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THE SOUTHERN PROBLEM: REPRESENTING SUDAN'S SOUTHERN PROVINCES TO *c.* 1970*

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Abstract

Southern Sudanese politicians of the 1950s and 1960s have been criticized for a rivalrous, divisive politics, which left the south disunited and vulnerable. While acknowledging that these men were a tiny, squabbling group, remote from those they sought to represent, this article suggests that they faced an impossible task. The demand to represent 'the south' did not come solely, or even largely, from the people who lived in the southern provinces: southern politics was heavily extraverted, pulled by the interests and prejudices of northern Sudanese, Egyptians, Britons, and others. Like other African nationalists of the time, southern Sudanese politicians struggled to weave together different levels of moral community, from the very local to the imagined nation. Yet they did so in uniquely unfavourable circumstances: subject to constant harassment and occasionally lethal violence, unable to secure political compromise, and without patronage resources. Representing the south gave these men space to talk about the increasingly desperate circumstances of those who lived in Sudan's southern provinces; but it gave them almost no space at all to negotiate a civic culture of southern politics.

Key Words

South Sudan, Sudan, decolonization, nationalism, political culture.

Addressing the second congress of the Southern Front in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, in 1969, the party's secretary-general, Hilary Logali, was in sombre mood. The 1968 national elections had been something of a humiliation. The Front claimed to have 'the undivided support of the Southern people'.[1] Yet it had secured only ten of the sixty seats in Sudan's three southern provinces. The rival Sudan African National Union (SANU) had won 15; candidates from Sudan's northern parties had won more seats in the south than either the Front or SANU, which presented themselves as southern parties.[2]

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1 Sudan Archive, Durham (SAD) 932/4/15–62, 'From political awakening to present southern political leadership', manuscript apparently by Luigi Adwok, 1967. On the Front's expectations of electoral success, see Robert Collin's notes on discussions with Front politicians in 1968, SAD 919/6/3.

2 A. Abushouk, *Al Intikhabat al Barlamaniyya fi as Sudan* (Omdurman, 2008), 179–84; J. Howell, 'Political leadership and organization in the Southern Sudan' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1978), 230–1.

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Logali rehearsed a familiar – and entirely plausible – set of explanations for this failure: 'frankly, the elections came too soon for us. We had no money for it … in some [constituencies] registration was very poor, and in many intimidation was rife'.[3] The southern provinces were torn by violence. The insurgent campaign conducted by a variety of rebel groups under the rough umbrella of the Anyanya movement had escalated since 1963; a savage campaign of repression by the army had killed thousands and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes; travel was difficult across the region and outright impossible in some areas. The government had no control in many areas; where it was present, administrators (mostly from northern Sudan) were viewed with suspicion or outright hostility by much of the population. The Front had itself boycotted elections held in 1967, arguing that these conditions made a mockery of the process.

Why, then, had the Front decided to contest the 1968 elections? Logali explained this in terms of the party's relationship with politicians and parties from northern Sudan. The Front had effectively entered an alliance with Sudanese Prime Minister Mohamed Mahgoub as a route to constitutional change and '[i]t was absolutely imperative that we participated in the 1968 elections if only to show our willingness and intentions for a peaceful democratic settlement of the Southern Problem.' Logali's choice of words was revealing. In exploring the politics of southern representation up to the end of the 1960s, this article locates these in a wider analysis of African political history, shifting debate away from the failings of individual politicians. It argues instead that while the powerful notion of 'the Southern problem' made space for advocacy on behalf of the people who lived in those provinces, it also exceptionalized and collectivized 'the south' and so constrained the ways in which aspiring leaders could speak both to, and about, the people of the southern provinces: this was an extraverted politics, entailing what Jean-Francois Bayart has termed 'subjection … [as] a form of action'.[4]

'INEFFECTIVE POLITICIANS'

Historical judgement has not been kind to the politicians of the Southern Front – nor to any of the men who claimed to represent the people of the southern provinces in the 1950s and 1960s, who were a little over one-quarter of Sudan's total population.[5] These were notionally divided into 'inside' and 'outside' – or exile – groups, the latter maintaining a precarious existence in Kampala, Nairobi, London, or Rome from the early 1960s. There was no clear divide between the two, however. Individuals moved between inside and outside, and all have been seen as manifestations of a remote elite politics: 'a class distinct from the ordinary Southern people' – or, even more cuttingly, 'the least representative section of the Southern peoples'.[6] Set apart from other people in the southern provinces by their experience of (mostly mission) education in English and of salaried employment, these politicians were at the same time excluded from Sudan's Arabic-speaking political elite,

3 'Report of the Secretary-General of the Southern Front party to the second party congress', *The Vigilant* (Khartoum), 13 Apr. 1969.
4 J.-F. Bayart, 'Africa in the world: a history of extraversion', *African Affairs*, 99:395 (2000), 219.
5 Republic of Sudan, *First Population Census of Sudan, 1955/56* (Khartoum, 1961), Table 1.8.
6 J. Howell, 'Politics in the Southern Sudan', *African Affairs*, 72:287 (1973), 168; Howell, 'Political leadership', 55.

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which was dominated by riverain Arabs from the northern provinces.[7] This unique double marginality left them stranded: a 'lonely, bilingual intelligentsia' in Benedict Anderson's famous formulation, yet denied the consolatory reward of inheriting power from the departing colonial state.[8]

Southern Sudan's politicians have been routinely excoriated for undermining the unity of the south through their personal ambition and ethnic rivalry: 'Southerners were very much disillusioned with the divisions and conflict among their political leaders.'[9] They were derided by contemporary observers: 'one of the tragedies of the Sudan has always been the inability of the southerners to coalesce … They have always been totally unable to stop squabbling among themselves long enough to pursue their own best interests.'[10] And they were equally condemnatory of one another. One, Luigi Adwok, wrote scathingly of what he called 'old' Southern politicians: 'they have always betrayed their intellectual inequality with their Northern colleagues … their mercenary approach to politics continues to confuse and defy the solution of the Southern problem'; his sometime colleague Bona Malwal noted that during the 1960s the 'increasingly ineffective politicians' became 'irrelevant'.[11] Yet this personalized criticism diverts attention from a key problematic: how did multiple actors combine, over an extended period of time, to reduce debate over the potential political futures of the diverse people who lived in Condominium Sudan's three southern provinces to a singular and all-embracing 'Southern Problem'?

The reluctance to address this question is understandable. In the 1960s, the definition of the southern problem itself seemed a tool for unity, which would give strength to those oppressed by an implacable and brutal foe – the Sudanese state. Southern identity has consequently been naturalized in much of the literature, as a phenomenon simply awaiting expression: 'the people of South Sudan were politically conscious, fighting for their collective survival as a unified people with one destiny, long before the emergence of modern political parties'.[12] While diversity might be acknowledged in phrases such as 'Southern nationalities' or 'Southern Sudanese peoples', many have preferred to emphasize the historical nature of a southern identity cast in racial terms – with southerners as an 'African Negroid' people, 'united in one culture and racial origin'.[13] In this context, attempts to imagine alternative

7 L. Sanderson and N. Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics in Southern Sudan, 1899–1964* (London, 1981), 326.

8 B. T. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), 140.

9 E. N. Wakoson, 'The origin and development of the Anya-Nya movement, 1955–1972', in M. O. Beshir (ed.), *Southern Sudan: Regionalism and Nationalism* (Khartoum, 1984) 190. See also Howell, 'Political leadership', 104; L. Akol, *Southern Sudan: Colonialism, Resistance and Autonomy* (Trenton, NJ, 2007), 41; S. Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans; Arabs and Israelis in the Southern Sudan, 1955–1972* (New York, 2009), 195; D. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2003), 30; O. Albino, *The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint* (London, 1970), 57; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics*, 314.

10 US National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) RG 59 A 1 5676, Box 1, Noel, US Embassy Khartoum to Looram, State Department, 19 Apr. 1969.

11 SAD 944/2/22–31, Luigi Adwok Bong, 'Civil service in the Southern Sudan', 5 Oct. 1966; B. Malwal, *People and Power in Sudan–the Struggle for National Stability* (London, 1981), 73.

12 A. M. Arop, *The Genesis of Political Consciousness in South Sudan* (n.p., 2012), 26.

13 D. Wai, *The African-Arab Conflict in the Sudan* (New York, 1981), 15–16; D. A. Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans: The South and the North, 1821–1969* (Uppsala, 1994), 18; Abel Alier, *Southern Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonoured* (Exeter, 1990), 11–13, 179.

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political futures – whether these were greater or smaller than the south – have been seen as the work of those lured by 'self-interest and the desire for power' to become 'mouth-pieces of the North'.[14] Differences among southern politicians were consistently explained as the consequence of 'Northern' intrigue: the most common accusation traded by southern politicians was that of being a 'stooge', 'puppet', or 'sell-out' – antithetical categories which asserted the monopolizing power of 'the south' as a political vision.[15]

In this respect, as in many others, what is now South Sudan has seemed in some ways isolated from wider scholarship on the history of Africa, where academics have found it easier to ask how it was that the arbitrary territorial constructs of colonialism came to inspire popular political movements. Cherry Gertzel's suggestion that 'nationalist part[ies] aroused and maintained mass support by [their] espousal of parochial issues' has been more recently expressed in terms of moral community: Meredith Terretta has identified a 'hybridized village nationalism' as the basis of the vigour and legitimacy of African nationalist movements, weaving local debates over civic virtue together with the imagined future of the nation.[16] At independence, the characteristic challenge for Africa's politicians had been to turn popular movements which had imagined nationalism as a route to multiple possible futures into a set of political practices that still legitimated the independent state: 'how to keep nationalist promises of liberation while relying on the inheritance of colonial order', as Jim Brennan has put it.[17] The failure of most to forge a politics of citizenship that both entitles and restrains has been identified as a characteristic tragedy of the postcolonial state in Africa.[18]

In Sudan's southern provinces, the liberatory politics of nationalism hardly had the opportunity to engage with other notions of civic virtue. Through the 1950s and 1960s, politicians – or rather, men who found themselves becoming politicians – in Sudan's southern provinces were repeatedly drawn into the task of representing a generic community of southerners. In doing so, they came to exclude other possibilities, both larger and smaller than 'the south'. Where they acknowledged diversity within the south, this was only to assert the need to subordinate that diversity in an embracing nationalism, which cast all southerners as Africans and effectively rebuffed attempts by some in Sudan's northern provinces to create a wider constituency of the marginal.

This 'racial nationalism' – as Jonathon Glassman has called a similar phenomenon in Zanzibar – did not simply draw on external categories of racial thought: it was also a product of the 'creative labor' of those in the southern provinces.[19] Yet the conditions of that

14 Editor, 'A test of good will', *The Vigilant*, 2 June 1967.

15 See, for example, United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA) FO 371/190418, 'Conversation with Mr Gordon Muortat', 18 Nov. 1966; Albino, *The Sudan*, 52, 57.

16 C. Gertzel, *Party and Locality in Northern Uganda, 1945–62* (London, 1974), 52; M. Terretta, '"God of independence, God of peace": village politics and nationalism in the maquis of Cameroon, 1957–71', *The Journal of African History*, **46**:1 (2005), 77.

17 James R. Brennan, 'Blood enemies: exploitation and urban citizenship in the nationalist political thought of Tanzania, 1958–75', *The Journal of African History*, 37:3 (2006), 390.

18 F. Cooper, 'Possibility and constraint: African independence in historical perspective', *The Journal of African History*, **49**:2 (2008), 167–96.

19 J. Glassman, 'Racial violence, universal history and echoes of abolition in twentieth-century Zanzibar', in D. Peterson (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic* (Athens, OH, 2010), 175–206, 190.

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labour were shaped by an extraverted politics, driven partly by the assumptions and expectations of British officials, northern Sudanese politicians and administrators, African politicians elsewhere in the region, US or other diplomats, and a sympathetic public in Europe. Extraversion created opportunity, as well as dependency: to speak for 'the south' allowed these men to be heard, if only ever in limited ways. Ironically, it was northern Sudanese politicians and administrators – who constantly questioned the legitimacy of individual southern politicians, and emphasized the unity of Sudan – who were nonetheless most insistent in encouraging the representation of 'the south'. This insistence was driven partly by political rivalries in the north, but more fundamentally it was the continuation of established practices and behaviours, which cast the south as inferior, and properly subject to northern Arab dominance. The idea of a 'southern problem' was the discursive counterpart of the legal state of emergency applied to the southern provinces in 1955, in force throughout this period. In combination, these techniques constituted 'the south' as a state of exception – in Giorgio Agamben's terms – through which 'something is included solely through its exclusion'.[20] These techniques rendered the people of the southern provinces – 'southerners' – as bare life, without protection of the law, and made the southern provinces both part of Sudan, and not part of it.

'THE MORE BACKWARD SOUTH'

The beginning of 'southern politics' is sometimes dated to 1947, when a small group of men from the southern provinces – low-ranking civil servants, police officers, government-recognized chiefs – were summoned to Juba, the main southern administrative centre. The meeting was the occasion for British officials to announce the integration of the administration of the three southern provinces of Sudan with the six northern ones, a decision that reversed the previous 'Southern Policy' which had treated them as distinct.[21] But debates over the representation of the south – over what it was, and who should speak for it – long predated 1947. Involving Britons and Egyptians, as well as Sudanese from what had become the northern provinces of Sudan, this southern politics stretched back to the Turco-Egyptian conquest of the 1820s, and was shaped by a history of violence and slavery in which people who lived to the south were perceived as fundamentally different, and could be treated as such.[22]

As the work of Eve Troutt Powell and Heather Sharkey has shown, perspectives varied as to where this south lay: for nineteenth and early twentieth-century Egyptians, it encompassed the whole of what was first Turco-Egyptian Sudan, and then Anglo-Egyptian Condominium; but for self-defining Arabs who lived in northern Sudan, their own status derived from locating this 'south' further up the Nile, in what came to be the three southern

20 G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA, 1998), 18; G. Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. K. Attell (Chicago, 2005).

21 J. Robertson, *Transition in Africa: From Direct Rule to Independence* (London, 1974), 107.

22 J. M. Jok, 'The legacy of race', in Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban and Kharyssa Rhodes (eds.), *Race and Identity in the Nile Valley* (Trenton, NJ, 2004), 187–206; A. Idris, *Conflict and the Politics of Identity in Sudan* (New York, London, 2005).

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provinces marked out by the Condominium.[23] The representation of those southern provinces as distinctive became routine in British accounts: from the brisk certainty of Winston Churchill – 'two main races … the aboriginal natives and the Arab settlers', to the scholarly racism of Harold Macmichael – for whom the south was 'the "Sudan" proper, inhabited by the great negro tribes', to the condescending certainty of Stewart Symes: the 'southern genius is distinctively African and negroid'.[24] While some accounts mentioned the actual diversity of these categories, and the uncertainty of the line between them, the fundamental, recurring contrast was racial: between 'the country of the Arabs' and 'the Negro south', two 'ethnographical zones', which required different government.[25] Racial difference authorized religious policy: mission evangelism was forbidden in the north, but permitted in 'the more backward south'.[26] There, as one North American missionary explained 'lives the Negroid, black of skin, flat-nosed'.[27] For northern Sudanese, too, the distinction was simply expressed: 'the southern Sudan is the home of numerous Negroid tribes'.[28]

As Jok Madut and Amir Idris have argued, such categorizations naturalized racial identities, which were the contingent product of protracted political and social processes.[29] It is not clear precisely when people from the southern provinces became directly involved in – rather than being subject to – this southern politics. They had been 'dealing with government', as Cherry Leonardi puts it, since the mid-nineteenth century, and though their voices almost never found their way into any formal record, their involvement with those who governed them allowed a degree of agency, if only in the tightest of corners.[30] Certainly by the time of the Juba conference, some were very willing to evoke the notion of collective southern difference.[31] The ready assertion in 1947 that 'the Southern Sudanese are entirely different on all counts to the northern Arab Sudanese' was the consequence of a potent, cross-cultural, cocktail of assumptions about racial difference.[32]

In the early 1950s, Sudan was propelled rapidly towards independence by the rivalry and self-interest of the two co-domini, Britain and Egypt, as well as by the ambition of

23 H. Sharkey, 'Arab identity and ideology in Sudan: the politics of language, ethnicity and race', *African Affairs*, 107:426 (2008), 21–43; E. T. Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley, 2003).

24 W. S. Churchill, *The River War: An Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan*, 2 vols. (London, 1900) I, 14; H. Macmichael, *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1934), 17–18, 19; S. Symes, *Tour of Duty* (London, 1946), 220.

25 H. C. Jackson, *Behind the Modern Sudan* (London, 1955), 9; Naval Staff Intelligence Division, *A Handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1922), 186. See also J. S. R. Duncan, *The Sudan: A Record of Achievement* (Edinburgh, 1962), 1.

26 Macmichael, *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, 104.

27 C. Watson, *The Sorrow and Hope of the Egyptian Sudan* (Philadelphia, 1913), 109.

28 Republic of Sudan, *Southern Sudan Disturbances, 1955: Report of the Commission of Enquiry* (Khartoum, 1956), 3.

29 J. M. Jok, *Sudan: Race, Religion and Violence* (Oxford, 2007), 3–15; Idris, *Conflict and the Politics of Identity*.

30 C. Leonardi, *Dealing with Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community and State* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 1–10.

31 Wai, *The African-Arab Conflict*, 43.

32 FO 371/2944, Minutes by D. W. Riches, 27 Apr. 1947, cited from D. H. Johnson (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire. Series B, Volume 5, Sudan*, 2 vols. (London, 1998), I, 260.

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a northern Sudanese riverain elite who imagined the nation in their own image.[33] The political imaginaries of British and Egyptian participants in these negotiations, and those of many Sudanese from the northern provinces, had already established 'the problem of the south' (as a 1947 Fabian Bureau publication called it) as a point of contention.[34] When educated men in the southern provinces planned to 'send our representatives abroad to voice our opinion to any Government in the world', all these external actors began their own search for southern 'representatives' who would offer them political advantage in the wider negotiations by endorsing, accepting – or, sometimes, denouncing – on behalf of the south.[35] Representatives sent to Khartoum from southern provinces were reportedly rejected by British officials, who told them that they 'cannot listen to them since they have no party'; in response they formed a single party claiming to represent the south.[36]

Knowledge of English, and a familiarity with bureaucratic practice, fitted a small minority of men, almost all in government employ, to play this role. As John Howell has argued, the idea of the south was at least in part an assertion of a claim to status and employment by these men: 'If this new Government is for the whole Sudan', demanded one typed letter, 'why all posts are given only to the Northerners?'[37] But it was not just the self-interest of petty bureaucrats which drove the process. The selection of representatives was driven by the belief that, as a senior British official put it, 'the people of the south know nothing about politics and are quite incapable as individuals of voting on the big issue, about which in any case they are completely ignorant'.[38] The 'big issue' was, of course, the future relationship of the southern provinces to the rest of Sudan. Educated men in the southern provinces agreed. Before the election of 1953 – which led swiftly on to self-government and then independence for Sudan – they reacted with horror to the suggestion (later dropped) that civil servants should be barred from the election campaign. '99 per cent of the politically-minded are Government servants', wrote one; another was even more explicit

> The exclusion of Civil Servants from taking part in politics means surrendering our voice to ignorant people who are unacquainted with politics. This being the case, errors will be committed which will be detrimental to the well-being of the country.[39]

Southernness, and more or less explicitly racialized statements about this, loom large in the limited record of the 1953 election campaign: 'Out with the Arabs' was one slogan of the time.[40] Abdel Rahman Sule, president of the Southern Party, which sought a distinct status

33 Johnson, *Root Causes*, 22.
34 The genesis of the phrase is mentioned in 'Petition to the United Nations by the Sudan African Closed Districts National Union', 1963, 17.
35 South Sudan Archive, Juba (SSA) EP SCR 10.A.1, Cier Rehan 'on behalf of the Elders and Chiefs' to Governor, Bahr el Ghazal, 2 Mar. 1953; see also Torit Political Committee to 'Chiefs and Notables', 16 Mar. 1953.
36 S. Paysama, *Autobiography: How a Slave Became a Minister* Fr V. Dellagiacoma (ed.), (Khartoum, 1990), 63.
37 SSA UNP 1.A.28.3, Nasir Court Members to Prime Minister Ismail Azhari, 31 Aug. 1954 and Chief Aboth and others to Council of Ministers, 15 Sept. 1954; Howell, 'Political leadership', 56, 114–15.
38 FO 371/113612, K. Helm to C. Shuckburgh, 30 May 1955, cited from Johnson, *British Documents*, II, 415.
39 National Record Office, Khartoum (NRO) Elecom 1 10/2/2, Bullen A. de Bior to Chair, Electoral Commission, 17 Apr. 1953; Constantin Libra for Wau Committee to Governor-General, 23 May 1953.
40 Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics,* 341.

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for the southern provinces in an independent Sudan, complained that candidates for Umma and the National Unionist Party (NUP) – the main Khartoum-based parties, led by northern riverain Sudanese – were giving out bribes and declaring that that southerners were 'already under their feet'.[41] Umma and NUP were to pursue these contradictory policies, both courting and mocking politicians from the southern provinces, for decades.

After the election, one successful candidate insisted that 'all Southerners [in the parliament], irrespective of their party, were agreed on fundamentals'.[42] Instead, they gained a reputation for being easily 'bought' by politicians from Umma or the NUP.[43] Yet these men had been set an impossible task: required to participate, but at the same time excluded. While Sudan's new rulers agreed with their British mentors that the south was a collective 'other', they had no intention of offering it autonomy.[44] To justify this refusal, they derided members of parliament from the southern provinces as half-educated men who did not really represent the people. On occasion, government-appointed chiefs were thrust – sometimes willingly, sometimes less so – into the role of alternative representatives of southern opinion.[45] Southern politicians were offered token positions in government, but these were always minor ministries: representing the south brought no power, or any special access to government resources.[46] Physically remote from their constituents, and politically remote from government, these politicians had little to offer to their would-be citizens.

Instead, they pursued the rhetorical evocation of a racial nationalism. At a public meeting, the parliamentarian Buth Diu 'expressed his suspicion of Northern Sudanese and questioned the need for their existence among the southerners'.[47] Benjamin Lwoki, the president of what was now called the Liberal Party, claimed to speak for 'the south' collectively, and wrote to the British prime minister saying that 'the South' demanded federation or secession: 'Northerners must realize that we have a heap of basic and natural differences between them [*sic*] ... we firmly believe in our right as a distinct race from the people in the Northern Sudan.'[48]

'I SHALL NEVER BETRAY MY MOTHER THE SOUTH': THE 1958 ELECTIONS

The Torit Mutiny of 1955 has acquired epochal significance in the historiography of southern Sudan: the moment when the enforced order of late colonial rule suddenly collapsed

41 NRO Elecom 1 11/7/37, Abdel Rahman Sule to Electoral Commission, n.d. Oct. 1953 and 27 Oct. 1953; SSA EP 10.B.23, Abdul Rahman Sule to Governor Equatoria, 4 June 1953; Republic of Sudan, *Southern Sudan Disturbances*, 23–24.

42 FO 371/108324, Adams to Bromley, 2 Oct. 1954, cited from Johnson, *British Documents*, II, 368.

43 Howell, 'Political leadership', 122–3.

44 Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans*, 90–1.

45 Albino, *The Sudan*, 82–3; Howell, 'Political leadership', 21; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics*, 314–15; SSA UNP 1.20.168, Bahr el Ghazal Intelligence Report, Dec. 1955–Jan. 1956.

46 Johnson, *The Root Causes*, 30; Howell, 'Political leadership', 95–9.

47 SSA EP 10.B.23, DC Zande to Governor Equatoria, 17 Aug. 1954.

48 SSA EP 10.B.23, Benjamin Lwoki to Governor Equatoria, 22 Oct. 1954; FO 371/108326, Benjamin Lwoki to Anthony Eden, 15 Nov. 1954, cited from Johnson, *British Documents*, II, 384–5.

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into decades-long civil war. But as both Douglas Johnson and Oystein Rolandsen have shown, while the mutiny and the savage government reprisals that followed had a wide impact, southern Sudan was by no means ungovernable, or ungoverned, at independence on 1 January 1956.[49] It was only in the 1960s that insurgency became widespread, pushed by a government whose authoritarian version of nationalism exalted Islam and Arabism.[50] The parliamentary elections of 1958 have been largely disregarded in literature, mentioned only to offer evidence of the perfidy of officials from northern Sudan.[51] But they saw a substantial amount of political activity. Although Equatoria was the most 'disturbed' (in the language of the time) of the southern provinces, 85,000 people there reportedly turned out to vote; 140,000 more voted in the other two provinces.[52]

In 1957–8, men associated with the Liberal Party briefly experimented with an attempt to define a political future which embraced the north: 'the Liberal Party stands for the democratic rights and interests of all national minorities in the Sudan including the people of the Nuba Mountains, the Fung and Fur and particularly the people of the Southern Provinces'.[53] This inclusive notion of a wider black identity in Sudan was to be argued most forcefully and consistently in the long political career of Philip Abbas Ghaboush, from the Nuba mountains in Sudan's northern provinces.[54] But as an alternative vision of community, it was eclipsed by competition between southern politicians, whose rival claims to be the rightful leader of the Liberals emphasized 'the cause of the Southern people'.[55] One, Stanislaus Paysama, was nonetheless accused of 'not being a southerner' – since he was born in Darfur, which was categorized as a northern province.[56] The rivalry was played out across the scattered handful of administrative centres of the southern provinces, where little groups of civil servants and teachers had formed themselves into branches of the party. A rival Federal Party also claimed to speak 'on behalf of the Southern people', contrasting the 'negroid population of the South' with 'Northern Arabs'; they drew on the powerful discourse of abolitionism when they committed themselves to a 'genuine struggle towards the release of our people from slavery'.[57]

The archival record of these discursive evocations of 'the south', fragmentary and frustrating as it is, provides a reminder that this was partly a politics performed for, as well as under the eyes of, northern officials and politicians. This combined interest and scrutiny

49 Johnson, *Root Causes*, 29–31; O. Rolandsen, 'A false start: between war and peace in the southern Sudan, 1956–62', *The Journal of African History*, 52:1 (2011), 105–23.

50 Sharkey, 'Arab identity and ideology', 33, 37, and 42; A. M. Lesch, *The Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Bloomington IN/Oxford, 1998), 1, 21.

51 Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War,* 56–7.

52 Howell, 'Political leadership', 165.

53 SSA UNP 10.D.1.6, Liberal Party constitution, Aug. 1957.

54 P. Abbas, 'Growth of black political consciousness in northern Sudan', *Africa Today*, 20:3 (1973), 29–43.

55 SSA UNP 10.D.1.6, Rodento Ondzi Koma, 25 May 1957, attached to Abdel Rahman Sule et al. to Minister of Interior, 25 May 1957.

56 Paysama, *Autobiography*, 66.

57 NRO UNP 1/3/11, Darius Beshir to Chair, National Constitutional Committee, 25 Jan. 1958, from SAD 947/1/63, notes by R. Collins; SSA EP.10.B.33, Ezbon Mondiri, 'Reasons for adopting US constitution', n.d. but 1957/8; Darius Beshir to Michael Tawili, 8 Jan. 1958; for the enduring power of abolitionist language, see D. Peterson, 'Abolitionism and political thought in Britain and East Africa', in Peterson (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism*, 1–37.

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both repressed and empowered southern politicians: subjecting them to sometimes brutal coercion but also affirming the existence of 'the south' as a subject of representation. When, in September 1957, a federalist pamphlet was brought to the attention of Ali Baldo, the governor of Equatoria, he told other officials that he was familiar with its contents, and saw no need for concern.[58] The pamphlet declared that 'North and South are quite different … In it there are two types of peoples namely Asian-Arabs and Negroid blacks of Africa', and insisted that, in the south, 'all masses of persons should be strictly made to recognize the Liberal Party under which alone we should be surely liberated'.[59]

Ali Baldo has become notorious as 'the little Hitler of Equatoria', a man committed to the coercive project of cultural hegemony which sought to unify 'the Sudan' according to the nationalist vision of Arabism, bureaucracy, and modernism.[60] Federation was anathema to Baldo and his fellow officials, who arrested and harassed southern politicians and imposed close restrictions on their meetings.[61] But his lack of concern over the leaflet is revealing. The idea that the south was collectively different created this as a state of exception, legitimizing the authoritarian behaviours of Ali Baldo and his fellows, and representing their intolerance of diversity – which was undermining the stability of post-independence Sudan more widely – as a singular, southern issue. They might – as another governor did – opine that lower level southern civil servants 'repel from all the good qualities of a human being'; or argue that '[m]uch of this seditious talk the southerners simply do not understand'. In doing so, they absolutely affirmed the distinctness of southerners.[62]

Southern politicians, in turn, sought the approval of Ali Baldo and other officials as a tool to discipline party members, exclude rivals, and assert the pre-eminence of their own claims to represent the south. So, for example, the battle between Stanislaus Paysama and Benjamin Lwoki for control of the exiguous structures of the Liberal Party was pursued partly through letters to administrators.[63] Abdel Rahman Sule, who supported Paysama, tried to enlist government in his attempts to prevent 'disorderly' behaviour in party meetings; and also suggested to Ali Baldo that 'Foreign visitors should not be allowed to consult the public over politics, especially the chiefs and the villagers.'[64]

The Umma Party, meanwhile, also sought to both constrain and sponsor southern politics. It had its own candidates in some constituencies in the southern provinces, but elsewhere it provided money and other goods – food, watches, tobacco – to support Liberal

58 SSA EP 10.B.33, Ali Baldo, Governor Equatoria to Governor, UNP, 12 Nov. 1957; SSA EP 10.B.33, 'Political principle [*sic*] difference between South and North Sudan', E. K. Mayom, Juba Federalist, 10 Sept. 1957.

59 SSA EP 10.B.33, 'Political principle'.

60 Aggrey Jaden, 'The Sudan Today'; from SAD 947/1/28, notes by R. Collins,.

61 SSA EP 10.B.23, Ali Baldo, Governor Equatoria to Abdel Rahman Sule, 22 Jan. 1958 and copy of permit for a meeting at Terakeka, dated 15 Nov. 1957.

62 NRO UNP 1/1/5, Governor Bahr el Ghazal to Ministry of Local Government, 7 Nov. 1957, from notes by R. Collins, SAD 947/1/65; Equatoria Monthly Intelligence Report, Apr. 1957, from 947/1/93, notes by R. Collins.

63 SSA UNP 10.D.1.6, Note on meeting of 25 May 1957, by Rodento Ondzi, attached with Abdel Rahman Sule et al. to Minister of Interior, 25 May 1957.

64 SSA EP 10.B.23, Abdel Rahman Sule, Circular, copied to Governor Equatoria, 12 Sept. 1957; Agenda for 'Liberal Party 10 members meeting Governor Equatoria', 12 Jan. 1957.

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Party candidates, hoping in turn for their support in parliament.[65] Despite Umma backing, Abdel Rahman Sule's campaign message was a simple one, denouncing 'northerners': '[t]hey come here and serve in the South not for our interest but for their own interest because they can not find employments in the North.[66] Federalism was explained by Abdel Rahman in terms of access to government employment: 'all the administrative posts will be southernized'. Abdel Rahman told one audience that they should 'not listen to nor accept any chief's political suggestion', and was dismissive when listeners raised questions about the prices paid for their crops. Instead he emphasized the importance of racial difference, telling the audience that 'there are two separate laws in our country, one for us black Southerners and another for Northerners'. Religion is rarely mentioned in the fragmentary written record of the 1958 campaign, but ambivalence towards Islam was apparent: Abdel Rahman, unusual among southern politicians in his religious affiliation, was anxious to assure his audience that while he was a Muslim, 'I shall never betray my mother the South politically.'[67]

Unsurprisingly, Umma support for the Liberal Party was stopped during the campaign because of this anti-northern rhetoric.[68] The wider reception of such language is harder to judge: the very existence of the written record, and the ironically effusive praise for Ali Baldo ostentatiously noted in one meeting, remind us of how constrained these political moments were. John Howell has argued that 'campaigning was rarely done in public' and that – whatever Abdel Rahman's advice – the local influence of elders, chiefs, and ritual specialists was crucial to electoral success.[69]

OUTSIDE AND INSIDE POLITICS

Those elected in 1958 faced the same dilemmas as their predecessors. Neither Umma nor NUP would agree to federation. Southern members of parliament claimed to know 'the true feelings of the Southerners', but were drawn into the chronic competition between the two main parties, which had deadlocked government in Khartoum.[70] In November 1958, the prime minister handed power to the military, and parliament was dissolved. Southern politicians were informed that politics had been suspended and so 'talk on Federation being political is no longer permissible'.[71] The next six years saw increasingly brutal government policies which were predicated on 'southern' difference, even as they

65 Howell, 'Politics in the Southern Sudan', 169; Equatoria Intelligence Report, 16–31 Dec. 1957, from SAD 947/1/96–97, notes by R. Collins.

66 SSA UNP 1.20.168, Allam Hassan Allam, Governor Bahr el Ghazal to Registrar of Judiciary, Khartoum, 14 Dec. 1957.

67 SSA EP 10.B.23, 'The Liberal Party political propaganda campaigns in Zande District', attached with B. T. Kisanga, Local Government Inspector to Ali Baldo, Governor. 31 Aug. 1957; also 'Note' dated 31 Dec. 1957. Abdel Rahman was subsequently fined S£350 for public order offences; 'Results of the trial of political cases', 4 June 1958.

68 Equatoria Intelligence report, 1–15 Jan. 1958, from SAD 947/1/96, notes by R. Collins.

69 Howell, 'Political leadership', 148–9; 160–1.

70 Stanislaus Paysama, in 'Weekly Digest of Proceedings in the House of Representatives', 12 May 1958; from SAD 947/1/4–5, notes by R. Collins; Howell, 'Political leadership', 122, 173.

71 SSA UNP.SCR.36.M.1, Vol.2, Circular, Ali Baldo, Governor Equatoria, 4 Dec. 1958.

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sought to erase that difference.[72] Religion became a focus for contention. Although the number of Christians in Sudan's southern provinces was small (estimated, perhaps conservatively, at 230,000 of a population of around 2.8 million in 1955), missionaries became vocal – and internationally audible – critics of state violence; in return officials and politicians accused them of 'misleading the primitive southern citizens'.[73] The ironic consequence was that in the southern provinces of Sudan, in contrast to the rest of Africa in these years, 'relations between missionaries and [southern] intelligentsia grew closer and more confident', and the 1960s saw an apparent wave of conversions to Christianity.[74]

Missionaries, expelled from the southern provinces between 1962 and 1964, became closely involved in the emergence of 'outside' politics, as refugees from government violence claimed the right to represent the south: 'We, the people of the Southern Sudan', began a typical manifesto.[75] Freed from the constraints of official scrutiny, these exile politicians – writing from Europe, or elsewhere in eastern Africa – identified southern independence as their aim. Missionary assistance gave them access to the British press, which knowingly opined that there was conflict between the 'Islamic North and the primitive tribal African south'.[76] The exiles' position was perilous: from 1963, the principles of the Organization of African Unity bound the newly-independent governments in the region to a mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and 'outside' politicians risked imprisonment, or even murder.[77]

Seeking the tolerance, and preferably the support, of neighbouring governments, exiles located themselves in a pan-African struggle, and emphasized the racial nature of the southern cause. Petitioning the United Nations, they declared their aim as 'Southern Sudan for Southern Sudanese within the framework of Black African Unity', and defiantly insisted that 'each race has a mission to fulfil'. The south was '100 per cent African', and the north threatened their racial identity: it was 'predominantly Arab, with a small percentage of Negroes who were absorbed and Arabized'.[78] Exile politicians sought meetings with regional leaders to plead their case; in Nairobi, they told journalists that southerners were 'living like slaves' and that the 'Arabs are determined to wipe us off the face of the earth'.[79] In a seminal book, exile authors definitely summarized 'the problem of the Southern Sudan': it lay in the aim of the Khartoum government 'to destroy the African negroid personality and identity in the Sudan and replace it with an arabicized and islamicized South'.[80]

The book's argument was taken up by a newsletter intermittently printed in London from 1963 to 1965. *Voice of Southern Sudan* – whose cover slogan was 'Negritude and

72 Lesch, *The Sudan*, 38–9.
73 Letter from M. Mirghani, *The Times* (London), 13 Apr. 1964, 13. The estimate of Christian numbers is in Republic of Sudan, *Southern Sudan Disturbances*, 7.
74 Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education, Religion and Politics*, 359, 393–5.
75 UKNA FO 371/190417, George Kwanai, 'The Azania Liberation Front manifesto', 27 July 1966.
76 Editorial, *The Times*, 13 Mar. 1964, 15.
77 Akol, *Southern Sudan*, 81.
78 'Petition to United Nations by Sudan African Closed Districts National Union, 1963', 1–3.
79 'South Sudan campaign of terror', *The Times*, 19 Nov. 1963, 10; 'Sudan accused of massacres', *The Times*, 13 July 1965, 11; 'A story to shock the world', *Daily Mail* (London), 31 Jan. 1966, 1.
80 J. Oduho and W. Deng, *The Problem of the Southern Sudan* (London, 1963), 8, 36–8, 54–5.

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progress' – insisted that Southerners (always capitalized) were Africans, suffering from the 'the Arab-perpetrated racialist and religious policies aimed at the destruction of African culture and personality in the negro-South' and the 'colonial rule practised by the Arab-North over the Negro-South'.[81] William Deng, writing in the first issue, expressed the ambitions of its literate, anglophone creators, which linked extraversion and leadership: 'Writing is one of the methods of judging national maturity because it puts to the world our ideas in permanent form … The world is ignorant of our case and we need to guide our own people.'[82] Slavery was repeatedly evoked: 'In the past the Southern Sudan was a basin where Northern slave traders acting on their own or as agents, went to look for slaves. This explains the traditional hatred existing between Northerners and Southerners.'[83] An open letter to Ugandan Prime Minister Milton Obote, about to visit Sudan, warned him that 'in the Sudan the Arab invaders are holding four million Negroes here in chains'.[84]

While some of *Voice of Southern Sudan's* correspondents acknowledged that there were 'Africans' in northern Sudan too, they denounced them for accepting the role of 'second class citizens': 'the Southern Sudanese remain the only responsible Africans to answer the call of vindicating the Black Man's course in the Sudan'.[85] They were less certain in their comments on religion and southern identity. Consistently denying that the conflict was a religious one, *Voice of Southern Sudan* insisted that it spoke for all southern Sudanese, including Muslims; the struggle was against forced islamicization, not Islam.[86] Yet, claiming there were 600,000 Christians in the southern provinces, it described the population as 'partly Christian and partly pagan'.[87] It carried an open letter from an expelled missionary, and another from the 'Southern Sudanese Christian Association', which presented the persecution of Christians as the epitome of southern suffering and asked readers to 'let our struggle and the persecution of Christianity be widely known'. It also reported with approval the decision of southern Muslims to convert to Christianity as an act of protest.[88] This approach succeeded in drawing a new level of international attention to events in the southern provinces, and embedding the idea that southern Sudan's politicians represented a population that was 'predominantly Christian', as well as African.[89]

81 'To all Southern Sudan nationalists', *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 2:3 (Oct. 1964); 'Paying lip-service to African unity', *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 3:1 (May 1965); 'The Southern Sudan', *Voice of Southern Sudan,* 1:1 (Apr. 1963); Editorial, *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 2:4 (Feb. 1965).

82 W. Deng, 'Official statement by the National Executive on the Sudan African Closed District National Union', *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:1 (Apr. 1963).

83 'Who has the solution to this problem?', *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 3:2 (Oct. 1965); see also 'Southern Sudan nationalist movement and call for African unity', *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:4 (n.d. 1963).

84 Copy of undated letter to Milton Obote, *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:1 (Apr. 1963).

85 'The Southern Sudan', *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:1 (Apr. 1963).

86 Editorial comment, *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:2 (n.d. 1963) and 2:1 (Apr. 1964); 'News items and comments', *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:1 (Apr. 1963).

87 'The Southern Sudan', *Voice of Southern* Sudan, 1:1 (Apr. 1963).

88 Ibrahim Nyigilo, Southern Sudan Christian Association to Heads of Christian Churches, *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 1:2 (n.d. 1963); 'Distinguished southern Muslims renounce their faith', *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 1:4 (n.d. 1963).

89 'Sudan army fights rebels in jungle', *Washington Post* (Washington), 22 Nov. 1965, 9.

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'WE ALL WANT FREE ELECTIONS': THE SECOND PARLIAMENTARY PERIOD

The October revolution of 1964, which brought down the military government, brought the focus of the politics of southern representation back into Sudan – and, very largely, to Khartoum. Here a cohort of educated internal exiles had spent the years since 1958 in civil service employment, or education, in intermittent contact with 'outside' politicians, and engaged – to a degree perhaps exaggerated in retrospect – in a clandestine southern politics.[90] They were also, however, engaged in a quotidian politics of kinship and ethnicity. Conflict in the south – and a lack of economic and educational opportunities there – brought a steadily growing number of people from the southern provinces to live in Khartoum, where they sought out those with whom they had some relationship of blood, marriage, or locality.

What had in the early 1950s been a small southern population in Khartoum had by the mid-1960s become a much larger group, predominantly male.[91] For them, daily life could be a reminder of their shared southernness – in the eyes of northern Sudanese, who largely regarded these southern migrants with fear and contempt, or of missionaries whose clubs provided one of the few social spaces for this population.[92] It might even, on occasion, encourage a sense of identity with other non-Arab Sudanese, since all might be collectively derided as *abiid* (slaves), by Arabs.[93] But it was also the constant playing out of a deep politics of obligations and claims based on more parochial ties; most migrants 'live with either kinsmen or tribesmen' according to the only detailed survey of this group.[94]

Sudan's 1964 revolution was very much a Khartoum affair: essentially, the government fell because its soldiers would not fire on protesters who were themselves part of Sudan's dominant riverain Arab culture. But what was now routinely called the 'southern problem' had catalyzed those protests, providing a focus for northern Sudanese dissatisfaction with a military government which seemed unable to solve that 'problem'.[95] And so representatives of the south were in demand again: to attend negotiations, to be spoken to, or for, to approve or to denounce.[96] A senior civil servant from southern Sudan, Clement Mboro, was given the unprecedentedly important position of interior minister, and a Round Table conference was convened to discuss the southern problem.[97]

Mboro was also a leading figure in the emergence of the Khartoum-based Southern Front. Initially this was not, its members emphasized, a party; it was an internal

90 Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War*, 62–3, 119–20.
91 F. Rehfisch, 'A study of some Southern migrants in Omdurman', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 43 (1962), 50–104.
92 H. Barclay, *Buurri al Lamaab: A Suburban Village in the Sudan* (Ithaca, NY, 1964), 99–100; Rehfisch, 'A study', 51, 91, and 103.
93 Barclay, *Buurri al Lamaabi*, 129.
94 Rehfisch, 'A study', 85.
95 P. Woodward, *Sudan: The Unstable State* (London, 1990), 108.
96 Alier, *Southern Sudan*, 25–6. The term 'southern problem' was constantly used: see 'Assembly debates policy', *The Vigilant*, 15 Aug. 1966; 'Buth reveals secret plans', *The Vigilant*, 17 Aug. 1966; 'Clement confers with Nugdalla', *The Vigilant*, 22 Aug. 1966.
97 Malual, *People and Power*, 82–5.

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manifestation of the single southern party, SANU, formed by exile politicians. The Front's claim to 'rally all the Southern people together ... for the aspirations of the Southerners' was a strident assertion of unity as well as a claim to representation. That was also, of course, an implicit rejection of the alternative vision of 'all the black people'– including non-Arabs from the northern provinces – as a political constituency.[98] *Voice of Southern Sudan* lent its endorsement to the Front as 'a body representing and safeguarding the interests of the Africans of Southern Sudan'.[99]

For the supporters of the Front, the South was a 'nation'.[100] Any alternative claim to represent the southern provinces was self-evidently the work of 'puppet political parties', intended to 'water down the genuine demands and aspirations of the Southern people'.[101] A single-sheet newspaper published in Khartoum, *The Vigilant,* expressed their vision of a political future: literate, worldly, modern, English-speaking, and above all insistent on the unity of the south. As a project, *The Vigilant* was both courageous and constrained. Its staff, constantly harassed, trod a delicate line, insisting on southern unity but generally avoiding open calls for secession.[102] *The Vigilant* carried reports on Khartoum politics and discussions there of 'the Southern problem', but almost nothing on life in the southern provinces – apart from occasional, appalling reports of government violence. Otherwise, its pages juxtaposed stories or opinion columns clipped from European or American papers with apparently random publicity photographs of new British machines or German sportsmen, alongside dismembered sections of cartoon strips. It was self-consciously intended to look like a newspaper, sometimes at the cost of coherence. For external observers, it was nonetheless persuasive: the British ambassador, whose staff were regularly in contact with the Front, wrote confidently that 'most Southerners ... support the Southern Front', even though he also described its leaders as 'rather forlorn Khartoum politicians'.[103]

Unable to reach any agreement, the Round Table conference appointed a '12 man committee' to consider key issues. The committee agreed that devolution of power might be a good idea, but then could not agree on how many regions there should be; its report was ignored by the government anyway.[104] The Sudanese state was still ultimately in the hands of men who, while happy to see the south defined as a distinct problem, were absolutely opposed to any devolution of power. Meanwhile, the men who were supposed to represent the south were divided from the outset, despite the constant emphasis on unity. William Deng, co-author of *The Southern Problem*, returned to Sudan and claimed to speak for SANU, but was denounced by other southern politicians, inside and outside. SANU and

98 Paysama, *Autobiography*, 70.

99 SSA EP 10/A/1 1EP147, Southern Front constitution, attached with Darius Beshir to Minister of Interior, 5 June 1965; see also SAD 951/4/1, Southern Front press release no. 1, n.d. 1965; 'Report from SANU Central Office', *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 2:4 (Feb. 1965).

100 A. Alier, 'Obstructions on the way to the solution of the Southern problem', *The Vigilant*, 7 Dec. 1966.

101 G. Muortat, 'Why the South boycotted elections in March 1965', *The Vigilant*, 26 Aug. 1966; Editor, 'The Sudan Communist Party in disguise', *The Vigilant*, 12 Dec. 1966.

102 'The anti-south campaign', *The Vigilant*, 31 Aug. 1966.

103 NARA RG 59 A1 5676, Box 6, Despatch from British Ambassador, 6 Jan. 1966, copy in POL 4.3, 'Southern Front'.

104 Alier, *Southern Sudan*, 29–40.

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the Southern Front became distinct – if still sometimes overlapping – groups.[105] William Deng became an advocate of federation, and his SANU faction intermittently articulated a political vision that went beyond the south, but the contrast seen by some between a federalist SANU and a secessionist Southern Front may be overstated.[106] The Front was pragmatically careful to emphasize its insistence on the principle of southern self-determination, rather than on the outcome; and William Deng put his energies into a developing partnership with the emerging leader of Umma, Sadiq al Mahdi, rather than into building wider alliances in the northern provinces. Divisions among southern politicians were ultimately driven by the competition to be recognized as the unique voice of the south – since that alone gave them a claim to be heard. Suspicious of one another, the politicians were also jealous of alternatives, fearing that, as one British diplomat noted, northern politicians might be 'tempted to regard the tribal leaders, and not the politicians, as the true representatives of the south'.[107]

The question of elections revealed their rivalries, and dilemmas, very cruelly. In Khartoum, the high politics of the years after the October revolution revolved entirely around elections to a Constituent Assembly, which was to devise a new constitution to replace the transitional one hastily adopted at independence. Umma and the NUP, each plagued by internal divisions, vied for control of this Assembly because – while they were agreed on the need for a unitary constitution which affirmed the Islamic and Arabic nature of Sudan – it offered control of government, and therefore of patronage resources, to these squabbling sectarian parties.[108] For this reason, both Umma and NUP refused to heed calls from some northern politicians to ban SANU and the Southern Front: they wanted southern support in the Assembly, and so southern representatives – potentially 60 of the 218 members – were 'used as a tactical weapon in the political conflicts of the Northerners'.[109] The northern parties also faced a new degree of international pressure from the United States, a source of loans and development aid, which was urging the need for 'elections to establish a Southern leadership to negotiate'.[110]

The rivalry and neediness of Umma and the NUP created an opportunity for southern representation – but it also placed the Front in a quandary. They insisted that they favoured elections in which 'the Southern people will express their free choice'.[111] But they were evidently uncertain of their prospects. The Front's leaders could hardly visit the southern provinces at all and any kind of extensive travel or campaigning was completely impossible; but Santino Deng, the most egregious of turncoat politicians, had formed a Sudan Unity Party with financial support and political protection from

105 Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans*, 115; NARA RG 59 A1 5676, Box 6, POL 1, Memo, G. Mennon Williams, 2 Apr. 1965.
106 NARA RG 59 A1 5676, Box 6, POL 4.4, R. W. Stookey, 'Southern organization and leaders', 25 May 1966.
107 UKNA FO 371/190418, Griffith, British Embassy, Khartoum to FO, 26 Nov. 1966.
108 A. Sikainga, 'Northern Sudanese political parties and the civil war', in M. Daly and A. Sikainga (eds.), *Civil War in the Sudan* (London, 1993), 78–96; G. Warburg, *Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan since the Mahdiyya* (London, 2003), 144.
109 Akol, *South Sudan*, 45; 'The debate on the South', *The Vigilant*, 11 Sept. 1966.
110 NARA RG 59 A 1 5676, Box 1, Weathersby, US Embassy Khartoum to Dean Rusk, State Department, 23 Apr. 1966.
111 'Southern Front rejects the validity of electoral rolls', *The Vigilant*, 27 Dec. 1966.

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NUP.[112] One diplomat caustically remarked that the Front was 'nervous about risking its claims to mass support in the South by putting them to the test of elections'.[113] There was some truth in this. 'We all want free elections', mused Luigi Adwok, a senior member of the Front, but 'elections are only a deal between voters and politicians': would the Front succeed in making such a deal?[114]

The Front initially decided that it would contest elections, as 'a boycott of the elections would result in the return unopposed of "undesirable" southerners, or even northerners, to parliament to represent the south'.[115] But after a new wave of government repression, which saw a series of massacres systematically targeting educated men and women in the south, the Front decided on a boycott when elections were finally held in the southern provinces in 1967.[116] *The Vigilant*, characteristically, claimed that this reflected opinion in the south: 'The majority of Southerners think that he [*sic*] elections will not serve any purpose.'[117] Unable to demonstrate southern unity, or their claim to represent that unity, through electoral success, the Front fell back on the naturalizing logic of racial difference. Logali gave a speech referring to 'our negro heritage of which we were and are intensely proud'. The acuteness of the dilemma facing these politicians was revealed in contradictions: in the same speech Logali reportedly offered some scholarly reflections on the 'fabricated' nature of the distinction between Arab and African, yet concluded with the announcement that '[o]ur paramount aspiration is to negritude.'[118]

William Deng's SANU, by contrast, did participate. At a public event in Khartoum in 1966, Deng insisted that 'SANU was the only party which really represents Southerners' and that 'too many people were now claiming to speak for the South, and only elections would show who really had the right to do so'.[119] SANU, supported by Umma, was able to campaign – though only in certain constituencies in one province, Bahr el Ghazal. Howell argued that ethnicity, kinship, and local status were key elements in SANU's campaign; for a brief moment, it seems, southern politicians were able to undertake the sort of political work described by Frederick Cooper for elsewhere in Africa, of engaging with the voter as 'a citizen ... of a localized community as well as of a nation'.[120] Before the elections, diplomats had been dismissive: 'no one expects that the newly elected deputies – who will appear in Khartoum in April – will be valid spokesmen of southern opinion'.[121] But SANU won 10 of the 18 seats that it contested, changing the view of US diplomats:

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112 'Umma party nominates for 32 constituencies in the South' and 'PDP report on elections in the South', *The Vigilant*, 20 Jan. and 14 Feb. 1967; Editor, 'To go and to see', *The Vigilant*, 26 Oct. 1966; 'SANU attacks NOUS', *The Vigilant*, 20 Sept. 1966.

113 UKNA FO 1090/1, Griffith, British Embassy, Khartoum to FO, 14 Jan. 1967.

114 SAD 932/1/4–6, Luigi Adwok, 'The possibility of free elections in the South', 13 Oct. 1966.

115 NARA RG 59 A1 5676, Box 6, 'Southern Sudanese leaders – information memorandum', 13 Jan. 1965.

116 'Symposium', *The Vigilant*, 18 Oct. 1966; Editor, 'The killing of chiefs at Bor', *The Vigilant*, 9 Jan. 1967; 'What security means in Upper Nile', *The Vigilant*, 27 Jan. 1967; Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans*, 129–35.

117 'Report from the South: By our own correspondent', *The Vigilant*, 23 Jan. 1967.

118 H. Logali, quoted in 'The Southern Problem: barriers on the way to a solution', *The Vigilant*, 2 Dec. 1966.

119 As reported by a British diplomat: UKNA FO 371/190417, Owen Griffith, Khartoum to Dodds, Foreign Office, 21 Mar. 1966.

120 Howell, 'Political leadership', 217–19, 223; Cooper, 'Possibility and constraint', 178.

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> SANU's unexpected success would appear to give it a strong edge over the other important southern party with headquarters in Khartoum, the Southern Front of Clement Mboro, which boycotted the elections … the elections, given the difficult circumstances, were reasonably free.[122]

Mboro insisted that 'none of the parties that participated in the election has real popularity as such in the South'.[123] But Deng's bullish declaration that 'Southerners turned up in full strength' to vote and that 'SANU enjoys the confidence of the majority of the Southerners' was a direct challenge.[124] As a British diplomat observed, the Front's boycott 'may well prove to have been a serious strategic error'.[125] And so the Front committed itself to the alliance with Mahgoub, and to new elections to be held in 1968.[126]

The Vigilant began to carry stories suggesting that 'normality' was returning to the southern provinces.[127] Clement Mboro and Hilary Logali travelled to the south, to follow a closely circumscribed and scrutinized campaign circuit. A photograph shows Logali addressing a small audience in the administrative centre of Malakal, watched by uniformed administrators.[128] Logali later claimed to have addressed a 'great throng' at a rally in Juba; but in 1968, a contemporary observer was struck by 'the sullen apathy in towns towards the politicians', which suggests the limits of the public politics of speeches.[129] The Front campaign strategy otherwise relied on exhortations to racial unity and discipline directed largely at an audience in Khartoum: 'the South' was 'inhabited by people of one racial stock'; south and north were 'two distinct ethnic groups' and the Southern Front spoke 'in the name of the South'.[130] A correspondent wrote that 'the fight between North and South is one between a master race and kaffirs'.[131] As northern parties discussed an explicitly Islamic constitution, the Front declared that it spoke for 'Southerners of all religions' – but particularly for 'religious minorities', and that *shari'a* law threatened 'the African way of life' which the south embodied.[132]

While the Front persuaded external observers of its claims to represent the south, SANU's candidates won more votes, as well as more seats.[133] As one candidate later

121 NARA RG 59 A1 5676, Box 6, POL 14–1, 'The Southern Sudan–insurgency and elections', 31 Mar. 1967.
122 NARA RG 59 A 1 5676, Box 6, POL 14–2, 'Information memorandum', Matthew Looram, 18 Apr. 1967.
123 'Clement Mboro condemns election results', *The Vigilant*, 14 Apr. 1967; Editor, 'Election results', *The Vigilant*, 16 Apr. 1967.
124 The latter phrase is used twice in a short press release: UKNA FO 1090/1, SANU press release, 29 Apr. 1967.
125 UKNA FO 1090/1, British Embassy, Khartoum to NENAD FCO, 15 Apr. 1967; see also Malwal, *People and Power*, 91–3.
126 'SF ready to contest general elections', *The Vigilant*, 16 Mar. 1967; Albino, *The Sudan*, 68.
127 'Clement returns from the South and says situation is improving', *The Vigilant*, 14 Nov. 1967; Editor, 'Situation in southern Sudan', *The Vigilant*, 21 Nov. 1967; 'Reports from the South', *The Vigilant*, 5 Dec. 1967.
128 *The Vigilant*, 14 Nov. 1967.
129 SAD 890/2, 'Autobiography of Hilary Paul Nyigilo Logali', 119–20; SAD 919/6/54–67, R. O. Collins, 'Equatoria'.
130 'Southern parties conference opens tonight', *The Vigilant*, 12 May 1967; Editor, 'Assembly and the incidents in the South', *The Vigilant*, 28 Nov. 1967; 'Clement's address at the inauguration of the Southern Front Youth Congress', *The Vigilant*, 19 Dec. 1967.
131 'How justifiable is the word "brother" in northern Sudanese usage?', *The Vigilant*, 27 Apr. 1967.
132 'For thought', *The Vigilant*, 28 Apr. 1967; 'Southern Front explains stand after walkout of constitutional committee', *The Vigilant*, 14 July 1967; 'No guarantee for religious minorities under a new constitution', *The Vigilant*, 29 Dec. 1968.

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recalled, SANU's campaign again blended speeches with private appeals to locally influential men:

> We would go out and say ... we are SANU, we stand for a federal system of government ... we are for unity of our people, we are in Africa ... We talked with the people first. Then we would talk with the chiefs and elders, talking separately with them as leaders of the community.[134]

But SANU's success was a barren one. Within days William Deng was murdered, allegedly by soldiers acting on the orders of northern Sudanese opponents of Sadiq el Mahdi.[135] Factionalism and rivalry among northern parties meant that Umma's sponsorship was no protection against violence.

After the election, the Front maintained its uneasy alliance with Mahgoub. The Front and William Deng's now leaderless SANU each continued to insist that they represented the south – and to accuse one another respectively of having 'sold the South to the Arabs', or of being under the control of 'a certain particular tribe' (an unsubtle accusation of dominance by Dinka from Bahr el Ghazal).[136] Neither could avert the drafting of a constitution that defined Sudan as Islamic and Arab. As a US diplomat wrote wearily in April 1969, '[t]he northern parties are almost totally involved in trying to get or stay in power, and thus have very little time to devote to any of the country's pressing problems.'[137] In May 1969, junior army officers inspired by Nasser's vision of social and economic revolution seized power, and the Constituent Assembly was dissolved.

CONCLUSION

Just before Nimeiri's coup, Joseph Oduho – former Liberal Party politician, later SANU founder, co-author with William Deng of *The Southern Problem*, and by this time a prominent 'outside' politician – denounced the southern politicians of Khartoum in an interview with a Kenyan newspaper: 'the majority of people in the South', he declared, 'regard them as stooges'.[138] A few months later, British diplomats implied that Oduho himself lacked influence in Sudan.[139] The late 1960s had seen a further flurry of splits among the outside politicians, even as they maintained their insistence that southerners 'are suppressed indiscriminately as a single subject race'.[140] Still hopefully pursuing finance from US diplomats – who mocked them as a 'scrubby bunch' – they now claimed to form governments, as well as parties.[141] Blending the languages of race and religion, Aggrey Jaden wrote a letter posted

133 NARA RG 59 A 1 5676, Box 1, Leo, US Embassy Khartoum to Looram, State Department, 13 Mar. 1968; also POL 12 Elections, 1968, Memorandum, 'Notes on revised elections worksheet method', 16 Apr. 1968; Arop, *The Genesis of Political Consciousness*, 152–4; Abushouk, *Al Intikhabat*.

134 Interview with Toby Madut, 4 Feb. 2009.

135 Malual, *People and Power*, 42–3.

136 I. M. Akoc, 'The southern parties', *The Vigilant*, 9 Feb. 1969; A. W. Akoc, 'The upheavals of Southern politics', *The Vigilant*, 23 Feb. 1969.

137 NARA RG 59 A 1 5676, Box 1, Noel, US Embassy Khartoum to Looram, State Department, 19 Apr. 1969.

138 *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 4 May 1969; copy in UKNA FCO 39/480.

139 UKNA FCO 39/686, White, British High Commission, Kampala to Walker, FCO, 20 Feb. 1970.

140 'Rivals plan secret talks in Sudan', *Uganda Argus* (Kampala), 7 May 1969, copy in UKNA FCO 39/480; Albino, *The Sudan*, 118.

141 NARA RG 59 A 1 5676, Box 1, Beauveau Nalle, US Embassy Kampala to Edward Schaefer, 24 June 1968.

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from Italy in the name of the 'Southern Sudan Negro Provisional Government', declaring that 'we are fighting against the powerful Arab Muslim army of the NORTHERN SUDAN to prevent the genocide the Arabs are committing against the peaceful Christian population of SOUTHERN SUDAN.'[142] Ephemeral 'capitals' were established just inside Sudan's borders to which adventurous journalists were invited; *Voice of Southern Sudan*, moribund since 1965, was revived and subtitled 'Voice of the Nile Republic', still bearing the 'Negritude and progress slogan'.[143] But in mid-1970, a spokesman for the Nile Provisional Government, the most prominent of these phantom bodies, announced that it had dissolved itself, having failed in its mission.[144]

Even as they pursued this extraverted display, the outside politicians' claims to leadership of the insurgency foundered. The insurgents of the early 1960s had initially been an uncertain coalition of disparate fighting bands, former mutineers among them: the single term Anyanya implies a unity that rarely existed. But in the late 1960s, a single leader, Joseph Lagu, used his preferential access to external supplies of weapons and money from Israel to create a new cohesion amongst the various insurgent groups. This process has itself been built into the teleological history of southern representation, as the moment when the soldiers, tired of the 'unceasing rivalry among the politicians' shouldered them aside to assume leadership of the south.[145] By 1970, the failure of southern politicians seemed complete.[146]

Their failure was apparently confirmed in the wake of the Addis Ababa peace accord signed by Lagu and Nimeiri; the ensuing years of 'regional government' in the south were a period of constant internal rivalries.[147] Yet their task was an impossible one: to represent a community that always seemed more tangible to the external observer than it did from within. The powerful idea of the southern problem authorized – indeed, demanded – the representation of the south by an educated elite, even as it cast the south as a 'state of exception'. But they were denied power and resources, increasingly physically isolated from the southern provinces and collectively suspect in the eyes of their distant constituents. Though they won external sympathy, this brought them no significant support. Representing the south through a vivid language of racial nationalism gave these men space to talk about the increasingly desperate circumstances of those who lived in Sudan's southern provinces – but almost no space at all to create a civic culture of politics by engaging with the possible futures imagined by these putative citizens.

142 SAD 944/5/45, Circular letter, Aggrey Jaden, 23 May 1968.

143 'No Merc minister', *Sunday Nation* (Nairobi), 28 Dec. 1969; 'Tucked away in Africa ¼ race war threat of a new Biafra', *Daily Mail*, 2 Mar. 1970; 'BBC despatch from Nairobi by Peter Stewart', 18 Apr. 1970; 'Sudan–the death', *The Economist* (London), 1 Aug. 1970: all cuttings in UKNA FCO 39/686; *Voice of Southern Sudan*, new series, 3:5 (1969).

144 'Nile "government" is dissolved', *Uganda Argus*, 22 July 1970, copy in UKNA FCO 39/686.

145 E. N. Wakoson, 'The Southern Sudan: the political leadership of the Anya-Nya movement', in Post Independence Sudan, *Proceedings of a seminar held in the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1998*', 86–109, quote at 108. See also Johnson, *The Root Causes*, 33; Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War*, 56, 116, and 195; Howell, 'Political leadership', 272; and Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans*, 154.

146 Wai, *The African-Arab* Conflict, 114–15.

147 E. N. Wakoson, 'The politics of southern self-government, 1972–83', Daly and Sikainga, *Civil War in the Sudan*, 27–50, 47.

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