Devolution and National Integration in the Sudan

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> Would it not then
> Be simpler for the government
> To dissolve the People and
> Elect another?
> Bertolt Brecht, *The Solution* (1954)

The problems of national integration have plagued many countries, particularly in the third world where ethnic, religious and cultural differences have in some instances brought the state to the verge, if not actually into the abyss, of national disintegration. These problems are by no means confined to developing countries; in some of the most developed ones the traditional fabric of society has been threatened by similar forces, as in the case of Britain, Canada and the USA.

Since the early 1970s, devolution of power in various forms and degrees has been advocated as a strategy for resolving minority problems by preserving national unity while recognizing the sense of nationality in the component parts of the state. Indeed, even in relatively homogenous societies, such as France, devolution of power has become a pressing constitutional issue as a means of arresting or reversing centrifugal trends. It has been argued in some countries that the immense increase in the range and complexity of modern government and the resultant overconcentration of responsibility has tended to produce a situation of constitutional malaise characterized by "anaemia in the extremities and apoplexy at the centre" (*Royal Commission*, 1973, p.87).

While some form of devolved system of government is seen as an indisputable necessity, there are certain differences, and even some confusion in regard to the operational terminology, political objectives and institutional structures of devolution. Conceptually, the term devolution is used differently in different contexts and the confusion is not made easier by the apparent discrepancy between theory and practice in some cases where the devolutionary system has been adopted.

The purpose of this study is to examine the basic assumptions underlying the concept of devolution and to relate them to the experience of the Sudan in adopting this system for resolving conflicts between regional and ethnic groups. The study is divided into five sections. The first examines some of the problems in defining devolution; the second deals with the historical, political and ethnic sources and manifestations of the problems of national integration. The third section examines the institutional framework of the devolutionary approach to these problems,

while the fourth seeks to analyze critically the operative political factors that, in practice, tend to negate, if not to reverse, the devolutionary process. The conclusion sums up the Sudanese experiment in devolution assessing the inherent contradictions of the devolved system that seems to be leading the country in the opposite direction to the one originally envisaged.

DEVOLUTION:

Devolution of power, like many other terms, is subject to different interpretations. It is often used interchangeably with decentralization, and is sometimes referred to as a phase to which decentralization can evolve. H. Maddick views decentralization as embracing "both the processes of decentralization and devolution". (Maddick 1963, p.23) He, however, makes the distinction that devolution is a nonhierarchical concept, the essence of which is autonomy or system separateness involving "the legal conferring of powers to discharge specified or residual functions upon formally constituted local authority". (Maddick, 1981) In the UN report on *Decentralization for National and Local Development* (complied by Maddick) decentralization is defined as "the transfer of authority away from the national capital whether by deconcentration (i.e. delegation) to field officers or by devolution to local authorities or local bodies". M Alassam defined the term along Maddick's lines as "the legal transfer of power, irrevocable by any other law, to persons elected or selected as representative of the local authority". (Alassam 1983, p.12)

According to Lord Kilbrandon's *Royal Commission on the Constitution*, the most advanced forms of devolution involve the exercise of power by persons or bodies who, although acting on authority *delegated* by Parliament, are not directly responsible to it or to the central government for their actions.' (Royal Commission 1973, p.165, emphasis added):

> Powers would be transferred to the region to determine policy on a selected range of matters, to enact legislation to give effect to that policy and to provide the administrative machinery for its execution. Parliament would still retain the power to legislate for the regions on all matters, but.... it would be inconsistent with this degree of devolution for the powers to be used without agreement other than in exceptional circumstance. (Ibid, p.250)

Within the British context, V Bogdanor defines devolution as the process involving "The dispersal of power from a superior to an inferior political authority. More precisely it consists of three elements: the transfer to a *subordinate elected body* on *a geographical basis*, of *functions at present exercised by Parliament"*. (Bogdanor 1979, p.2, emphasis in original) According to D. Hart "decentralization entails the *delegation* of authority to subnational entities". (Hart 1972, emphasis added)

Philip Mawhood regards the introduction of the term 'devolution' by Maddick and others as irrelevant and unnecessarily confusing; he objects in particular to the generalization of the concept of decentralization into a blanket term covering both deconcentration and

decentralization. Mawhood makes a clear distinction between the two and relates his definition of decentralization to Talcott Parson's levels of social control:

> Decentralization is taken, at Parson's 'value/goal' levels, to mean the sharing of part of the governmental power by a central ruling group with other groups, each having authority within a specific area of the state. At the level of 'norms' it indicates the existence of formal political structures, each covering a defined area, representing local interests as well as the interests of the central rulers; the local share of allocating power is protected by the formal as well as by the normative rules which are accepted by the centre. At the level of 'collectivities and roles' it means unit of local government in which formal decision-making is primarily exercised by locally representative councilors or officials. (Mawhood 1983 p.4)

A major source of the confusing terminology is the convergence on the subject of the various disciplines of public administration, political science, business administration and administrative theory. In the study of public or private management the interchangeability of the terms (decentralization, delegation, devolution etc.) is not a problem because the operational concepts are relatively clear. But when applied to government, these terms have to take account of the more complex problems of power-sharing in politics -- problems which are, indeed, paramount to a definition of government's own role in society. Since, as Mawhood rightly observes, "a definition, like a theoretical model, is adopted not because it is true but because it is useful", it might be helpful in the light of the above definitions to determine what does not constitute devolution of power in government in order to arrive at a better understanding of the term. Whether, after this process of elimination, it is called 'devolution', 'democratic decentralization' or simply 'decentralization', might arguably become a matter of academic choice, and while this would certainly not reduce the confusion in the terminology, it might perhaps make for a better insight into the subject-matter.

In the first place, devolution of power is not delegation or deconcentration of functions. Delegation denotes relinquishing certain functions from the competence of the centre to local personnel or institutions. These functions, however, still remain within the original control of the delegating authority and could be revoked from the jurisdiction of the recipient. Thus, delegation is an administrative technique of transferring authority without guaranteeing local jurisdiction or preventing interference from the centre. Similarly, the transfer of central functions to local or regional units of government departments is not devolution because it does not necessarily entail any sharing of power or decision-making. Indeed, in developing countries, this stratagem can be seen as a means of increasing the power of the centre in the process of appearing to dilute it. Field and regional administrators are not the same as local and regional government, and "to disperse concentrated blocks of decision-makers is not to decentralize decision". (Barrington, p.2; Alassam 1983, p. 11)

Devolution has sometimes been equated with a federal structure of government. But whereas the basis of federalism lies in a constitutionally guaranteed division of powers between coordinate

and independent levels of government, devolution is a function of preserving the unitary attributes and the national sovereignty of the state by devolving power to local and regional areas in order to ensure their popular participation and sustain their distinctive qualities and aspirations. This obviously need not imply that devolution is inapplicable within a federal framework, but only that its nature and functions in a unitary state are different. While devolution is not identical with federalism, a devolved structure can conceivably evolve in the federal direction.

Devolution is thus not just another form of administrative scene-shifting that is irrelevant to all beyond a restricted circle of decision-makers or that is so hedged by qualifications and central supervision that power devolved is, in effect, power retained. Conversely, devolution is not a process of pervasive and seeping inertia that could provide one or more of the component parts with a convenient fulcrum for the transition to secession and independence. Nor is it merely the negation of centralization, which would mean anarchy; it represents, instead a meeting-point for harmonizing centre-periphery relations and, particularly in the case of multi-racial and multi-cultural societies, for 'unity in diversity'.

To understand further the real meaning of devolution of power it is essential to examine some operational definitions of the subnational units into which the system is assumed to devolve. Maddick defines local government and authority as "a sub-unit of government controlled by a local council which is authorized by the central government to pass ordinances having a local application, levy local taxes or exact labour, and, within limits specified by the central government, vary centrally decided policy in applying it locally". (Maddick 1963, p.23) S. E. Sadek refines this broad definition by giving local authority a legally endowed 'corporate status' making its existence relatively separate from the state; local government is governed by a body usually elected but sometimes appointed or including central appointees." (Sadek 1972, p.8) Mawhood defines local government as a unit which has "its own budget and a separate legal existence", with authority granted to it by the central government to allocate substantial resources on a range of different functions. (Mawhood 1983, p.4)

Regional government as distinct from local government, or more specifically as constituting another tier in centre-local relations, involves a more complex set of relationships that necessarily entails a measure of autonomous rule through the creation of executive and legislative organs. Sometimes the term 'regional' is used synonymously with 'local' government. Indeed, the whole notion of 'regionalism' is fraught with confusion because yet again different interpretations, in different languages and contexts, are given to a term which is freely and variably used in different disciplines. In international studies, for instance, regionalism or regional organization refers to a group of countries having in common certain characteristics that make for regional unity or, at least, for some form of political, economic or ideological affiliation (e.g. the OAU, the EEC, and the League of Arab States). In geography, 'region' refers to areas of similar physical aspects; in public and business management it denotes an administrative unit. In terms of devolution of power, it refers to a sub-national political unit or a territory within which

there is a strong ethnic and cultural awareness. The 'region' can be defined as "an area broader than the large administrative unit (province) for which the underlying integrative factor might be the economy, further unity conducting to better disposal of services or the like. Thus in most cases the region is meant to incorporate more than a single local unit, yet in a limited range of instances the two coincide, totally or approximately". (Sadek 1972, p.8)

In the final analysis, and regardless of whatever definition might be applied to a devolutionary process, it would be misleading to regard 'devolution' as a value-neutral and invariably relevant system to whatever country that might be considering it or, indeed, in need of it. The ultimate relevance, and the real test, of devolution in any given situation is not so much in the theoretical assumptions underlying it or the institutional arrangements outlining it, as it is in the nature of the historical realities and the political factors favouring or constraining it. In this sense, the Sudanese experience in devolution is of significance to other third world countries, more, perhaps, for exposing the difficulties and contradictions of achieving a national consensus within a devolutionary context than for providing a blueprint for resolving the problems of national integration.

THE PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION:

The largest country in Africa, (nearly one million square miles) the Sudan occupies a key and, in more than one sense, a unique position between the Arab and African worlds. Straddling the frontiers between Islamic and non-Islamic Africa and between Arabic-speaking areas and the rest of the continent, the Sudan has common borders with eight countries: Egypt in the north, Ethiopia in the east, Uganda, Kenya and Zaire in the south, and the Central African Republic, Chad and Libya in the southwest, the west and the northwest respectively. The country's location astride these strategic and cultural boundaries cuts across significant ethnic and linguistic units which are important sources in the politics of identification in the Sudan.

The unique Afro-Arab character of the Sudan had been viewed from different perspectives by Sudanese scholars, from both the south and the north. A southern viewpoint by Dunstan M Wai argues that, "The Sudan is a diverse country in its physical and environmental setting, racial and ethnic groupings, variety of life, and competitive religious and ideological relationships… The Northern Sudanese consider themselves Arab; the southern Sudanese consider themselves as Africans. The sharp Afro-Arab schism negates the notion of one Sudan and one people". (Wai 1979) Muddathir 'Abd Al-Rahim, a northerner, maintains that the great majority of northerners feel that they are equally Arab and African, without any sense of tension or contradiction:

> The fact that they are predominantly Muslim and Arab does indeed distinguish the northern Sudanese from their southern compatriots, who are mainly 'pagan' and, to a much less extent, either Christian or Muslim; but it does not mean that they are not African. As the only region in the continent - and indeed the world - in which the physical, racial, and cultural diversities of Africa as a whole are not merely represented but synthesized into a unique and unparalleled entity, northern Sudan may

in fact be described as more representative of Africa as a whole than any other country or region, including the southern Sudan. ('Abd al-Rahim 1973, p.43)

Francis M Deng, a southerner, regards the emphasis on the cultural and racial dualism of the Sudan and on Arabism in the north as being counter-productive: "The history of the Sudan shows that where strains of power struggle and the threats of indiscreet assimilation are removed through decentralization and the freedom of social intercourse is guaranteed, symbols of identification may be accepted or rejected on the basis of their own appeal and new strength". (Deng, 1973, p.108)

The people of the northern parts of the Sudan are Hamite-Semite descendants of successive waves of Arab migrations that left considerable elements of Arab-Islamic cultural identification among distinctive ethnic groups throughout the north. The people of the south belong to three ethnic categories, Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic and Sudanic, each of which falls into a number of subgroups.[1] Many of the southern tribes arrived in ancient migrations from the south, east, and west of the region, some have always lived in the area, and others were the result of the fusions of these main groups. Although the ancient history of the Sudan can be traced back to the third and second centuries B.C., its modern history as a political entity begun with the Egyptian and European penetration early in the 19th century. The Turco-Egyptian occupation from 1821 to 1885 provoked Sudanese resistance and ultimately inspired an Islamic and nationalist revivalism under the leadership of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, which culminated in the reconstruction of a politically independent Sudan.

While the legacy of Mahdism as religious sentiment and a political movement was to play a significant role in the development of Sudanese politics, the Mahdist state itself was short-lived. The Mahdi's successor, the Khallfa 'Abdullahi, was defeated in 1898 by the combined forces of Britain and Egypt. The re-conquest of the Sudan brought the country under the so-called Anglo-Egyptian condominium, a novelty in international law. Since Egypt itself was, in effect, a British protectorate, real control over the Sudan lay with the British. The political and administrative nature of this ostensibly 'dual rule' was to influence the evolution and orientations of the Sudanese drive for independence. The Mahdist followers, the *Ansar*, became increasingly identified with the movement for an independent Sudan linked with Britain to pre-empt the reestablishment of Egyptian influences. The rival religious sect, the *Khatmiyya*, became associated with Egypt under the slogan of 'unity of the Nile valley' as a means of countering British dominance. The emergence of major political parties followed the same sectarian lines with the Umma Party representing the *Ansar*, and the *Ashiqqa* Party(later the National Unionist Party) supported by the Khatmiyya.

It took the British over twenty years to bring resistance in various parts of the country, particularly in the south and the Nuba Mountains under firm control. After pacification, the British administration followed the age-old policy of 'divide and rule'. Instead of governing the country as one continuous territory, the British maintained a strict division between northern and

southern Sudan. In the early 1920s the system of 'indirect rule' was introduced. The emphasis was on local decentralized authority in the hands of tribal chiefs with a view of counter-acting the authority of the religious leaders and minimizing the number and influence of the small educated elite.

The bureaucratic paternalism of indirect rule which by the 1930s evolved into a more elaborate system of 'Native Administration', gave priority to preserving law and order and the *status quo* and not to political and social development. In southern Sudan, indirect rule became the administrative aspect of the 'Southern Policy' officially introduced in 1922, to build up a series of semi-contained racial or tribal units by encouraging 'tribal consciousnesses'. This meant the effective isolation of the south from nationalist currents then appearing in the north, by aggravating and perpetuating ethnic and historical differences, and by impeding the integrative process inherent in the natural course of nation-building. Northerners were progressively excluded from the south and restrictions were placed on the movement of southerners to the north. The tendencies for Islamicization and Arabicization in the south were restrained while European and American missionaries were given a free hand which enabled them to affect a limited Christianization of the region. According to some leading historians of the Sudan, "the southern policy entailed both the progressive separation of the south and the fostering of particularism within it. As in the north, the aim of the policy has been towards the cessation or reversal of trends towards homogeneity" [2]

After the end of the Second World War, British policy in the Sudan made a sudden volte-face and began to see integration of the south with the north. The precipitate change could be attributed to nationalist pressures, to the imperial considerations of a weakened colonial power, and to the related fact that no other alternative seemed feasible if the Sudan was to be prepared for some form of self-rule. But the damage done could not be so easily rectified. The differences between southerners and northerners were real enough, but these tended to overshadow the fact that neither group was monolithic in ethnic and cultural terms. The fear in the south of domination by the north was further fueled by the uneven levels of social and economic development of the two regions, and by the indifferent, and sometimes patronizing, attitude of the traditional political parties that had emerged in the north. The latent fears, suspicions and hostility broke out into the open on the eve of independence when southerner troops mutinied in August 1955. The mutiny, entailing great loss of life on both sides and the spreading of unrest throughout the south, was eventually put down and order restored. But it signaled a precarious advent to the independence of the country officially attained on the first day of 1956. [3]

The early post-independence period was marked by the intensification of sectarian rivalry and political divisions between and within the two major parties, the Umma and the NUP. The transplanted Westminster-style parliamentary system failed to take account of the realities of political life in the Sudan at both the national and local levels. The functions of representation, participation and education in government were neutralized by the sectarian politics of the traditional elite. The greatest failure was in the south where insensitivity to regional grievances

and aspirations, through either neglect or manipulation, was inexorably creating an explosive situation. The southern demand for a special status was not unreasonable and could, at least, have provided some acceptable basis for mutual accommodation. But none of the major parties could transcend its own sectarian interests to cope with the national content and implications of the southern issue. Nor did southern politicians prove less disinterested in pursuing personal ambitions and tribal interests. Northern actions, or more precisely the lack of them, increased disenchantment in the south, and - from a southern perspective – seemed designed to deprive southerners of any substantial share in the administration of the country.[4]

In November 1958, the military under General Ibrahim 'Abbud stepped in and terminated the uneasy and troubled existence of parliamentary government. The military regime attempted various formulae for resolving the problems besetting the country.[5] In southern Sudan, an aggressive Islamicization and Arabicization programme was adopted. The result was to further alienate southerners from the regime, Islam and the north. As Holt and Daly note, "Thus a policy which, had it been instituted in the early days of condominium rule could have served to produce a broader national character, appeared under the hands of the military to be aimed at suppressing an emerging though still unclearly defined southern identity." (Holt and Daly 1981, p.139) Bechtold places these policies in historical and cultural context by examining the premises of the junta's thinking:

> Islam and the Arabic language had, in fact, been the catalytic agents in creating a reasonably integrated, though not homogenous culture out of a multitude of ethnic tribes in the north; the thought that this same formula might also be applicable to the south was therefore not that strange albeit rather unsophisticated.

However well-intentioned these policies might have seemed from the junta's own point of view, they proved to be 'totally dysfunctional'. (Bechtold 1976, p.208)

Frustrated by its inability to come to grips with the complex problems of national integration and the rising discontent in the country, the military regime resorted to the politically simplistic formula of attempting to resolve the southern problem by force of arms. The result was to lock the country into a vicious cycle of escalating violence. Southern resistance was galvanized: a political movement was formed in exile in 1962 which emerged finally as the Sudan African National Union (SANU); and a guerrilla army, the *Anya-Nya*, as the military arm of SANU, was operating in the southern Sudan in 1963. The southern rebels were now openly fighting for secession and, in response, the government stepped up its increasingly indiscriminate military operations in the south. By 1964 some 300,000 southern refugees had fled to Uganda, the Congo (Zaire), Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic.

The intractability of the southern problem precipitated the downfall of the regime. Public opinion in the north expressed dissatisfaction with government policy in the south and discussion groups in the University of Khartoum concluded that no solution was possible so long as the military remained in power. Violent confrontations between students and government forces in October

1964 sparked a unique popular uprising that within one week brought down the military regime. The transitional Civilian government that assumed power in the wake of the October Revolution immediately began to reverse the repressive policy of the military and to move towards reconciliation with the south. It proclaimed a general amnesty and appealed to exiled southern leaders to participate in arranging a cease-fire and in starting negotiations.

In March 1965 the new government convened a Round Table conference in Khartoum to discuss the southern problem. Most major political parties, both northern and southern, participated in the conference. They discussed various schemes ranging from self-determination to a local government model, but reached no agreement on anyone of these. The northern political parties rejected self-determination on the grounds that no faction or part of the country had an absolute right to self-determine itself into secession. Federation was regarded as being prohibitive in terms of human and national resources as well as encouraging excessive localism. The northern parties agreed to consider regional government. The southern parties, however, were divided between the advocates of self-determination, and those who accepted a form of voluntary union. Although the southern and northern representatives made a secret agreement to exclude the two extremes of separation and the *status quo*, there was still little common ground.

The failure to reach agreement was not inevitable. The twelve-man committee, formed by the conference to continue the search for compromise, came up in 1966 with proposals on autonomous rule for the south, which were remarkably similar to those adopted later in the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972. But during 1965 the political and military picture had changed, the situation and developments inside the Sudan and around it were no longer propitious to a peaceful settlement, and the initiative on both sides passed to the advocates of a military solution. The southern political leaders had been sharply divided in their approach to a settlement and thus failed to present a common platform. At the same time, the *Anya-Nya* forces, who were not directly involved in the negotiations, were in the process of spreading, taking advantage of the relaxation of security measures and the suspension of the army's large-scale operations in the south. The real battles had to be fought not in the conference room but on the ground in the south; as the *Anya-Nya* gained strength, the influence of the more moderate southern politicians correspondingly declined.

In the north a similar process was taking place, for different reasons and in different forms but in the end contributed to a hardline policy. The radical foreign policy adopted by the transitional government not only undermined its liberal approach to the southern problem but also played into the hands of both the *Anya-Nya* and the leadership of the major political parties in the north. The support extended by the radically oriented government in Khartoum to African liberation - and sometimes secessionist - movements had alarmed conservative regimes in neighbouring countries. The governments of Ethiopia, the Congo (Zaire) and Chad had problems of integrating minorities of their own; they responded to what they considered Sudan's active support of their dissident groups by providing overt or tacit support to the *Anya-Nya.*

The beleaguered radical regime in Khartoum was also facing an onslaught from within. The traditional political parties, who chafed at their relative exclusion from power and resented the leftist composition and orientation of the government, were making a successful bid to reassert their political ascendency in the country. Faced with these internal and external challenges the influence of leftist elements rapidly declined. Following elections in April 1965, a coalition government was returned to power under the Umma Party leader, Muhammad Mahjub, who immediately readopted a hardline approach in tackling the Southern problem. The return of party politics, in fact, resurrected the old regional, sectarian and ideological divisions which became wider and sharper than ever before. As the parties become preoccupied with manoeuvering for political positions, they had neither the inclination nor the power to cope with the complex and deteriorating situation in the south, which they again conveniently simplified as a security problem to be handled by military force. Thus, the southern issue remained unsolved, and the attempt to find a workable formula for a permanent constitution continued to be a divisive element among and between northerners and southerners.

It was against this background of recurrent crises and potentially destabilizing conditions that the Sudan came under military rule for the second time since independence. In May 1969, young radical army officers under the leadership of Colonel Jaafar Muhammad Numayri staged a military coup and seized power from the civilian government. The radical sentiment of the army officers was shared and influenced by some leftists and nationalists groups who, inspired by Arab and African socialism, were committed to a policy of political and socioeconomic transformation in the Sudan. The new regime recognized the existing ethnic and cultural differences in the Sudan and offered a political solution based on regional self-government for the south.

There was no immediate response from southern opposition leaders, partly because of persistent suspicions and mistrust, and partly because the various southern movements were still fragmented and divided in their approach to the problem. In fact both the northern and southern leaderships were, at that time, facing internal power struggles and were thus preoccupied with consolidating their authority within their movements. Numayri had succeeded by 1970 in crushing armed resistance from the traditional and rightist parties, notably the Ansar. After surviving an abortive communist-inspired coup in July 1971, Numayri turned on his leftist allies and eliminated them from the political scene. At about the same period, the *Anya-Nya* leader, Joseph Lagu, was seeking to bring the different southern factions under his leadership. In 1971 Lagu succeeded in establishing a unified command over the *Anya-Nya* with a new political wing, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) under his direct authority.

In a curious way, the interests of the two emergent military leaders converged. After crushing both the rightist and leftist challenges, Numayri's regime was still precariously insecure and evidently felt the need of establishing both a powerbase and political legitimacy. Following his election to the Presidency of the Republic in October 1971, Numayri re-established contacts, begun earlier by the leftists, with the southern leadership and began to press forward with a

political solution of the southern problem. On the other side, Lagu was anxious to preclude any renewed intervention by southern politicians and to end the war on the best possible terms for the south. In short, both sides came to realize that "the conflict had become, for all intents and purposes, unending. The *AnyaNy*a had made the south virtually ungovernable, but an internationally recognized secession was far away as ever. The government was asking for unity, with everything negotiable". (EI Obeid 1980, p.l04)

The rapprochement was facilitated by external factors. Numayri's break with the leftists obviously encouraged the World Council of Churches, and the Haile Selassie regime in Ethiopia, to become more active in bringing the two sides together. But the success of negotiations in Addis Ababa was made possible because none of the two leaders was seriously constrained by opposing factions or felt accountable to any electorate or political constituency. Nelson Kasfir argues that "though northerners and southerners who participated in the negotiations both earnestly desired an end to the fighting…most northerners and southerners were probably opposed to the concessions made on their behalf." The negotiations were saved because Numayri moved to prevent any northern attempt to mobilize in opposition to the settlement, and because the southern leadership decided to come out in favour of the greater unity of the Sudan. Kasfir concluded that, 'if the Sudanese case is an exception to the rule that internal wars are never settled through negotiated compromise, it is an exception that proves the rule.' (Kasfir 1980, p.146)

THE DEVDLUTIONARV APPRDACH

The Addis Ababa agreement of 1972 provided a peaceful solution to the Sudan's most elusive problem and thus brought an end to the civil strife that plagued the south for almost 17 years. In a joint communiqué, the two sides stated that "with the restoration of peace and stability as their primary concern, both parties have outlined a political, legal and administrative framework within which regional aspirations can be fulfilled and national interests and sovereignty best preserved." (Foreign Affairs 1973, p.46)

The agreement was signed into law as the Southern Provinces Regional Self-Government Act, 1972, by President Numayri on 3 March and was officially ratified by both sides in Addis Ababa on 27 March, 1972. Under the act, the south would become a self-governing region consisting of the three provinces of Bahr El Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile.[6] The nature of the relationship between the central and regional governments was regulated in such a way as to retain for the centre control over matters of defence, foreign policy and trade, national economic planning, transport and communications, while the regional government was made responsible for the preservation of public order, internal security, administration and development in cultural, economic, and social fields.

The act provided the southern region with a legislative body, the People's Regional Assembly, and an executive body, the High Executive Council (HEC). The regional assembly, elected by

secret ballot, was entitled by a two-thirds majority to ask the President of the Republic to postpone or withdraw any central legislation deemed detrimental to the interests and welfare of the south. The regional assembly was also empowered by a three-quarters majority to request the President to remove the HEC president or any other member of the regional executive. The President had by law to accede to such a request. The HEC was made responsible for the government of the south, under the presidency of a chief executive nominated by the regional assembly and appointed by the President of the Republic.

The act gave the southern government an independent budget with revenues from regional taxes and a special fund to be set up by the central government. The representation of southerners in the national army was made proportional to their population, and the use of the armed forces in the south was placed under the authority of the President of the Republic to be exercised on the advice of the HEC president. The act stipulated that while Arabic would be the official language of the Sudan, English would be the principal language in the Southern Region. The south was to maintain its representation in the national assembly on the basis of universal suffrage and proportional representation. The act finally affirmed that the agreements could only he amended by three-quarters of the members of the National Assembly and the approval in a referendum by two-thirds of the citizens in the south.

The first difficulty in implementing the agreement was the time-factor: namely, how to bridge the period between the cessation of hostilities and the introduction of the first definitive law and the machinery by which it could be made effective. To circumvent the difficulty, interim arrangements were made to cover the integration of the *Anya-Nya* fighters into the regular forces and the resettlement of refugees. In April 1972, the first step towards setting up regional government was taken when Abel Alier (the former Minister of Southern Affairs), was made president of an appointed HEC to run the region's affairs for an 18-month transitional period before elections for the regional assembly were held. The membership of the HEC was a mixture of southerners who had previously worked inside Numayri's government and representatives of the various parts of the resistance movement. The *Anya-Nya* leader, Joseph Lagu, was given the rank of major-general in the Sudanese army.

The end of the long conflict was no small achievement and the peaceful settlement was hailed by the outside world as a resounding triumph for President Numayri. For African countries, particularly those with similar conflict situations, the peacefully negotiated settlement of the southern problem was of special significance. The Nigerian Times, (7 March 1972) perhaps mindful of Nigeria's own painful experience in Biafra, editorialized: "What makes the Sudanese agreement so reassuringly surprising is that it is rare to find these days a negotiated settlement of a secessionist effort". An editorial in the New York Times (28 February 1972) noted that, "If successful, Sudan's new experiment in unity with diversity offers a useful guide to many other underdeveloped nations similarly afflicted with racial, religious and corrosive domestic divisions".

Organizationally, the system of regional self-government adopted in the south entailed not merely a purely administrative transfer of authority on a centre-to-local basis, but the devolution of power from the central to the regional authorities together with the creation of regional legislative and executive organs. Yet the self-government act was either ambiguous or silent on some of the basic matters connected with the executive and legislative functions of government. Since the act came into existence prior to the promulgation of the national constitution, some of its articles vastly differed from, or were in fact contradictory to, those later adopted in the constitution. These fundamental differences relating to the nature of the political system and its basic principles had resulted in political confusion and legal ambiguity or omission.

The most glaring peculiarity is that while the self-government in the south was based on a parliamentary system with the executive dependent on the support of the legislative body, the national constitution provided for a presidential system in which executive authority was vested solely in the President of the Republic. This in itself would pose no contradiction if the two systems were to function separately but it is difficult to see how centre-regional relations could sustain the anomalies of two completely different systems of government co-existing in a state of constitutional incompatibility.

The constitution designated the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU) as the sole political organization throughout the country. The SSU was to 'nominate' the President of the Republic and select or approve the candidates for the national assembly. The provisions of the southern regional government act for the election of the executive were, as we have seen, quite different, not to mention the fact that the very idea of a one-party system was inconsistent with the basic assumptions of parliamentary government. Thus, the intrusion of the SSU in southern politics ran counter to the spirit, if not the letter, of the act and was to prove potentially destabilizing and divisive. Another related anomaly was that, although the constitution empowered the President of the Republic to dissolve the National Assembly, the 1972 Act had made no such provision for the dissolution of the Regional Assembly. When President Numayri did in fact later invoke the constitution to dissolve the regional assembly, his action was regarded by some southern leaders as a flagrant violation of the Addis Ababa agreement.

As a devolutionary measure, the self-government act curiously failed to deal with the organization of local government. The act put the powers of the local councils under the HEC and this apparent centralization in a devolved system seemed to deprive the lower reaches of the administration from dealing with matters that were essentially local. Indeed, this argument was later used to rationalize and justify the controversial decision to re-divide the south into three regions.

When it provided for an independent budget for the south with revenues from regional taxes and central funds, the act presupposed the existence of exact statistics of the revenue, taxes and duties which could be transferred to the regional treasury. Since no statistics and only limited funds were readily available, this provision had not been implemented and had had no bearings

on how financial relations between the central and regional treasuries were determined. The meagre financial resources had tended to fuel southern dissatisfaction over the failure of the central government to provide revenues for the economic development of the south. The 1972 act was also vague on the definition to determine exactly what criteria - whether administrative or cultural - could be applied in the delimitation of boundaries. The ambiguity over this issue was later to prove a source of friction in north-south relations.

Since the People's Local Government Act of 1971, the government declared policy had been to move towards the establishment of a more comprehensive local government system. After the establishment of regional government in the south, it was proposed that the southern experience should provide a model for plans to reshape government power and structure through devolution to regional government in northern Sudan. In theory, the proposed devolution plans entailed drastic changes in the structure, power and functions of the government system in the Sudan. According to one public administration expert, they would make Sudan "One of the most decentralized countries in the developing world". (Alassam, 1979, p.3) In 1980 the constitution was amended to embody regional government as a basic part of government in the country; the 1980 Regional Government Act divided northern Sudan into five regions: the Central, Eastern, Northern, Kordofan, and Darfur regions.

Just as the southern experiment was taken as a model for introducing regional government in northern Sudan, so too was the regionalization of the north invoked to propose the re-division of the south itself into three autonomous regions. The call for re-division, which originated from, or was taken up by, Joseph Lagu, was based on the argument that with the new regional government system, the reasons which had made it essential to keep the south in one bloc no longer existed. (Sudanow April 1981) The opponents of re-division argued that it would defeat the very concept of the Addis Ababa agreement, throw the constitution into disrepute, and destabilize the country.

President Numayri clearly favoured re-division but, at various stages of the debate, appeared to have reservations about its possible repercussions. In October 1981, the President dissolved the Regional Assembly and dismissed the administration of Abel Alier, which was strongly against re-division. An interim government was installed to steer the south through elections and a referendum to decide the re-division issue. The elections, held in mid-1982, gave the pro-divisionists, who represented the smaller tribes, a narrow margin over the anti-divisionists, who were mainly but by no means exclusively from the Dinka, the largest single tribe in the south.

In the political wrangling surrounding the election, President Numayri finally decided to dispense with the stipulated referendum and to bring about the envisaged change of status for the Southern Region. On 6 June 1983 the President announced the establishment of three regional governments in the south: the Bahr El Ghazal, Equatoria, and Upper Nile regions. The President presented re-division of the south as the culmination of his devolution policy for the country as a whole. The devolved structure of the Sudan now consisted of eight regional governments, each

with a governor, executive cabinet, regional assembly and civil administration.[7] The new arrangement made for a system in which "all will ultimately be responsible to the national President, who will rule with a diminished cabinet and civil service in Khartoum, assisted by a powerful body of advisers". (Africa Confidential 27 June 1983)

The argument for regionalization was essentially the same as before: that it would make for devolved regional government in which important decisions could be taken at the local level. Educated southerners, however, resented the arbitrary inroads which had been made on the system established by the Addis Ababa agreement. Southern resentment was further fueled when in September 1983, President Numayri decreed the imposition of strict Islamic *shari'a* law in the Sudan. The spectre of Islamicization had been, mistakenly or not, a perennial worry in the south. Although the issue had been the centre of national debate for a long time, the implementation of Islamic law was surprising in view of its potentially divisive repercussions on relations with the south and among Islamic and secularist groups in the north. President Numayri might have been encouraged to implement Islamic law because after pushing through the re-division of the south, he felt he had little to fear in terms of a concerted anti-Islamic backlash.

These controversial moves generated the expected destabilizing impact on both national and regional politics. Even before the implementation of re-division and the *shari'*s law, armed insurrection had already broken out in the south. A resistance movement, calling itself *Anya-Nya* II, began to form early in 1983 during the confusion of the re-division debate. The tensions and simmering currents of discontent in the south threatened to erupt at any time into wide-scale armed struggle. Confrontation was, intentionally or not, increasingly replacing reconciliation and compromise.

THE DEVOLUTIONARY PROCESS:

In both the north and the south there seemed to be a growing realization among Sudanese enlightened opinion that President Numayri's highly personalized style of decision-making was undermining the very institutions he had set up to establish regional government. Regional elections in the five northern regions resulted in the formation of regional assemblies and the return of the incumbent governors (all previously appointed by the President). Before the elections, President Numayri had promised never to interfere with the powers of the regions. But he also made clear that the proper functioning of the devolved system was dependent on each region attaining economic self-sufficiency. Since, in the light of the economic plight of the country, this was at best a long-term goal, the implicit logical conclusion was that the real fulfillment of regional government would have to wait until some point in the unforeseen future.

The fact was that the economic implications of regionalization were never really considered beyond giving each region the right to collect local taxes.[8] But the southern experiment had shown that, given the meagre economic resources of the country, the question of fund allocation could constitute serious source of friction between the central and regional governments, as it

had in federal Nigeria with its infinitely greater resources. As one outside observer noted in regard to southern Sudan, "Without dramatic infusions of funds, over and above the current levels provided by foreign donors, it is difficult to be optimistic about the prospects of tranquility". The institutionalization of regional government in the north was thus yet another example of the politics of rhetoric obscuring and indeed superseding the political and economic realities. The net effect, so far, had been "the creation of a new layer of administrators and a new layer of regional parliamentarians and support staff without any hope for generating adequate tax revenues for the additional expenditure.' (Bechtold, 1983)

The regionalization process raised some questions as to the role of the political organization, the SSU, in the new system. Again the southern experience indicated that the intrusion of the SSU in the regional political process was negative and often disruptive. Since its inception in 1972 and incorporation in the constitution in 1973 as the single political organization, the SSU had failed in its declared goal of bridging the gap between the ruler and the ruled. The function of the SSU regional and provincial hierarchies increasingly assumed a supervisory role for the centre over the regions and the provinces. In this respect, it became an instrument of Numayri's wielding of presidential power.

In the debate over regionalization in the north, the advantages of devolution were made clear. The sheer size of the country and its underdeveloped infrastructure necessitated responsive and effective rule. Devolution would bring government to the people and thus satisfy local conditions and aspirations. The most optimistic assumption was that the participatory nature of local and regional government would be conducive to the democratization of the political process in the country as a whole.

The basic principles underlying devolution were obviously desirable. Yet the most fundamental question which was acknowledged but deftly side-stepped, was whether the Sudan was ready for such a system and, more to the point, if in the prevailing conditions it could afford it, politically as well as economically. Indeed, the same factors favouring devolution could equally militate against it. In a situation of chronic economic problems, recurrent political crises, and spreading popular discontent and unrest, a devolutionary approach could conceivably fuel rather than diffuse latent separatist tendencies in various parts of the country. To many educated Sudanese the regime's motives in introducing regional government were suspect. In some quarters, these were regarded as "merely a way of enhancing the presidential system, ridding Khartoum of the scourge of party politics and keeping the regions acquiescent and malleable". (Africa Confidential 27 June 1983) Another source of contradiction was that the introduction of regional government in the north further complicated the already uneasy nature of north-south relations. From a southern perspective, the overall impact of the proliferation of regional systems in northern Sudan was to reduce the earlier ratio of at least theoretical parity between north and south. Moreover, after seeing their region reduced to one of six, southerners had also to swallow the bitter pill of having the south itself re-divided into three regions.[9]

In addition to the earlier noted anomalies between the essentially parliamentary nature of the southern regional government and the presidential nature of the national constitution, the 1980 Regional Government Act created quasi-parliamentary regional systems in the north. The overall trend, however, was actually to enhance presidential power within a politically, but not constitutionally centralized federal structure. Indeed, President Numayri's personalized style of decision-making clearly indicated that he perceived the devolutionary process he had instituted in terms of a federal system with an all-powerful presidency.

There is more paradox to this situation than the anomalies of constitutional arrangements and the inherent contradictions of the mutually exclusive claims of autocracy in power and devolution of power. The 'imperial presidency' is, at once, the one cohesive element in the disparate political system it had created, and the most destabilizing factor within it. This is evident in the curiously ambivalent nature of President Numayri's relationship with the south. For a considerable period of time the President enjoyed popularity in the south which outstripped that of any local leader and held out the hope of a better future. But from the start, the sheer enormity of the problem of building the south was complicated by lingering suspicions and the legacy of the long history of strained relations. The daunting tasks of integrating the rebel forces into the regular army and of resettling the refugees were bound to create areas of misunderstanding and friction.

The process of rehabilitation was only beginning when the first elections were held for the regional assembly in November, 1973. President Numayri re-nominated his chief southern ally, Vice-President Abel Alier for the presidency of the HEC even before the Regional Assembly made its choice. The President's action set a precedent for a pattern of presidential interventions which was to make dangerous and eventually destabilizing inroads on the rudimentary, often chaotic but nevertheless still working system in the south. From the President's own perspective, these interventions might have been imperative to avoid disruptive confrontations and to forestall some potentially disastrous developments in the south. In other words, the south had to be saved from itself. As one southern leader noted, "the south survived, but the institutions have been diminished if not totally obscured".[10] There was certainly a point when the south would no longer tolerate these patronizing constraints, and when they could conceivably lead to the same disruptive confrontations that they had aimed to avert.

The chronic political instability in the south could mainly be attributed to the failure to solve the economic and social problems. The working of the HEC and the Regional Assembly were greatly hampered by some confusion as to the responsibilities of each. These confusions partly emanated from the structural flaws in the institutions of the regional system; but the political process was further aggravated by tribal sensitivities and tensions, and by discontent and frustrations at the slow pace of economic development. It was widely felt that "the promises made at the time of the Addis Ababa agreement were not being fulfilled and that the regional government was not sufficiently militant in forcing greater concessions from the north." (Legum ed. 1976)

One of the main problems was the acute divisions between southern political groupings. While the southern leaders tended to agree in their principal attitudes in relation to the north, they disagreed seriously amongst themselves. Confrontation with the north created a unifying common purpose; reconciliation and regional autonomy resurrected mutual southern recriminations. The reemergence of divisions and tensions was thus largely due to personal rivalries and tribal animosities; the differences between Lagu and Alier were differences of personality and tribal affiliation, not of policy and still less of ideology. (Hamid,1983)

A related negative aspect of the southern leadership was that instead of using the south s unique position as an important power-base of the regime for greater involvement and influence in national issues, most southern politicians acted as though these issues were only of secondary importance to their power struggle in regional politics. Leading southern politicians seemed to prefer to stand for election in the regional rather than the national assembly. Although this in itself was not initially an unhealthy phenomenon, the preference for regional identification tended to endure and to have negative implications for north-south relations. A strong southern presence or voice in national politics might not have significantly altered the outcome of events, but it could have revitalized the political process, injected a note of southern concern in national issues and thereby perhaps provided a form of constraint on some of the government's highhanded policy decisions.

Instead, the most effective way in which the southern factor had come to play a significant role in national politics was in rallying to the support of President Numayri during the numerous challenges to his rule by northern opposition forces. It was in this rather ironic sense that the south became President Numayri's 'reinsurance policy' much to the advantage and indeed the very survival of his regime. When ultimately, the heavy hand of authoritarianism came to be felt in the south itself, southern leaders and intellectuals felt betrayed by the 'north' and new grievances assumed the old guise of the unbridgeable 'schism' between the 'Arab' north and the 'African' south.[11]

The real failure of the southern leaders was that while their inability to provide alternative policy programmes deprived their constituencies of any real political choice, their excessive preoccupation with regional politics deprived the south of any significant influence on national issues of primary concern to it. On both counts, the result was to make the southern region more vulnerable to manipulation from the centre.

It was precisely this failure that had led to the 'personalization' and 'tribalization' of southern politics at the regional level, and this, in turn, contributed to the 'personalization' of decision-making at the national level, by providing President Numayri with the justification and the power to intervene in southern politics. The pattern set was eventually to culminate in the virtual dismantlement of the regional government system established by the Addis Ababa agreement.

CONCLUSION

Given the diversity of approaches and the various arrangements for organizing the state at the centre-region-local levels, it might be imperative to avoid assessing one system in relation to some hypothetical ideal. There is no ideal system of devolution of power that can invariably provide a panacea for the problems of ethnic minorities or the demands of national integration, and that is invariably applicable to all countries where such problems prevail. The most perfect constitutional arrangement can become malfunctional and subject to abuse in the absence of the resolve and the power to make it work. Devolution of power as a policy and a process certainly involves constitutional change of a wide-range and fundamental kind; but it also raises basic questions about the nature of the state. In the final analysis, the essential operative factor is not so much the institutional framework of devolution or the legal niceties in which it is enshrined but the political milieu within which it operates and the quality of political leadership operating it. If the function of devolution is to strike a workable balance between centrifugal and centripetal forces in society (that is, between preservation of national unity and the recognition of the sense subnational identity in one or more of the components of the state), then constitutional change must also be accompanied by changes in established political habits without which the process of devolution would become a self-defeating exercise.

The main problem in developing countries where the devolutionary approach had been adopted is the apparent discrepancy between the institutional arrangements and the corresponding realities of the power situation. More often than not, local authority belongs to the people who do not direct it, is staffed by personnel and funds over whom they have little or no control, and is subjected to central planning imposed from above without consulting them.

In the Sudan, ethnic and cultural diversity is the result of the history and geography of a country located astride significant strategic and cultural boundaries in Africa. The Sudan, in fact, represents the environmental, racial and cultural diversity of the whole continent. The main differences are between northern and southern Sudanese. (The term 'Arab' and 'Negroid' are ethnically inaccurate but are often used in western writings on the Sudan to describe the two groups.) These differences, as manifested in 'the southern problem', were aggravated during the British colonial rule which administered the two parts of the country separately and which, in fact, deepened the already existing cleavages. In the post-independence period, successive Sudanese governments either tried to force integration on a southern population fearful of northern domination, or simply pretended that the southern problem did not exist. The result of all these policies was the tragic and debilitating civil war in southern Sudan that for almost 17 years infested the body of Sudanese society.

The Addis Ababa agreement of 1972 was a unique settlement in the history of modern civil war. Under the agreement the south came to enjoy autonomous rule with a measure of institutionalized relations and a relative freedom to use them. Indeed, for a time the south became, in the absence of liberalization in the north, the exposed nerve of the country.

But the southern leadership proved incapable of taking advantage of the situation. The return of active political life to the south failed to solve the region's underlying economic and social problems. Southern politics became dominated by personal ambitions, group animosities and all the attendant disruptive elements of factionalism and sectarianism. The support of the smaller tribes for the proposal to divide southern Sudan into three regions was a case of how tribal affiliation and motivation (to break Dinka hegemony) could overshadow, or replace, the larger regional consciousness and identification obtaining during the long struggle against the governments in the north.

The situation was made even worse by the frequent interventions by the central government in regional affairs. These interventions, ostensibly undertaken to rectify the unstable situation in the south, resulted mainly in destabilizing and diminishing the southern experiment in regional government, institutionally as well as politically. The cumulative effect was to compound the strains in north-south relations and to exacerbate intra-region division which, in turn, tended to invite new and increasingly highhanded central intrusions. The fragile power balance was made almost untenable by two policy decisions: the extension of regionalization to the north and the re-division of the south into three regions. The creation of regional governments in the north meant little in terms of popular participation; and although the regime went through the rituals of holding regional elections, these were regarded by many Sudanese as being of the same nature as the periodic referenda that invariably gave the President 99% of the popular vote. The whole process in fact dramatized the simple fact that real devolution could not be imposed by presidential fiat. The resultant political confusion as to the exact nature of regional government might have affected or distorted popular conceptions of devolution of power; indeed, the misgivings and disillusionment within Sudanese society, particularly among intellectuals, had reached such a point that the case for devolution would now have to be strenuously argued, and not merely asserted.

The basic contradiction in the Sudanese experiment in devolution is that of a highly personalized style of decision-making operating within a formally and institutionally devolved system of government. The weakness of a devolved structure in which the centre still inordinately dominated was illustrated by the highhanded way in which decisions of national importance were imposed from above irrespective of opposition from substantial sections in society who, rightly or wrongly, regarded these decisions as detrimental to their fundamental rights and interests.

The 'imperial presidency' can be discerned in many forms of government, ranging from an absolute autocracy to a federal system. But it negates the basic assumptions inherent in devolution of power. In the Sudanese experience the political environment obscured the institutional framework and the political leadership invoked both in order 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.

Recent developments in the Sudan (the re-division of the south and the imposition of Islamic law) have raised imponderable questions as to the future of north-south and inter-region relations. The answer to these questions can only be speculative. While secession of the south is unlikely, the intensity and duration of the unrest and the emergent resistance movement could become a decisive factor in the erosion of what has remained of President Numayri's power base in the south and ultimately in the overthrow of the regime itself.

It has been one of those ironies, so evidently abundant in Sudanese history and politics, that the political leadership that had recognized the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Sudan and thus brought peace to the south has now become the agent of renewed violence and inter-communal strife, and probably its victim.

NOTES

[1] According to the 1956 population census, there were nearly six hundred tribes and over fifty tribal groups in the Sudan. Ethnically, the census broke up the population into percentages including 39% Arabs, mostly in northern Sudan, 20% Nilotics in the south, 9% Fur in the West, 6% Beja in the east, 6% Nubiya in the extreme north, and 5% Nilo-Hamites in the south. The same census revealed that Arabic was spoken by 51%, Nilotic by 18% and northern and central languages by 12%. Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Peace and Unity in the Sudan: An African Achievement. (*KUP ,Khartoum, p.14).

[2] See P M Holt and M W Daly, *The History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, (Wiedenfeld, London 1981, p.l39); and Richard Lobban, "National Integration and Disintegration: The Southern Sudan" in *Three Studies of National Integration in the Arab World* (Association of Arab-American University Graduates, North Dartmouth, Mass., Information Paper No. 12, March 1974), pp. 17-18.

[3] See Holt & Daly, *op.cit,* and Mohammed Omer Beshir, *Revolution and Nationalism in the Sudan*, (Collings, London, 1974). For a detailed account of the southern conflict see M O Beshir, *The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict*,(Hurst, London, 1968), and *The Southern Sudan: From Conflict to Peace,* (Hurst, London*,* 1975).

[4] A case in point was the policy and process of 'Sudanization' which was based on seniority, experience, and qualification. Since the north generally was more developed educationally and administratively than the south, almost all the senior posts in the civil service went to northerners. Thus a policy which was administratively correct was - given the sensitivity of the issue - politically short-sighted.

[5] For the military regime's attempts at decentralization measures, see J Howell (ed.), *Local Government in the Sudan*, (Khartoum University Press, 1974).

[6] These were subdivided in 1976 to create three additional provinces - Lakes, Jonglei and Western Equatoria.

[7] Looking at the new administrative map of the Sudan, the most striking feature of the new regional units is that they almost identically recreated the provincial structure first established by the British in the pre-independence period. It was as though, after all the experimentation and the debates on devolution, the country had moved, from an administrative point of view, back to square one.

[8] According to some writers, "The financial and staffing implications of decentralization are particularly complex and thus, in view of both their significance and their complexity, detailed analysis is required prior to the introduction of any sort of decentralization". Diana Conyers and Yash Ghai, "Decentralisation as a Strategy for Resolving Ethnic Conflict and Strengthening National Unity" Paper presented to the Marga Institute *Dialogues on Devolution and Ethnicity*. Colombo, Sri Lanka, 12-17 December 1983.

[9] For a critical view of the government's policy in southern Sudan, see Dunstan M Wai, "Crisis in North-South Relation"', *Africa Report*, March-April 1982.

[10] Bona Malwal, *People and Power in the Sudan, London*, (Ithaca Press, 1981), p. 2l3. Malwal, once a close confidant of President Numayri and the national Minister of Culture and Information was imprisoned for opposing the re-division of the south.

[11] It is characteristic of this line of thinking among southern intellectuals that whenever the 'north' did something which the 'south' welcomed (e.g. the Addis Ababa agreement), the praise went to the northern individual concerned (e.g. Numayri); but when the same individual adopted policies deemed detrimental to southern interests (e.g. the re-division decision and the imposition of Islamic law) the blame was invariably and indiscriminately heaped on 'northerners' as a whole.

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