally lagging. The environment was not conducive to assimilation. Once such a situation is created, May (2008) argues, involuntary minorities who resist assimilation will often experience exploitation and subjugation in a nation-state.

By the virtue that the South Sudanese are black Africans also added to their dilemma another source of stigma. In the Sudan, color matters much and it increases the social and cultural stratification on Arab/non-Arab basis (Garri and Mugaddam, 2015). Being a black person in the Sudan means, Al-Afif (2007) maintains, being *abd*, i.e. a slave. Color-based racism distanced the South Sudanese from the north in almost all everyday life opportunities for interaction and integration. For example, except in some regions in south Kordofan State where south-north integration was maintained by means of intermarriage, it was a taboo for a South Sudanese to think of getting married to an Arab woman from north Sudan.

Again, social stratification was consolidated by means of exclusion and alienation from Africanism. The Arab identity the north power wielding elites wanted the southerners to adopt was unrealistic. Identity construction is a mutual process that should voluntarily be negotiated between the new identification seekers (the southerners) and original identity holders (the northerners). The politics of Arabicisation in the Sudan tended to de-Africanise the southerners forcibly. Moreover, Arabism was introduced in a disguised superiority over Africanism (Harir, 1993). While south-north differences were not experienced so blatantly by many southerners when they in the south due to the geographical distance, their presence in the north as IDPs exposed them to overt discrimination. While they were displaced to north Sudan, the southerners were exposed to sharp social and ethnic stratification processes. At their make-shifts, they realized the contrast between how

power classified the northerners as privileged while they were being deprived of basic needs and living in dignity. As Harir (1993) argues, the historical cleavages between *awlad al balad* versus *Nuba or Jangei* (i.e. worthy sons of Arabs versus Nuba and Southerners) never allowed integration of Arabs and non-Arabs into an equally worthy status of citizenship. This insurmountable cleavage remained the stumbling block for such integration.

The hope for establishing a state where all the Sudanese could enjoy equal citizenship became an ignominious setback for the South Sudanese who participated in the Juba conference of 1947. The conference was a historical moment for the South Sudanese who opted to remain united with north Sudan. Another setback in state-building was the modalities of political participation. According to the north Muslims' Islamic ideology, a non-Muslim shall not be entitled to run for presidency. Since it was easy for the government to win the absolute majority in any elections, the Southerners would never be able to ascend to any high political positions at the national levels. Thus, they were left at the mercy of hand-picked appointments for very limited constitutional portfolios or for marginal ministries.

Ironically, South Sudan was "deemed to be too poor to be viable as an independent country, the discovery of large oil reserves in the South has now shifted the argument to the North needing the South. The wealth of the South itself became a source of conflict" (Deng, 2007:3). Thus, the reasons for keeping South Sudan attached to the north seem to be opportunist—it was the land which rendered unity a necessity, not the man.

CONCLUSION

The paper argued that language policies, identity construction and state-building processes in the Sudan were taken in their primordialistic sense by the North Sudanese elites. Under the British rule English was promoted for religious and colonial purposes whereas under the postcolonial regimes Arabic was promoted to play an instrumental role in constructing an Arab identify in the Sudan. Moreover, under the latter regimes, primordialism was sharpened and with it Arabism dominated the state-building dynamics. For the South Sudanese, these were detrimental to the very basics of state-building, political participation and minority linguistic rights.

The paper further explored that separation of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 did not come from a vacuum. First, the north Sudanese power wielding elites adopted coercive language policies which empowered Arabic at the expense of native language in South Sudan as well in north Sudan. Second, the elites created the Arab/non-Arab ethnic and social stratifications under which ethnic identities were revitalised. Consequently, many divisive ethnic metaphors continued to reproduce firmly established divisive 'we' and 'they' idioms that rendered identification with ethnicity stronger than with the state. Third, the overall state-building policies showed deficiencies in addressing aspirations of the South Sudanese, including political participation and recognition of their rights to nurture their languages and maintain their identities. Ultimately, when the South Sudanese were entitled by the CPA to go to the self-determination referendum, consensually voted for separation.

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