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Sudan: *Sharia* in the North, *Anya Nya* in the South

The Sudan continued during 1983/84 to drift deeper into political instability and economic decline that seemed to evolve with the inevitability of some malevolent natural force.¹ Indeed, in more than one sense, the country was moving backwards on more than one front. The arbitrary and controversial policy decisions to re-divide Southern Sudan into three separate regions and to adopt the Islamic *shari'a* code were unnecessarily divisive and disruptive within the existing economic and political context. The high-handed way in which these decisions were imposed on a population increasingly wary of the politics of despair and rhetoric, only served to reawaken the forces of division between the North and South and to strain relations within each region. The tensions and discontent in Southern Sudan spilled over into wide-scale violent confrontation.

These developments had repercussions on the economy and foreign relations. The prospects for Sudan's oil potential were clouded in uncertainty. The regime reverted to the familiar strategy of assigning all the blame to "agents of international communism" for the problems besting the country; as a result, relations with Ethiopia and Libya reached a new low, and the regime moved towards a more overt military association with the US. As event marked a coalescing of opposition forces into armed resistance with ideological overtones, the communist 'bogy' invoked by the regime might yet turn out to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

The main political development in recent years has been the growth of a highly autocratic style of government with a predictable habit of adopting controversial and often self-defeating policies, and emasculating its own formal institutions. Paradoxically, this autocratic attitude tended to harden as traditional opposition forces became more factionalized and, conversely, as opposition in the North and in the South began to assume a new militancy.

The 'Third Mandate' Programme:

President Ja'far Muhammed Numeiry delivered his keynote address to the Fourth National Congress of the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU) on 26 February 1983. He presented an eight-chapter platform for his third presidential term of office. Its main aspects dealt with attempts to rectify the malaise in the political organization. It began by rejecting the multi-party system as 'incapable of shouldering the tasks of development in a newly independent state' [sic]. Instead,

it stressed the 'historic necessity' of national unity within the 'melting pot' of the SSU in order to create a populist organization based on 'social forces'. The programme questioned the accessibility of SSU membership to the masses in the past, and blamed dominant groupings within the organization for "failing to voice the genuine will of the people".²

The reiteration of the rejection of the multiparty system 14 years after its demise seemed to demonstrate rather than explain the failure of the SSU to take popular roots. Nor was the failure to attract mass membership a source of concern to all sections of society; many Sudanese, in fact, shunned the organization precisely because of its "all-embracing nature and the popular perception of it as a government organ. The programme attempted to resolve the 'ambiguity' in the relationship between the political and executive organs of government; but the proffered prescription was more likely to compound the ambiguity than to dispel it. On the one hand, it stressed that the SSU would not exercise authority over executive organs, but should devote more attention to "definite programmes of problem-solving action"; on the other hand, it defined the role of the SSU central leadership as "formulating higher policy and stimulating more popular debate and discussion".

The proposed reforms of the SSU basic rules also included guaranteeing freedom of expression to its members. But this reform was apparently negated by the rider providing for measures to ensure internal discipline including setting-up a central disciplinary committee with procedures and sanctions. In view of previous calls by SSU partisans for disciplinary action against members who had belonged to the former

opposition and who had been critical of Government policy, it was evident that the committee's function would be to further stifle any signs of dissent within the SSU.

Although events had emphasized the need for drastic changes and radical reforms of the political institutions, the programme for the 'third mandate' did not give the impression that such changes would be forthcoming. Indeed, the whole trend seemed to indicate that the regime's institutions would become even more rubber-stamp for President Numeiry's policies. This became amply evident when the SSU Fourth National Congress duly endorsed the 'third mandate' programme and 'unanimously' re-nominated Numeiry as its presidential candidate.

The 'Leader-President':

Numeiry was re-elected by a 99.6% majority for a third six-year term of office in May 1983. This landslide was presented by the government-controlled media as a "true mass demonstration" of support for the President. An editorial in the official monthly *Sudanow* in May 1983 described this development as a "very interesting phenomenon" and added:

For the first time, popular participation in the campaign has introduced a substantial well of support to the plebiscite process: in this case a competition to assure a record of registration of those eligible to vote and the mass participation of those registered...The administration of the plebiscite itself has transformed the role of the SSU cadre offering them a more vital function from simply voting the 'correct way'.³

The political realities, in fact, had little to do with the efficiency of the SSU in running presidential elections and still less with the virtually unanimous vote. In various parts of the country—particularly in the South—people were beginning to vote with their feet and, increasingly, with their rifles. The nature of the presidential system centering on President Numeiry was inherently incompatible with real democratic practices or popular participation.

Indeed, one of the ironies of the political system in 1983, was that while the administrative map of the country now consisted of eight regional governments—each with its own governor, executive Cabinet, Regional Assembly and administration—the Sudan was, for all practical purposes, bereft of any effective institutions. Instead of attempting to arrive at some form of political consensus, the President had retreated progressively into self-imposed isolation, discarding advice and, seemingly, believing only in his own political infallibility. According to one foreign observer, "Numeiry had failed to make his party, the SSU, into anything than a bureaucratic repository for politicians he wants to neutralize. His secret service, not the SSU, became his executive arm. Any emerging nucleus of power whether in the armed services or among politicians, was divided, ostracized or imprisoned".⁴

Numeiry's autocratic tendencies had been encouraged by several factors. First, the disorganization and factionalism of traditional opposition forces, inside and outside the country, had precluded the emergence of serious rivals to his position. The apparent lack of any viable alternative might have encouraged the President to feel he had little to fear in terms of concerted opposition to his rule. At the same time, after so many years in power, Numeiry had become insensitive to the impact of his actions and intransigent in the face of any opposition, real or imagined, to his policies. Even his advisers were aware, as one of them put it that "The best advice was to offer no advice at all".⁵ His inner circle told him what he wanted to hear. The President had also tended to provoke unnecessary crises and then adamantly refused to make any concessions to defuse them. The politics of confrontation replaced the art of compromise. A case in point was the crisis in the Judiciary during 1983 when the President brought the whole legal process to standstill after his summary, mass dismissal of Judges who had protested at his remarks about corruption and lethargy in the legal profession.

The 'personalization' and tribalization of regional politics in Southern Sudan, which was reflected in the decision-making at the national level, gave Numeiry the justification and power not only to manipulate Southern politics but, ultimately, to dismantle the whole experiment of autonomous rule under the pretext of expanding it:

The 'imperial presidency', without passing any value judgment on it as such, can be discerned in many forms of government, ranging from an absolute autocracy to a federal system. But it negates the basic assumption inherent in devolution of power. In the Sudanese experience, the political environment obscured the institutional framework, and the political leadership invoked both to dominate in each. The realities of the power situation had a logic of their own which, defying constitutional interpretation and conventional political wisdom, had retarded and, indeed, reversed the progress towards political stability and national integration.⁶

Spokesmen for the regime were sensitive to charges of an all-powerful and high-handed presidency and tended to rationalize it on the rather shaky grounds of the constitutionality of the President's actions. "Clearly, the key to the relationship between democracy and power does not lie in the number of hands in which various powers are concentrated. The answer rather lies in the issue as to whether or not those who have these powers exercise them in accordance with the rule of law".⁷ Since the President was also the law-maker, this rationalization actually begged the question,

After the re-division of the South into three regions (see below) the Sudan had eight regional governments, all ultimately responsible to the President in Khartoum ruling with the assistance of an enlarged circle of advisers. The official view was that such an

arrangement would make for a devolved system of government in which important decisions would be taken at the local level. However, to critics of the regime, it was “merely a way of enhancing presidential government, ridding Khartoum of the scourge of party politics and keeping the regions acquiescent and malleable”.⁸

The Shari'a 'Judicial Revolution':

Although the issue of Islamization had been the centre of popular speculation and political debate for a long time, the official introduction of the *shari'a* came as a stunning surprise. As recently as the SSU Fourth National Congress in February 1983, the issue still seemed to have been left in abeyance. The President's programme emphasized the need for building religious consciousness by uplifting individual morals and social well-being. It also pointed out that the transformation would require a long-term strategy: revising the existing laws would be a slow, cautious process during which the state must strive to “promote its moral values”.⁹

Apparently throwing caution to the winds, Numeiry announced a new penal code on 8 September 1983 which enforced the *shari'a* law to deal with all crimes. He explained that in view of escalating crime throughout the country, he had decided to readjust the penal code with the purpose of integrating it structurally and spiritually with *shari'a* law. He reiterated that “no remedy had so far-reaching effects on crime deterrence as Islamic law”. He termed the move to implement *shari'a* as 'the judicial revolution' to achieve 'efficient justice' (al-'Adala al-Najiza).¹⁰ In an interview, the Chief Justice, Dafalla al-Haj Yousif, said that “the reformation of the Judiciary, which became a matter of urgency in the President's third term, required changes in both the structure of the judiciary and legislation”.¹¹

The new Islamic laws would apply to foreigners and Christians, as well as Muslims. According to the President's adviser, Hassan al-Turabi, (the unofficial leader of the Muslim brothers), the step was not necessarily an imposition of religious law on non-Muslims, but it was practically difficult to make an exception for any sector”.¹² In a subsequent decree, the President freed all 13,000 inmates of Sudan's prisons because they were not sentenced in accordance with Islamic law; each prisoner received S£100 (\$60) to “make a new start in life”.¹³

The reactions to the *shari'a* measures were not long delayed. On 21 September the Archbishop of Khartoum and other Church leaders addressed an open letter to the President in which they strongly objected to “the institution of *shari'a* law as a system for administering justice for all the people in Sudan”. Southern students at Khartoum University issued a statement vehemently denouncing the *shari'a* measures, which they blamed on the influence of the Muslim Brothers.¹⁴ The prevalent view of Southerners was that Numeiry badly needed funds for his depleted economy and introduced the Islamic laws under pressure of, or to curry favour with, Saudi Arabia”.¹⁵

It was ironic that though convicted criminals were released en masse, political prisoners were not affected by the amnesty and new political figures were detained. Among these was the former *Ansar* leader, Sadiq al-Mahdi, and many of his supporters. The official explanation was that he was put in protective custody “as a result of internal family squabbling caused by Sadiq's false claim to succeed his late uncle al-Hadi al-Mahdi as *Imam* (of the *Ansar*)”.¹⁶ Such an explanation was as implausible as it was naïve. Sadiq’s real crime was his public criticism of Numeiry’s *shari’a* measures in Omdurman on 24 September 1983. Although he was an ardent supporter of Islamization, Sadiq objected to the incomplete manner and circumstances of its application. “If the distribution of wealth is unjust and the means of lawful sustenance are blocked to the poor and unemployed”, Sadiq said, “and if, meanwhile, the opulent acquire wealth through unlawful means, then applying the punishment for theft in such a society will only lead to enhancing social injustice. Islamic *hudud* (legal sanctions) cannot be separated from the Islamic political system which strives for justice in all spheres of life”.¹⁷

Opposition to the imposition of *shari’a* law was also evident among secularist elements in the North, but this could only be articulated through exiled opposition groups and the radical clandestine underground. The exiled opposition dismissed Numeiry’s resort to Islamization as merely a cosmetic attempt to cover up the deteriorating conditions in the country.¹⁸ Other Islamic opposition elements argued that the adoption of *shari’a* by a “corrupt and discredited regime” could only result in undermining the ideals of Islam itself, thus paving the way for ‘atheist’ groups.¹⁹

The explanations offered for Numeiry’s decision to enforce *shari’a* law were various and sometimes contradictory. Some observers assumed a measure of controlled political scheming on his part: some saw it as a move in line with the increasing impulsiveness and unpredictability of his state of mind; others attributed it to his own conversion to Islamic purity. Thus the move was seen as a strategy to appease Saudi Arabia, from which he needed financial support, and its local allies, the Muslim Brothers, from whom he sought political support. Conversely, it was regarded as an attempt to undercut the growing influence of the Muslim Brothers by co-opting their ideological platform. Related to this was the argument that the President desperately wanted to divert popular attention from the economic and political problems engulfing the country. In this sense, the adoption of *Shari’a* was an attractive option, providing him with a clear and unassailable ideological stance and, at the same time, pre-empting the continuing crisis in the Judiciary following the Judges’ strike.

The Saudis did, in fact, declare support for the *shari’a* and expressed readiness to assist Sudan to implement it. On the other hand, the Saudi media gave extensive coverage to Sadiq’s critical speech which was not allowed to be published in Sudan. There were also signs of strain in the President relations with the Muslim Brothers. In a speech

marking the 12th anniversary of his assumption of the Presidency, Numeiry warned that “no one can claim guardianship of Islam”²⁰—a theme which he pointedly reiterated in another speech on the anniversary of independence on 1 January 1984. These warnings were unmistakably directed against the Muslim Brothers who had been zealously active in promoting the implementation of *the shari’a* since the measures were announced in September. According to one observer:

The Muslim Brotherhood is now politically prone. It is popularly identified as the main influence behind the *sharia*, and with a minimum of manipulation could therefore be ostracized, even apolitically annihilated, on grounds that it is seeking supreme power by devious means.²¹

The President might find it politically advantageous to clip the wings of the Muslim Brothers following the implementation of Islamic laws. Yet, it is unlikely that this calculation was part of an elaborate scheming before the event. After all, in introducing *shari’a* law, the President had seriously eroded his previously important power-base in the South and, arguably, within the Army—a high risk to take in order to appease to depose the Muslim Brothers. On the other hand, the improvised nature of the *shari’a* decision, the confusion and ad hoc clarifications in the process of its implementation, tended to suggest that it was more of a manifestation of the President’s impulsive style of decision making than a calculated political strategy. Another reason often mentioned was that Nmeiry was becoming increasingly religious: “The impression is that he has now turned more fully to Islam as a means of insulating himself from the more conventional and more onerous means of survival”.²²

The *shari’a* decision was taken without prior consultation with the President’s own institutions or his Egyptian allies who’ in accordance with the Integration Charter, should have been consulted before important policy decisions were taken. While this need not necessarily imply a decline in Egyptian influence in favour of the Saudis, the move was certainly an embarrassment to the Egyptian leadership. Besides tending to destabilize the internal situation in the Sudan, thus exposing Egypt’s southern flank, the Islamization measures also put the Egyptian regime under pressure from its own Muslim militants (compared to whom, the Sudanese variety was indeed a model of moderation).

SOUTHERN SUDAN

The introduction of Islamic law fuelled the already spreading unrest and discontent which had its origins in the slow pace of economic development and in the acute divisions within Southern politics. The President’s decision to re-divide the South into three separate regions brought the tension and unrest to boiling point.

The Re-division Issue:

Following the now familiar pattern of government by presidential fiat, Numeiry decreed on 5Gune 1983 not only the re-division but also the capitals and the governors of the new Southern regions. Daniel Kot became Governor of Upper Nile Region with its capital at Malakal; Lawrence Wol Wol, Governor of Bahr el-Ghazal with capital at Wau; Goseph Tambura, Governor of Equatoria with Juba as capital. The Regional Government were to hold power for 18 months after which regional elections would take place.

Numeiry presented the re-division of the South as the culmination of his policy of devolution for the country as a whole. The official view was that separate regions limit wasting energy on tribal conflict, and would give the South a stronger voice in the affairs of the nation: “the experience of the autonomous South which, after all, comprises practically one-third of the country has revealed the disadvantages of the concentration of power in the regional capital and the majority people [i.e. the Dinka tribe]. Such a practice has proved to be detrimental to both provincial capitals and minority people”.²³

But while the implicit notion of curbing Dinka power found support among the smaller tribes, particularly in Equatoria, many Southerners feared that re-division would weaken the South *vis-à-vis* the North. “The irony was that the southern experience was invoked in justifying the division of the North, and the latter was used to rationalize the re-division of the South”.²⁴

The proliferation of Regional Governments in the country (eight in all) tended to strain the political and economic resources of the country.²⁵ According to one observer, “so far the net effect has been the creation of a new layer of administrators and a new layer of parliamentarians and support staff without any hope for generating adequate tax revenues for the additional expenditure”.²⁶ Even before re-division, it was clear that the prospects for tranquility in the region were remote without dramatic infusions of funds, over and above the levels provided by foreign donors.

The re-division issue was further complicated by the ambivalent attitude of Southern leaders. Some observers found it surprising that most prominent leaders who, earlier were bitterly opposed to re-division, nevertheless accepted leadership positions in the newly-created regional governments. In Bahr el-Ghazal, the Cabinet make-up was 100% anti-divisionist while in Upper Nile the figure was 77%. Only in Equatoria was the Regional Cabinet 100% re-divisionist. These appointments seemed to serve a two-fold purpose. Besides sweetening the bitter pill of re-division, they placed the appointees in the position of convincing their people of the advantages of the new arrangement in terms of developmental benefits and bringing government and services nearer to the people.

Resurgent Insurgency:

Even before re-division became a political reality, the South was becoming the tragic scene of mutinies by southern army units and of general lawlessness. The acrimonious debate over re-division added to the tensions within the region itself and further strained North-South relations. In early 1983 a new guerrilla movement calling itself *AnyaNya II* began active operations in the South. The Bor garrison in Upper Nile mutinied when it was ordered to move to another area, and held out against government forces from January to May 1983. These troubles increased support for the AnyaNya II rebels who were reported to be increasing in numbers and sophistication.²⁷ In June, five foreign works were kidnapped on Boma plateau. At least 70 government troops were reported to have died in mid-to-late September 1983 in clashes with AnyaNya rebels. In mid-November, Numeiry announced in a press conference in Paris that the 'so-called Sudanese People Liberation Army' had kidnapped expatriate workers of Chevron oil company and of Jonglei canal and that the rebels demanded a halt to work on the canal, an end to exploration for oil and cancellation of Islamic laws. The President said he would not heed 'the threats of cowards' and that the necessary security measures would be taken.²⁸ In early February 1984, rebels overran Chevron company complex in Bentiu, killing three foreign workers and wounding at least seven others.²⁹ A few days later Chevron announced it was suspending all its operations in the area because of the security situation.³⁰

The rebellion began as a resurrection of the AnyaNya—the movement named after a deadly poisonous insect which had waged a 17-year struggle from 1956 for Southern rights and which ended with the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972 that gave the three Southern Provinces a considerable degree of autonomy within a quasi-federal system. However, new opposition, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), was established with its own armed wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The manifesto issued by the SPLM explaining its background and objectives is reproduced in the Documents Section in this volume.³² The SPLM rejects the secessionist aims of the *AnyaNya*, and sees the struggle against the Numeiry regime as 'national struggle' involving all Sudanese, irrespective of whether they are Muslims or Christians, Northerners or Southerners. They have appealed to all anti-Numeiry elements throughout the country to rise in support of their armed struggle to overthrow the present regime. The best known among the SPLM leaders is the veteran politician, Joseph Oduho, who first gained prominence in the original *AnyaNya* movement. He is chairman of the SPLM's Political and Foreign Affairs Committee.

The SPLA is led by a young army officer, Col John Garang de Mabior, who graduated as a doctor of economics from an American university. He is one of more than a score of senior officers who absconded from the national army, along with an estimated 2,000-3,000 privates. This trained professional military force formed the core of the army

that was rapidly mobilized and trained in the South. The Khartoum regime alleges that they were being trained in Ethiopia, The SPLA appealed to *the AnyaNya II* rebels to join them; many appear to have done so, but by no means all. This led to some difficulties between the two rebel forces. While the SPLA's policy is not to engage in conflicts with AnyaNya II supporters, they have made a number of punitive attacks against units who have misbehaved by looting villages and raping peasant women. The SPLA sees the *AnyaNya II* rebels as a largely ill-disciplined force which is in need of proper training.

However, the old secessionist feelings of a section of Southerners still live on; the new idea of a 'national struggle' propounded by the SPLM was not immediately accepted by all Southerners. But anti-secessionist views were reported to be strong, especially among the younger, better-educated generation of Southerners who, by all reports, have rallied behind the SPLM. This younger generation of Southerners appears to be an important new political force in the country.

The most serious disagreement between the SPLM and *AnyaNya II* was over the latter's attack on Chevron's Bentiu camp. The unit responsible for the attack was rounded up by the SPLA for questioning and possible disciplinary action. The SPLM's policy is not to harm any foreigners working in the South, and not to drive away the foreign firms engaged in developing the oil industry and building the Jonglei Canal. But they have attached conditions to their promise of security for those engaged in these projects. Letters were sent to the directors of Chevron and Total companies, as well as to the CCI managers, setting out SPLM policy towards their operations. These letters were signed by Joseph Oduho. The oil companies were told that the SPLM has declared the entire South Sudan as War Zone 1, and they were advised to withdraw their staff without delay to avoid accidental killings, damage to property and machinery, and 'inevitable political complications'. The letter was to be taken as 'a formal and final warning'. It explained that SPLM wishes to make it possible to maintain the installations and property, but demands that the companies should, in future, complete negotiations with the SPLM and have no further dealing with the Sudanese Government concerning the South. The companies were assured that the SPLM 'welcomes and appreciates' their activities, recognizes their right to exploit any oil discoveries they have made, or may make in the future, and has no intention of substituting other companies for them. However, while the struggle against the Numeiry regime continues, the letter advised the oil companies to "keep out of the way and stop their present activities".

The complaint made in the ultimatum to CCI is that the original proposals for the construction of the Jonglei Canal had not been observed. As originally envisaged, parallel canals were to be constructed alongside the main canal to enable peasants' cattle to get to the water. Instead, it is alleged, all the work had so far been concentrated on building the main canal; high banks had been erected, preventing the cattle and the peasants from

getting to their only water supplies. Thousands of cattle were said to have perished by falling off the high embankments in their desperate effort to get to the water.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As the regional and international implications of the worsening security situation in Southern Sudan became more serious. The regime found itself with dwindling room for manoeuvre; it saw itself as under attack by foreign enemies, who were accused of conspiring to subvert its authority. The curious assortment of alleged plotters ranged from Ethiopia and Libya, Iran and Cuba, to France, the BBC and the Western media in general. Sudan's foreign policy approach was two-fold: to blame pro-Soviet neighbours for destabilizing the internal situation, and to use this argument to strengthen the military and economic ties with the US.

The Regional Dimension:

The uncertain situation in Chad continued to present a constant problem. The regime's main concern was the Darfur region (a stronghold of the *Ansar*) on the Chad border, which was vulnerable to unchecked cross-border movement. Numeiry was therefore determined to prevent a return to power of Goukouni Weddeye, which, in his view, could provide the Libyans with bases in Eastern Chad. In June and July 1983, when the Libyan-backed forces of Weddeye overran the northern half of Chad, Numeiry and President Mubarak jointly pledged support for Hissène Habré forces. The Sudan also provided facilities for the American forces and AWAC planes to check the Libyan-backed advance in Chad.

In September 1983, the President accused the Soviet Union, Libya, Iran and Ethiopia of plotting against his regime with the assistance of Iraq Ba'athists, Sudanese Marxist and elements of the defunct Sudanese religious sects. The President blamed this hostility on the fact that "Sudan has driven communist thought and the Soviet presence not only from Sudan but also from the whole region". There were other reasons for this elaborate plot: Sudan had advocated and worked to make the Red Sea a neutral zone, and it provided 'strategic depth' and a southern flank for the Egyptian army. According to the President, some dissident Sudanese politicians and leaders of the exiled Sudanese opposition had "met recently in Moscow and worked out a joint plan of action for subjecting Sudan to Soviet hegemony".³³

The Khartoum media reported Ethiopian violations of Sudanese airspace. In November 1983 the Government accused Ethiopia of massing 1,000 troops, supported by 150 Cuban and Soviet advisers as well as military aircraft and heavy equipment on the border.³⁴ The Sudanese First Vice-President Gen Omar Mohamad al-Tayeb, denounced

what he called “ a foreign–inspired conspiracy” and referred to “the Kremlin plan implemented by Havana, financed by Tripoli and trained by [Addis Ababa]”.³⁵ Ethiopia and Libya were alleged to have master-minded an attack by Southern rebels in which more than 30 Cubans took part. The Government declared a state of emergency and put the armed forces in maximum alert.

Ethiopia issued a “categorical denial” of troop concentrations on the border, which they described as being “very calm”. Its Foreign Minister rejected Sudanese allegations of Ethiopian involvement in Southern Sudan, and suggested that these allegations were intended to distract attention from internal problems and to convince the Ragan Administration that “Sudan was facing real danger, apparently to get more military assistance”.³⁶ In December 1983 the foreign press reported the arrival in Sudan of Egyptian aircraft, presumably to support the Sudanese army in its operations in Sothern Sudan following the clash with rebels in Nasir township in which 424 rebels were reported to have been killed.³⁷

The introduction of the *shari'a* laws exposed the Sudanese regime to sharp criticism from the Western media. In retaliation the Government attacked the BBC for what was called a “malicious and rabid campaign” employing a “long-term strategy” to cast doubt on the introduction of Islamic law.³⁸ Numeiry attributed the campaign begun by the BBC to “the distorted picture deeply rooted in Western minds as a result of the practices that had occurred in Iran”.³⁸ The Presidential Adviser on Information deplored the disturbing fact that “the coverage in the Western media have chosen to focus almost exclusively on the penalties of amputation and stoning with a view to making the new penal code appear inhuman”.³⁹

In a curious incident, the Sudan News Agency carried a report by a ‘friendly diplomat’ in France alleging that the French, in collusion with the Libyans, were involved in a plot to sabotage the construction of the Jonglei canal project.⁴⁰

Sudanese-Ethiopian relations had always been governed by a balancing act whereby mutual deterrence was effected through the presence of dissident groups of each country in the other. This balance required a workable level of good neighbourliness; any deterioration of relations could only disturb it. With the resurgence of conflict in the South, any disturbance of this balancing act was obviously not to the advantage of the Sudanese Government. According to one commentator:

If the Ethiopian regime feels it has a chance of forging a compromise with the Eritreans, even the Tigreans, it may be tempted to prompt Numeiry’s downfall by supporting *Anyanya II* enough to enable the guerrillas to wage a war of attrition. The logic would be that a new regime in Khartoum would be more open to Ethiopian suggestion for ‘solving’ the Eritrean and Tigrean conflicts.⁴¹

Developments in the Sudan were also having repercussions in other areas. The Egyptians were reported to be disturbed by the introduction of Islamic laws, both for domestic reasons and for their divisive impact in Southern Sudan. While the security arrangement and defence agreements between the two countries were not likely to be affected, the Egyptians might now be reluctant to implement fully the Integration Charter with the Sudan.

In East Africa, events in the Sudan were also becoming a source of concern. An editorial in the *Weekly Review* of Nairobi stated that:

The application of Islamic law in the South is most certainly going to make an explosive security situation even more dangerous than it already is. President Numeiry has charged that Libya and Ethiopia are behind the current troubles in the South. He should perhaps look closer to home for the origins of these troubles. If he is reluctant to do so, friendly statesmen elsewhere should offer their good offices to help him avoid another round of carnage in Southern Sudan.⁴²

The American Connection:

In mid November 1983, President Numeiry embarked on a four-nation trip to Italy, France, Britain and the US. The European leg of the trip was mainly meant to counter some of the hostile press he had been receiving because of the *shari'a* measures. The American trip was, partly, for his medical check-up and, partly, to solicit more economic and military aid. The American Administration seemed receptive to the President's allegations of external threats. President Reagan reaffirmed his determination to assist African countries threatened by 'Libyan aggression'. In a press conference in Washington, Numeiry described the US as "the only country in the world that provides real and unconditional assistance to developing countries"⁴³.

The American interest in the Sudan obviously went beyond simple charity. Not only was its geopolitical position in the horn of Africa considered strategically important, but it was also a country where the West had made a heavy economic investment, such as Chevron's. A Jack Anderson report in the *Washington Post* revealed that the American Administration had sent a secret mission to the Sudan; according to a highly sensitive State Department cable, there was "evidence of a growing externally-sponsored insurgent threat to Southern and Western Sudan".

To American strategists this means "the need for an effective Sudanese counter-insurgency capability". As a result, the Pentagon had sent a "security evaluation and assistance team" to the Sudan. Because the project had "high political sensitivity" the American counter-insurgency experts were travelling incognito in the Sudan. The American team was supposed to develop plans for protecting "proposed oil facilities in Southern Sudan against an insurgent threat". The team would also evaluate the Sudanese

ability to deal with the insurgents. A possible operational option would be the dispatch of US special forces to train the Sudanese in counter-insurgency.⁴⁴ The London magazine, *New African*, reported in December 1983 that US marines were stationed in Ruh Kona to protect the security of Chevron Oil's exploration in the Bentiu area.

If, as reported, the Southern rebels had indeed a Marxist wing whose significance in the orientation of the SPLM/SPLA was not yet clear, then active American involvement in the survival of the Numeiry regime would most likely strengthen this Marxist faction just as the American overt presence would certainly intrude on Northern Sudanese perceptions of their own independence.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS (1.9 Sudanese Pounds = £1; S£0.8 = 41)

While the economic outlook continued to be bleak, some sectors were beginning to revive. The economy came under scrutiny as the process of organizing 1984's package for financial support from donors, creditors and the IMF moved to its final stages. Their conclusion was that:

Although still facing major debt and economic constraints, Sudan has at least 'performed up to scratch' this year. Repayment obligations to Club of Paris and commercial bank creditors have been met—although at a total of \$50m, they represented no more than a gesture of intent.⁴⁵

Cotton production was estimated to have improved for the second year running. With Kenana factory up to full production of over 300,000 tons, the country was likely to be self-sufficient in sugar. This would ease the balance of trade position since sugar was previously the second major drain on foreign exchange after petroleum. The government also increased its efforts to control public spending, money supply and unnecessary imports, most recently with the Central Bank curbs on commercial bank lending imposed in August.⁴⁶

The construction of the Sudan's oil export pipeline was scheduled to start early in 1984, following the award in October 1983 of the \$380m pipeline contracts to an Italian-led consortium. The decision to pipe the oil direct to the Red Sea for export had raised resentment among Southerners, who wanted a refinery to be built at Bentiu to help develop the Southern region. The rebels had threatened to sabotage the construction of the pipeline. After guerrilla attacks on the oil site at Bentiu, Chevron announced in February 1984 that it was suspending all operations because of the security situation. According to one commentator, "A growing anti-Americanism in the South, because the US is identified as Numeiry's military backer, has now extended to Chevron".⁴⁷ Any delay in the construction of the pipeline would adversely affect any prospect of improving the country's moribund economy. The badly needed foreign exchange would,

however, help Sudan to recover at least partially from its huge debts now estimated at \$7bn.

The introduction of Islamic laws also injected an element of uncertainty and confusion in the economic field. “The economic, as much as political and social consequences of the move are still far from clear—and often contradictory statements from government and religious bodies have not helped. The resulting upsurge in speculation and rumour-mongering has done little to improve confidence in Sudan’s still fragile economic future”.⁴⁸ Many foreign donors were already concerned about the threat to political stability caused by the escalating security problems in Southern Sudan. The attitude of Sudan’s major Arab donors was also uncertain, but according to *Africa Economic Digest*, the consensus among Western donor agencies was that, without further clarification of Sudan’s future under Islam “nobody is going to bend over backwards to help like they did last year”.⁴⁹

The ban on alcohol under the new *Shari’a* law also had its impact on the economy. The loss of customs and excise revenue was estimated at c. \$100m a year. Without exemptions for foreign firms, it was expected that there would be increased demand for transfers and non-renewal of contracts by expatriate staff, while recruitment would become more expensive.⁵⁰

NOTES

¹ For previous surveys of Sudan, see all 15 volumes of Africa Contemporary Record (ACR) 1968-69 to 1982-83

² *Sudanow*, Khartoum, April 1983

³ *Sudanow*, May 1983

⁴ Charles meynell, *The Times*, London, 1 Novemebr 1983

⁵ *Le Monde*, Paris, 4October 1983

⁶ Mohammad Beshir Hamid, “Devolution and the Problems of National Integration in the Sudan”, Paper presented to the Marga Institute *Dialogues on Devolution and Ethnicity*, 12-17 December 1983, Colombo. Sri Lanka.

⁷ Mohammed Othman Abu Sag, *Sudanow*, November 1983

⁸ *Africa Confidential*, London, 22June 1983

⁹ *Sudanow*, April 1983

¹⁰ *Al-Sahafa*, Khartom, 9 September 1983

¹¹ *Sudanow*, October 1983

- ¹² *The Guardian*, Manchester, 3 October 1983
- ¹³ *Marchés Tropicaux*, Paris, 7 October 1983
- ¹⁴ *Africa Now*, London, November 1983
- ¹⁵ *The Guardian*, Manchester, 7 December 1983
- ¹⁶ *Sudanow*, November, 1983
- ¹⁷ Sadiq's speech was distributed in pamphlet form, 24 September 1983
- ¹⁸ *Al-Dastur*, London & November 1983
- ¹⁹ *Al-'Alam*, London, January 1984
- ²⁰ *Al-Sahafa*, Khartoum, 21 October 1983
- ²¹ *Africa Confidential*, London, 19 October 1983
- ²² *Ibid*
- ²³ Abu Sag, *op.cit*
- ²⁴ Hamid, *op.cit*
- ²⁵ According to some observers, President Numeiry might well in due course create a ninth region. "It would be called Unity Region and would bestride the North and South of the country, taking in the recently troubled Abyei district in southern Kordofan and the Bentiu area of Upper Nile where the American oil company Chevron's main wells are situated ... Such a neat solution encapsulating not only the Abyei problem but also taking Bentiu out of the troubled South, while at the same time appearing to promote North-South harmony, is a piece of inspired, if opportunist thinking". *Africa Confidential*, 22 June 1983.
- ²⁶ Peter K. Bechtold, "the Contemporary Sudan," *American-Arab Affairs*, No 6, Fall 1983
- ²⁷ *Daily Nation*, Nairobi 27 September 1983
- ²⁸ *BBC Summary of world Broadcasts* ME/7494/1 18 November 1983
- ²⁹ *The New York Times*, 3 February 1984
- ³⁰ *Ibid*
- ³¹ *Sudan News Agency (SUNA)* 11 February 1984
- ³² See Documents, Political Affairs
- ³³ *Weekly Review*, 9 September 1983
- ³⁴ *The Guardian*, Manchester, 21 September 1983
- ³⁵ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* ME/7523/A/1 22 December 1983
- ³⁶ *The Guardian*, 21 November 1983
- ³⁷ *Le Monde*, Paris, 22 December 1983
- ³⁸ *The Guardian*, 5 October 1983
- ³⁹ *Al-Sahafa*, Khartoum, 1 December 1983
- ⁴⁰ *Africa Confidential*, 19 October 1983
- ⁴¹ Hilary Ng'weno, *the Weekly Review*, 11 November 1983
- ⁴² SUNA 27 November 1983
- ⁴³ Jack Anderson, *the Washington Post* 19 October 1983
- ⁴⁴ *Africa Research Bulletin*, Exeter, 15 November-14 December
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid*
- ⁴⁶ *AED* 9 December 1983
- ⁴⁷ *Africa Confidential*, 19 October 1983
- ⁴⁸ *Daily Nation*, 27 September 1983
- ⁴⁹ *AED* 18 November 1983
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*