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Notes on Sustaining Peace in Sudan: Prospects and Challenges

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The peace agreement which was signed between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on 9 January 2005 in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, came as a result of internal and external developments within the Sudan, Africa and in the world politics. Various actors in the country and beyond had shown interest in seeing to it that a peace agreement is achieved. The January 2005 peace agreement have therefore opened the way for the remaining conflicts in the country, namely the conflict in Darfur and eastern Sudan to be resolved using the Naivasha agreements as a model.

The suspicion and the lack of confidence between the Northern and Southern Sudanese politicians is considered to be the main setback, which could lead to further conflicts during the interim period (2005-2011) in the Sudan. This mistrust is manifested in two parallel levels. There is the **North-South scepticism** on the one hand, and the **mistrust between the Sudanese elites/politicians and their constituencies** on the other.

- ✚ Immediately after the signing of the Machakos Protocol Framework in July 2002, a **Southern Sudanese chief residing** in Khartoum was asked whether he was for the unity of the two regions, or in favour of secession of the South from the rest of the country after the interim period. Instead of answering the question in a direct manner, he offered the following analogy:

“There was a blind man who was invited by some men to enter a house where a new bride was made ready for him to receive. The man stopped at the door and did not move and said to his friends: I will not enter the house until I am certain of what you are inviting me for. Either the bride touches me or takes me personally

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into the house, because I am afraid that you will force me inside and find it a prison or a door, which will lead to my death”. [Rayaam, 20 February 2004]

✚ As regards the feelings of mistrust between Sudanese elites and their constituencies, a **Southern Sudan Paramount Chief** was quoted as saying, to a professional Southern Sudanese politician:

“I know very well that for you the Southern politicians, we are like spoons for eating fresh hot meals. We endure the heat so that the food reaches your mouths fresh and cold.” [Rayaam, 20 February 2004]

Moreover, one cannot appreciate the basis on which the Machakos and Naivasha peace processes (**May 2002-January 2005**) were conducted, unless one recognises that **these peace road maps were informed by three historical and ideological realities**, which engendered the problem in Southern Sudan, specifically throughout the past fifty years. These ideological realities may be categorised into three paradigms, two of which were introduced into the Sudanese politics by Southern Sudanese political and military groups:

✚ The ‘**Old Sudan**’ refers to the existing state structures of the Sudanese central government, as inherited from the Anglo-Egyptian colonial state in 1956. The supporters of the ‘Old Sudan’ paradigm, while acknowledging the existence of several inherent structural problems in power and wealth sharing dynamics in the current system of the government, call for symbolic reforms within these structures, which would not necessarily do away with the current quota arrangement between the riverine Northern elite and the so-called marginalised regions (**Mabior 1997; Yoh 2003c**).

✚ The ‘**Two Sudans**’ paradigm originally came into being as a result of Southern Sudanese attempts to convince both the Anglo-Egyptian colonial powers and

various Sudanese central governments that the South was in possession of distinct historical, political and socio-economic realities, which were not necessarily similar to those prevailing in the rest of the country. This paradigm was initially a modest call in the 1940s and 1950s, for an autonomous status for the South. In the 1960s this called developed into secession from the rest of the country and by 1990s it settled on the right to self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan.

- ✚ The package of reforms, which the ‘**New Sudan**’ advocates, involves establishing a new political contract between the centre and the peripheries – a deal that should accommodate a new basis for restructuring power and wealth distribution in the country. The paradigm, which is propagated by the SPLM and its Northern progressive allies, also proposes that such a restructuring process should favour the regions, and not the centre. It also advocates the substitution of Arab-Muslim cultural domination by a ‘New Sudanese’ cultural affiliation, to which the majority of the Sudanese are historically and culturally linked, and that this new identity should be governed by a secular system of governance.

The Machakos and Nairvasha **road maps have explicitly spelled out a number of the issues, while its drafters have chosen to be vague on others.** This vagueness has introduced, unintentionally perhaps, contradictory methods for the resolution of the Sudanese conflict, especially on the following issues:

- ✚ The first issue is whether the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress (NC) will be committed to **democracy and the secularism** of national politics as viable options for the post-interim period’s political, economic and judiciary permanent arrangements between the South and the North.

- ✚ The second contentious issue is that of the **unity of the country**, and what this means, in terms of post-interim period permanent arrangements, especially in relation to power and wealth sharing between the centre and regions, including the South. The SPLM is in favour of a new dispensation altogether.
- ✚ Then there is the issue of **self-determination**, and the impact it will have on national politics, especially during the post-interim period permanent arrangements (constitutionally and politically) should the South opt to secede from the rest of the country.
- ✚ **The political map of Northern Sudan, like that of the South is very complex and diverse.** Unlike the South, however, the political forces of the North, while they differ on the ‘type’ and the levels of reforms to be introduced in post-war Sudan, are in total agreement on the necessity to maintain the unity of the country. They would do everything in their power to ensure that the country remains united. They include NDA alliance, Umma Party, the splinter groups of Umma and DUP, Baathists, Islamists, and other progressive forces in the North, etc..

When addressing post Machakos and Naivasha peace process **dynamics in Southern Sudan**, and the manner in which the peace agreement will be implemented, the following questions may be posed:

- ✚ Will the SPLM leadership try to **isolate** the other **Southern political forces**, or will it opt to appease some and antagonise others? What will be the nature of the **current alliances between the SPLA and Northern Sudanese opposition parties**, especially those in the NDA, during the interim period? Will the **Southern Sudanese** political and military organisations, opposition parties that are currently involved in love-hate

relationships with the SPLM, **opt to unite against SPLM leadership during post-war Southern Sudan administration?**

- ✚ On the other hand, two parallel, **opposing ideological trends exist within the SPLM** – those who prefer a **united secular democratic Sudan**, in alliance with the so-called marginalised areas (Darfurians (Zegawa, Fur, Masalit, Beja, Nuba, and Ingasana in Blue Nile), and those who **envisage the path of self-determination as leading to secession of the South**, as the best manner in which to solve the Sudanese conflict. What will happen during the interim period if the SPLM leader, **Dr John Garang, decides to ally with one particular trend, thereby sidelining the other?**

When discussing **external actors and alliances**, the **neighbouring countries** to Sudan come to mind. The current IGAD member states (**Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti and Uganda**) have their own **interests and internal problems**. Some of them, such as Uganda and Ethiopia, have signed security and economic cooperation agreements with the National Congress government, while maintaining good relations with the SPLM.

- ✚ **Eritrea** is not in a good relationship with both Khartoum and Addis Ababa, although it has close ties with the SPLM.
- ✚ **Uganda** perceives the prospect of peace in Sudan, as an opportunity for it to uproot the Acholi led Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from Southern Sudan.
- ✚ **Egypt and Libya** have signed controversial integration pacts with the Sudanese government, which may lead to serious misunderstandings with the SPLM during the interim period. For example, the NC and the Egyptian governments signed an integration agreement in January 2004, dubbed the 'four freedoms' pact.
- ✚ On the other hand, a considerable number of Southern Sudanese seem to feel that the Troika that brokered the Machakos Consensus (**USA, UK, Norway, plus Italy**), have little interest in bringing about a lasting and

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just peace in the country. Rather, they seem to be interested in an open-ended and long-term ceasefire agreement, whose fate or success will be left to circumstances during the interim period.

✚ There are **other countries**, whose economic interests and political sympathy with either side of the Sudanese conflict, during the interim period, will inevitably determine the course, which the implementation of the peace agreement will take. These countries and organisations include China, Russia, South Africa, Nigeria, India, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, the UN, the EU, the AU, the Arab League countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Yemen etc.) , the World Bank, and the IMF.

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