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Civil War in Sudan The Impact of Ecological Degradation

Prelude

Since the firing of the first bullet in 1983, the re-appearance of war between Northern and Southern Sudan has generally been interpreted as a typical ethno-religious conflict deriving from differences between Muslims and Christians, or Arabs and Africans.

While this categorisation served as a description of the earlier manifestation of the conflict in the 1950s, and still has some bearing on how the war is being conducted and perceived, the assumption here is that the nature of the conflict has changed. Conflicts are processes, not static events, and over the last three decades developments in the Sudan have gradually if consistently *changed the nature of the conflict* from being a classic ethno-religious conflict to one mainly over resources, with the economic and resource crisis in the North emerging as a driving force in the Sudanese civil war.

When the colonial powers introduced a market economy in Sudan towards the end of the last century, they simultaneously restricted its development and expansion by indigenous Sudanese in order to maintain political control. After Independence, however, a Sudanese national elite began to evolve from a primarily mercantile social group now ostensibly freed from colonial control.

There were, nonetheless, several strong barriers to the development and progress of a middle class whose European equivalents had brought about the industrial revolution. In Sudan they lacked the major prerequisites for industrialisation, namely capital, technical and scientific know-how and markets, and so their focus shifted from manufacturing production to the extraction of natural resources.

This is the first paper of the Sudan-programme in the framework of ENCOP. It gives reasons for the hypothesis of the changing nature of the Sudanese conflict. Further papers will deal empirically with the different aspects of the ecologically induced conflicts in Sudan.

The collapse of attempts at industrialisation - mainly substitute industrialisation - led to exploitation of accessible natural resources in a manner so thoughtless and unscrupulous that it soon endangered the peasant and pastoralist societies in Northern Sudan. During the 1960s and 1970s Southern Sudan remained relatively unscathed, as a result of its isolation during colonial rule and the earlier civil war, and its poorly-developed transport infrastructure.

Since the 1970s, the world trade system has been undergoing a structural crisis which had its specific negative impacts on the poorer countries of the South. They are manifest in unfavourable terms of trade, servicing and repayment of foreign debt, structural adjustment programmes and a general worsening of the economic situation. This pressure is in turn transmitted by the elite resource extractors of the South to the poorest people and their natural environment. Unfair terms of trade at international level are reflected in unfair terms of trade at the national level. Just as poor developing nations were exporting more and buying less, so the rural peasants and pastoralists were forced to produce more and buy less in the local market.

In Sudan, this meant a new expansion drive to exploit hitherto less accessible resources, mainly in Southern Sudan. A number of schemes were started, based on the exploitation of oil, water and land, and all in the name of 'development', but with the profits going mainly to the Northern Sudanese elites. Although the civil war had been halted in 1972 with the Addis Ababa Accord which recognised their autonomy, Southern Sudanese were denied their share of the benefits of peace. War broke out again a mere eleven years later, after the Sudanese dictator General Nimeiri had abrogated the accord he himself had signed by redividing the South. The situation was fuelled by Nimeiri's introduction of unjust 'Islamic laws' and the siting of an oil refinery in the north. The first attacks by the newly-formed Sudan People's Liberation Army under its leader Col John Garang were directed against the installations of the Jonglei Canal and oil-exploration companies.

The renewed civil war marks the biggest onslaught so far by the mainly Northern Sudanese elite on the resource base of the South and the great cattle economies of the Nilotic groups. A small but significant number of Southerners has also been drawn into this elite, while the majority of Southerners suffered the accelerated breakdown of social structures which had already been weakened through years of neglect.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM/SPLA) grew to enjoy the support of a large section of the rural poor and dispossessed in the North, since it addressed the fears of marginalized peoples. This marked a fundamental transformation of the original north-south division of the country, with ethnicity superseded by economic exigency. The ethnically mixed urban poor of Khartoum were able to say, "Inshallah,

John Garang will liberate us". (The recent split in the SPLA - patched up again at the Abjure conference in June 1992 with the move by Garang towards the advocates of separation of the South - suggests that tribal and racial loyalties are still active factors, however, and that rhetoric may not always be matched by reality).

The war in the South is best understood as resulting from opposing political approaches to the reality of diminishing resources, and in the search for a lasting peace it is necessary to understand this new dimension to the old conflict.

1. The Land

In its sheer size and diversity of geography and peoples, Sudan resembles the entire African continent. More than 80 per cent of its 25 million population live in rural areas, making up 132 tribes and sub-tribal groups in an area of 2.5 million km². Black Africans predominate in the high-rainfall savannah of the South, with peoples of Arab origin in the desert scrublands of the North, and mixed tribes in the central low-rainfall savannah.

Ironstone soils in the south give way to clay soils in the centre and desert sands in the north and west. The principal mountainous areas are the Imatong in the south, the Red Sea Hills in the north-east and the volcanic Jebel Marra in the west. The general absence of mountainous barriers to the air stream means that there is a gradual change of climate with latitude. Rainfall declines from 1200 mm/yr in the southern savannah (4°N) to practically zero in the northern desert (22°N).

The river Nile runs for 2258 km from south to north, with the country's capital Khartoum sited where the White Nile is joined by the Blue Nile from Ethiopia.

2. The People

Recent History

The last full census (1955/6) estimated that 40 per cent of the Sudanese population was "Arab" - in the sense of cultural rather than racial identity, since Sudanese Arabs are from a mixture of Arab, Nuba and black African stock.

The Arab tribes in central Sudan, such as the Shaygiyya and Ja'aliyyin are mainly riverain farmers, while farther away from the Nile live the Arab pastoralists and rain-dependent farmers. In the poor savannah of the north and west roam the camel-breeders such as the Shukriyya and Kababish, and south of them the Baggara Arabs herd cattle.

Northerners of non-Arab descent comprise about 30 per cent of the population: the Nubians in the far North bordering Egypt, the Beja in the Red Sea Hills, the Nuba in the Nuba mountains of southern Kordofan, the Ingessana and other peoples in southern Blue Nile Province, and the Zaghawa, Fur, Masalit and others in Darfur. In addition, there are many long-term immigrants from West Africa collectively known as "Fellata", spread one thousand kilometres across the country from West to East. The great majority of the non-Arab Sudanese are Muslims.

The Southern Sudanese, who also amount to 30 per cent of the population, consist of two main groups. One is the Nilotic group of primarily cattle-herding Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk who inhabit the central grasslands of the South. The second group, including the Azande, Bari, Mural, Topes and many others, cultivate the wooded lands along the southern borders. Islam and Christianity have had a greater impact on these people than on their Nilotic neighbours.

The Jellaba

One important category of Arab Sudanese is the urbanised trading class known as *Jellaba*, who have spread all over the Sudan and into some neighbouring countries. They are the wealthiest group, with considerable economic and political influence on Sudan's modern history.

The Jellaba are the descendants of Arab traders whose Islamic civilisation seemed ready for far-reaching revolutionary change a thousand years ago, during the early phase of the Abbasid Caliphate, but imploded instead. At that time both arts and crafts were developing rapidly. There arose a new wave of poetry, with secular urban poets such as Abu Nuas and Bashir, the refreshingly scientific and secular philosophical schools of Moutazilla and Ikhwan al-Safaa, and with them a modern Arabic language devoid of flowery and ornamental jargon. All these achievements seemed to prepare the ground for an historic transformation.

But despite the atmosphere of impending renaissance, the revolution never took place. The feudal Arab lords entrenched themselves in their states and resisted change, the Khalifas brought in Turkish and Slavic mercenaries to uphold their disintegrating Islamic empire, and the crucial breakthrough was never made.

Instead of diversifying into production in the manner of the European industrialized countries, the would-be Arab elite became entrenched in the role of "Jellaba", literally bringers of goods rather than manufacturers. For a thousand years their ancestors specialised in short and long distance trade, thus the Jellaba prefer the intricacies of

commercial dealings to long-term investment in industrial enterprise, which for them remained a little-known activity.

By virtue of their trading connections and geographic distribution, the Jellaba are nonetheless well-organised and adaptable. Their political talent has been under-estimated on many occasions, and when challenged they have regained their hold on the state either by the power of the vote or the power of the gun, acting as Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde according to the situation.

The Crisis of Subsistence

During the Middle Ages, Christian kingdoms existed peacefully side-by-side with their Muslim neighbours along the Nile. In the 17th century the Funj Sultanate replaced the collapsed Christian kingdoms in the north, while the Dar Fur Sultanate arose in the west. Sudan was invaded in the 19th century by an army sent by Mohamed Ali, the Turkish ruler of Egypt, who defeated the declining Funj Sultanate in 1821 and began the gradual extension of power into the south and west. The Jellaba and their private armies collaborated with the Turkish rulers in the penetration and plunder of the South.

The memory of the brutal slave trade conducted mainly by mercenaries of the northern Jellaba has lived on in the culture of the South. The experience of such aggression by Arab Muslims against black Africans gave rise to southern resistance to Islam and embrace of Christianity, which Southerners perceived as being on their side against oppression.

To this day the majority of Northerners have chosen to ignore rather than admit the shameful history of the Jellaba, preferring to pretend that the slave trade happened in a different time and place, although a tendency to refer to Southerners as "slaves" still persists. Slave trading magnified and distorted cultural and ethnic differences and left a lasting sense of grievance and mistrust.

When the imperial powers intervened against the slave trade in the 1870s and 1880s, it caused an economic crisis which helped precipitate the Mahdist uprising which overthrew Turkish rule in 1885. However, neither Turco-Egyptian rule (1821-1885) nor the Mahdist regime that followed (1886-1898) effected any fundamental change in the basic structure of the economy. It remained essentially a subsistence economy, with some commercial agriculture based on the use of serfs and slaves, as well as some long-distance trade ties with Egypt and to the East.

In 1898 the coalition of British and Egyptian forces overthrew the Mahdists and reconquered Sudan, setting up a colonial condominium state which sought to establish

"the rudiments of a modern capitalist economy whilst at the same time opposing its full blown indigenous development, since this would create a political threat to itself. ... At the political level, during the 1920s, a Native administration was created from the rubble of the Mahdist period." (1)

Independence in 1956 created the political conditions for the Jellaba to break away from the constraints of direct colonialism. By the 1960s their focus had shifted from the pump-irrigated cotton schemes of the 1950s (such as the White Nile schemes) to large scale mechanised farming of sorghum and sesame in rainland areas. These spread from eastern Sudan southwards into Blue Nile Province and then west into southern Kordofan and Darfur.

Today the area under licensed mechanised cultivation, at more than 4 million ha. (over nine million feddans), exceeds that under traditional rainfed agriculture (3.8m ha./ 9m fed.). The former "supports" some 8,000 largely absentee farmer-landlords, while the latter is the livelihood of 2-3 million "peasant" farmers.

The tractorisation and intensification of agriculture dealt a severe blow to traditional peasant farming, with the gross social and environmental change it inflicted on peasant and pastoralist societies.

Low-technology agro-pastoralism began to collapse across the central clay plains of northern Sudan, and a new and burgeoning category of impoverished people emerged who were dependent on selling their labour to survive. Many migrated to the towns, considerably swelling the numbers of the urban poor.

Unlike the migration of the European peasantry during the Industrial Revolution, this move was not towards centres of higher economic production, but to areas of greater food availability - mainly through food aid. A historical pattern is being echoed in tragic fashion.

Another consequence of the rapid impoverishment of the northern Sudanese traditional peasants and pastoralists is the abandonment of relatively benign methods of exploitation of nature and their replacement with aggressive methods which assume that natural resources are limitless.

In creating a social group of local resource-extractors, the inclusion of Sudan in the global market economy has directly impoverished both the environment and the rural people who depend on it for survival.

3. The Resources

Agriculture is the major economic activity of the Sudanese people, of whom about 80 per cent are engaged in crop production and animal husbandry. The principal food crops are sorghum and millet, while the cash crops are cotton, groundnuts, sesame and gum Arabic. The main animal wealth comes from cattle, sheep, goats and camels.

Sudan has some 36 million ha. (85m feddans) of arable land, of which only one third is cultivated, owing to constraints of water availability or the heavy nature of the soil. A further 100m ha. (240m feddans) are usable as grazing land and 17.6m ha. (42m feddans) are natural forest. Of the 13.5m ha. (32.5m fed) gross cultivated area, some 1.9m ha. (4.5m fed) are under irrigation, 7.5m ha. (18m fed) under rainfed mechanised farming and 4m ha. (10m fed.) under traditional cultivation.

The current livestock population is estimated at 27.7 million Animal Units (AU), much greater than the optimum stocking rate of 22.1 AU. [1 AU = 1 cow + 1 calf or their equivalent]. The range resources are also reduced by expansion of cultivation, by deforestation and by grass fires, which burn up to 30 per cent of the total forage production. (2)

Forests are being decimated in the North by the expansion of mechanised farming and increasing demand for fuelwood. At current rates of consumption versus regeneration and afforestation, all forest areas in Northern Sudan will be denuded by the year 2003. (3)

All rivers in Sudan are part of the Nile waters system. In addition to the White Nile and Blue Nile, the Bahr al-Arab, Dinder, Rahad and Atbara rivers flow into the main Nile. With the exception of the Bahr al-Arab, all the other perennial tributaries of those rivers originate either from outside the Sudan or from Southern Sudan: this has an important bearing on the civil war. Rainfall, the only other water source, is characterised by wide variability of distribution within the same isohyet in any one season, and this is reflected in both run-off and seepage variability. Crop production and the welfare of livestock fluctuate greatly in accordance with the rainfall patterns. (4)

Human and animal life depends on a delicate balance of the soil, water and flora that support it, and disruption of any one of these vital elements creates havoc. Factors such as climatic change, land exhaustion through over-use or misuse, population growth or displacement, disadvantageous changes in land tenure, warfare or export of resources cause lasting damage to the people, the animals and the environment. All these disastrous factors have descended on the country within the life-span of one generation:

- Micro- and macro-climatic change (the practically continuous Sahel drought since 1967)
- Diminishing and erratic rainfall and accelerating desertification (the floods and torrential rains of 1988)
- Near doubling of population in less than a quarter of a century (15.4m in 1970 to 25.4m in 1990)
- Displacement - both internal and external - of some six million people
- Doubling of livestock numbers within 20 years
- Deforestation on a massive scale
- Renewed civil war in the South, which is now encroaching on the west and east
- Aggressive expansion of legal and illegal rainfed mechanised farming, from 0.42m ha. [1m feddans] in 1967 to 7.5m ha. [18m fed.] in 1989

To prepare the ground for far-reaching changes in the land tenure laws and traditional practices, the Sudanese state introduced a new land act in 1970. The 1970 Unregistered Land Act declared that all land, occupied or unoccupied, belonged to the state and entitlement could no longer be acquired by long use. Only about one per cent of crop and grazing land is privately owned. The subsequent distribution of 'state land' to absentee-landlords, encouraged the reorientation of agricultural production for export purposes. This move was sanctioned by the international "market forces" who favour cash crops for export rather than food for the internal market. (The shift of focus of agricultural production from the internal market to the external market.) It is a deeply disturbing indicator of the devastation of the social fabric and eco-system that Sudan's relatively small population is increasingly unable to sustain a livelihood in a huge and resource-rich country.

The discovery of oil in commercial quantities at the beginning of the 1980s raised hopes of salvation of the country's economic crisis. But the oil was found mainly in the South, and as with the prospect of saving water with the Jonglei Canal, success depended on control of the area.

4. The Civil War in the South

4.1 The Events

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium government took 25 years to subdue Sudan. This was especially difficult in the South, where until the 1920s government consisted largely of punitive military expeditions and periods of exceptional violence.

To pacify and govern the North, the new rulers promoted the political and economic influence of Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, head of the Khatmiyya sect and Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, head of the Ansar sect. Sayyid Abd al-Rahman reconstituted and to some extent secularised the Ansar organisation, which became the Umma political party, while Sayyid al-Mirghani patronised the emergent nationalist movement, led by Ismail al-Azhari, and transformed the Khatmiyya followers into the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

While the British concentrated on economic, political and infrastructural developments in the North, such as the Gezira scheme, the railways and the introduction of modern civil administration, it allowed the West and South to stagnate under the "native administration" of the chiefs and sheikhs. (5)

This policy towards the South amounted to total separation of South and North: tribal structures were maintained; little or no effort was made to promote social or economic development; education - with English rather than Arabic as the lingua franca - was elementary and minimal. The result was not only isolation of the South from the North, but also from the rest of the world.

In the 1930s and 1940s nationalist political activities in the North were developing at a rapid pace. Catalysed by internal and external developments associated with the Second World War, the political pressure led to independence in 1956.

The colonial powers only began to loosen their grip on Southern Policy in 1948, when the Juba Conference was allowed to take place, and southern chiefs agreed with northern nationalists to pursue a united Sudan.

"The crash programme of integration that then occurred was too little, too late. In 1953 the 800 administrative posts vacated by the British were 'Sudanised'. The northern politicians allocated a mere four posts to the Southerners; an insult but also an indication of how education in the South had lagged behind. In the south, 'Sudanisation' was tantamount to 'Northernisation'. As independence approached, the Southerners saw their British administrators being replaced by Northerners. In 1955 the southern garrison at Torit mutinied on hearing that they were to be transferred to the

North. Their rebellion formed the nucleus of the Anyanya separatist movement, which was to fight Sudan's first civil war for seventeen years." (5)

The 1972 Addis Ababa Accord

Since independence the Sudan has alternated between civilian and military rule in a fruitless search for economic development and the resolution of "the Southern problem".

In July 1971, when Nimeiri was returned to power after a short-lived coup supported by the Communist Party, he severed all connections with the 'socialist' countries and rushed headlong to embrace the West and the prospects held out by its 'free market' philosophy.

For his grand new plans to succeed, peace was a crucial issue. In 1972, following negotiations with Joseph Lagu - who only two years previously had brought the Anyanya movement under his sole command - Nimeiri and Lagu signed the Addis Ababa Accord that brought an end to 17 years of civil war. The basis of the agreement was regional autonomy for the South, but it left several key issues only half-answered.

The years between 1972 and 1983 were years of uneasy peace. Many Equatorians were unhappy about what they felt was the hegemony of the Dinka in the Regional Government, which became the major source of wealth and social prestige in the South. The balance of power between Equatorians and Nilotes was altered in 1979 with the fall of Idi Amin in Uganda and the return to Sudan of many well-qualified Equatorian professionals and administrators.

Most Southerners were disdainful of the way Nimeiri interpreted the Addis Ababa Accord to redraw the boundaries of the South to include the Bentiu region, where oil had been discovered, into the North. This feeling was compounded when central government ignored the concerns of local people when it gave the go-ahead for the construction of the Jonglei canal through the swamps of the Sudd.

Southern politicians were also divided amongst themselves: Equatorians against Dinka and Nuer; Anyanya 'haves' against Anyanya 'have-nots'. Nimeiri tried to exploit these divisions to his own advantage and began manipulating the course of events by appointing and dismissing senior southern politicians. These machinations culminated in the "redivision" of the South in 1983: three regions were created out of the one autonomous region, and the single regional government was abolished. While Equatorians rejoiced, the unseated Dinka and Nuer felt humiliated and deceived. The

spectre of a new civil war began to haunt the South, but this time the Nilotic tribes were bound to be the major actors.

In the same year that Nimeiri redivided the South, a number of mutinies took place, notably the one at the garrison at Bor, which then became the nucleus of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) of Col Dr John Garang.

The SPLM/SPLA

The SPLA, unlike the Anyanya movement, announced that it was not fighting for an independent South: its declared aim was a unified secular and democratic Sudan. The SPLA saw itself as an integral part of the struggle of all the marginalized groups in Sudan, including the Nuba and Fur. John Garang has repeatedly called for a national constitutional conference to agree on a secular and democratic constitution for the whole country. It has always been questionable, however, whether the SPLA would be able to maintain this position in the face of huge practical and psychological obstacles, not least that most of its rank and file were motivated to fight by ethnic and religious differences.

During the early years of the movement, Ethiopian government support was crucial to the SPLA, and since Ethiopia had problems with its own secessionists it would have been unwilling to assist in action likely to lead to a re-drawing of international frontiers. (Since the fall of the Dergue in May 1991, of course, the Eritreans have succeeded in just such a revision).

Internal dissent in the SPLA reached crisis point in August 1991, when a break-away group - the 'Nasir faction' - called for the overthrow of Garang and for a separate South, abandoning all ambitions for a unified secular state. Although they failed to unseat Garang, they revived the principle that 'self-determination' took priority over unity, and voiced a common southern attitude that the difference between the Islamic Front regime and the opposition Umma and Democratic Unionist Party was minimal: that Northerners could not be trusted. It is now debatable how long Garang and his supporters - the 'Torit faction' - can keep to their original slogans.

The end of the Cold War has meant diminishing strategic importance in the global sense for Sudan, but other considerations have come to the fore and are gaining momentum. The Islamic fundamentalist movement has expansionist ambitions, and the people of neighbouring Egypt have an ever-growing demand for water. In the shifting sands of the new politics of the region, all participants are forced to reconsider their course of action, and the SPLA is no exception.

The Koka Dam Agreement, March 1986

Following the overthrow of Nimeiri, the "National Alliance" of radical political forces that led the popular uprising met the SPLA/SPLM at Koka Dam in Ethiopia and reached an agreement on a basic formula for peace, including the convening of a constitutional conference. The Koka Dam Agreement was endorsed by the Umma Party and rejected by the DUP and the National Islamic Front (NIF).

The Umma Party leader and new Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi soon abandoned Koka Dam, however, having successfully revived the old Mahdist alliance of Jellaba and western Baggara and obtained huge arms supplies from Libya and Iraq. He began to pursue the war with renewed vigour, arming the Murahaleen militias, whose loyalty to him "would be greater than their accountability to the law and the state". (5)

By the end of 1988 the DUP was sufficiently concerned about Sadiq's intentions that it negotiated the "November Accords" with the SPLA/SPLM, agreeing in principle to freeze the Islamic Sharia laws pending a constitutional conference, to implement a cease-fire and cancel the State of Emergency imposed by Sadiq in 1987. The popularity of this agreement was demonstrated when DUP leader Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani was given a hero's welcome at Khartoum airport on his return.

Faced with massive popular endorsement of the November Accords - and implicit condemnation of his own stance, Sadiq al-Mahdi turned to the NIF for support, setting up a new coalition government which excluded the DUP. But the army had become convinced of the futility of the war, and in February 1989, dismayed by the lack of political resolve, issued an ultimatum to Sadiq: unless there was progress towards peace, and the militia were disbanded within one week, the army would step in.

Eventually Sadiq capitulated: the NIF left the government and the DUP returned. Negotiations were started with the SPLA; a cease-fire was achieved fairly quickly, and the UN famine relief programme Operation Lifeline was resumed. The Constituent Assembly agreed to freeze the Islamic laws, and a date - 18 September 1989 - was set for convening the constitutional conference. Sadiq was due to meet Garang in Addis Ababa on July 4.

The meeting never took place. On June 30, with perfect timing, a military coup staged by the NIF aborted the peace process and with the fervour of "jihad" unleashed a reign of terror in the North as well as the South. The new regime escalated the war in the south to new levels of brutality with the backing of radical Islamic and Arab countries. Iran, especially, became a source of enormous military and economic support.

The NIF has been single minded in its resolve to solve the "southern problem" once and for all with a programme of Islamisation and Arabisation.

The DUP and Umma Party both regard the South as a natural extension of their economic base, their strategic resource reserve, and they would rather see the continuing devastation of war than accede to southern demands for self-determination.

4.2 The Causes

Few wars are ever fought in the name of their real causes: instead they are fought under old banners and old slogans, based on memories of past conflict. Because these memories fade so slowly, they obscure from the valiant warriors the possibility that they might be fighting for reasons no longer relevant or valid and even, on occasion, against their own interests.

This is partly the case in Sudan's current war. Although the major cause for the conflict is now the struggle over resources, most fighters on both sides remain convinced that the war is all about ethnicity, cultural identity and religion. In the following I will try to explain this transformation in the nature of the conflict, by discussing the major elements of the process.

The Cultural-Ethnic Divide

Sudan is such a vast country that for long periods most Sudanese tribes were able to live in their homelands in relative isolation from each other, free to develop their own cultural values and norms. Only when forced to move from their traditional habitats by reason of ecological degradation or political coercion did they have to confront alien cultures and peoples. These points of contact between strong ethnic identities, whether "Arab" or "African", were also the areas of friction and potential for low or high intensity conflict.

When Southerners are in conflict with the North, their identity with the region and self-image as black Africans come first, while at a local level tribal attachment is predominant. Apparent unity is more complex than it seems, and long and bitter conflicts have often divided neighbouring peoples. In the North, although there are evident regional and tribal loyalties, they often give way to social group-based distinctions.

The Jellaba, the secular-educated and the army officers constitute what Dr Alex de Waal calls the Sudanised groups. (6) The three groups share a cluster of common features: a language (Arabic), a religion (Islam) and a common cultural code, a hybrid of northern riverain cultural values.

Historically the Jellaba traders were partly responsible for the slave trade, which transformed the cultural borders between the Northern "Arab" tribes and the southern "African" tribes. From borders of cultural exchange and mutual enrichment they became barricades from behind which they shoot at one another.

The Southern Policy

Following violent military expeditions to gain control of the South, the colonial government imposed a different system of administration, known as the "Southern Policy". While in the North control of the economy and the administration was mainly in the hands of the state and secular leaders, in the South the colonial government created self-contained tribal societies, headed by traditional chiefs. The government tried to eradicate all Muslim influence, encouraged missionary activities and used English as the lingua franca.

No effort was made at economic development. Education was elementary; no secondary education was available. "At its height, the Southern Policy led to the attempted creation of a 'cordon sanitaire'; a depopulated no-man's land between north and south. ... There were also suggestions of federating the south with Uganda." (5)

In the decades of isolation from the North and the rest of the world, the memory of the slave raids was kept alive, with virtually no personal contact to dilute its bitterness. Consequently, when the administration of the South was "Sudanised" by the introduction of Northerners prior to the early years of independence, and the sons of the Jellaba slave traders confronted the Southerners as their new rulers, the ethnic friction soon caught fire. Hundreds of Northern traders, professionals, teachers and others were killed in the massacres which in 1955 swept through the South in response to what was perceived as northern colonialism.

This was a shocking reminder to the North that it would take more than earnest declarations to transcend entrenched mistrust and enable peaceful communication to take place between alien cultural identities.

The Resource-Extractors versus Rural Sudan

The arid and semi-arid zones that make up most of the North are over-populated, even though the population density is only about ten inhabitants per square kilometre. This is because the populations are concentrated around sources of drinking water and good soil.

Over the centuries people in the Sahel have developed many coping mechanisms to counteract occasional drought. But since 1967 rainfall has consistently been less than

the previous long-term average, and the survival techniques have come under unbearable pressure from such persistent drought. There has been a precipitation deficit of 40-50 per cent compared with the preceding 15 years. (7)

During the 1970s and early 1980s it was widely believed that the Sahel drought was man-made; a result of the destruction of vegetation through over-grazing and deforestation for timber and fuel-wood. Since the mid-1980s expert opinion has swung towards the view that changes in ocean temperature caused by global warming might be the main culprit. (8) However, both the regionally and globally induced changes are in the last instant the result of human interventions, the ongoing human-ecology transformations.

In addition to drought, unsustainable methods of land use such as over-grazing and intensive mechanised rain-fed farming are destroying the Sahelian ecosystem in which 70 per cent of the Sudanese people live.

It is the contention of this paper that the subsistence economy of this huge Sahelian zone has collapsed irreversibly as a result of human activity and climatic change. The slower "natural" process of wear and tear has been accelerated enormously by the unprecedented exploitation of resources carried out by the Jellaba, prompted by their assimilation into the world market in the restricted role of extractors of primary wealth. In addition, the loan conditionalities of the IMF and the World Bank considerably boosted this restructuring of resource utilisation away from local needs and the local market towards the demands of the international market.

In this process, the decline in the international terms of trade brought about by the collapse of primary commodity prices had a knock-on effect on the local market, where terms of trade had also worsened. To maintain their living standards the peasants and pastoralists had to produce more from a shrinking resource base. Failure to do so meant joining the millions of newly asset-less poor.

The Fragility of the Drylands (9)

The southern fringes of Sudan's semi-desert zone used to have sufficient rainfall to support the cultivation of drought-resistant millet and a few other crops, but even this subsistence production has become virtually impossible because of three spells of drought in the last two decades. Savannah covers about 25 per cent of Sudan, known as the central rainlands, where agro-pastoralism is the principal method of land use. Rainfall averages 800 mm per annum across this belt of acacia and tall grass, where the more fertile soil supports sorghum, millet, sesame, groundnuts and cotton.

The remaining parts of the South are tropical forest and swamp. Large areas of tropical equatoria are not suitable for raising livestock because of the presence of the tsetse fly.

The fragility of the arid and semi-arid lands is evident. "Awareness of seasonality and careful utilisation of resources are supplemented with herd diversity and selective use of certain environmental niches in specific seasons of the year. ... The sequence of environmental security building is based on utilising the richer southern zones in the event of long periods of drought." (9)

This movement of people and herds from one ecological zone to an area already occupied by different ethnic groups is already a recipe for tension, requiring delicacy of negotiation. Conditional agreements used to be reached when the need for sharing land was occasional, but now that the need is permanent the strains are greater. Furthermore, when the buffer zone between the semi-desert and the savannah is blocked by large-scale mechanised farms, then the entire way of life of the agro-pastoralists collapses.

Mechanised Farming in the Central Rainlands

The total area under "legal" or licensed large-scale irrigated and rainfed mechanised schemes increased from less than half a million hectares (one million feddans) in 1968 to about five million hectares (9 million feddans) by 1986. An equal area is farmed illegally by the same methods.(2) These large-scale private schemes took over great stretches of traditional farm land, water points, grazing lands and herding routes, displacing millions of small producers. Large areas of forest were cleared (including about 95 per cent of the forest in eastern Sudan) to make way for the giant agricultural schemes, and with the trees went vital local sources of revenue from fuel wood and gum Arabic.

It is noteworthy that the Mechanised Farming Corporation, MFC, was established in 1968, upon request from the World Bank to secure its first loan for the so-called supervised sector and to facilitate credit to private farmers.

The MFC supervised the expansion of mechanised agriculture into southern Kordofan, White Nile and Upper Nile Provinces. By 1975 the World Bank provided half of the total loans for the agricultural sector, specifically for private rainfed mechanised farming.

The ecological and social stress caused by large-scale mechanised agriculture is well-documented, and can be held responsible for three types of conflict:

1) Conflicts between traditional farmers and owners of the big schemes, as documented by Ahmed: "Cultivators are forced to sell their labour cheaply, pastoral nomads are driven out of the best areas of their traditional pasture ... and agro-pastoralists are forced to abandon one of two activities and change over to agricultural labour for low wages and a lower standard of living." (10)

2) Conflict among local people in the vicinity of the schemes, because of scarcity of cultivable land, obstruction of animal herding routes or in the search for fresh grazing land.

3) The most serious, however, is the conflict between the state, as major backer of the scheme owners, and the small farmers and pastoralists. The state has often opposed the spontaneous resettlement of such people when stricken by drought.

The very structure and location of the large-scale mechanised farms is a source of recurrent and continuous confrontation:

"Their mere location in the intermediate land between the semi-arid zone and the rich savannah is a potential source of conflict. ... The whole intermediate lands have now been transformed into an arena of conflict not only between the traditional producers but also between the modern and the traditional sub-sectors of the agricultural system." (9)

It is interesting to note that during the period of rapid expansion of mechanised farming from 1970 to 1985, more than 20 major regional tribal conferences were organised to solve land disputes between the various ethnic groups in the central rainlands.

Enter the World Bank and the IMF

During the 1950s and 1960s agricultural production was directed mainly to the internal market and the satisfaction of basic local needs. For this reason Sudanese people were able to withstand the severe drought from 1972-75 without the emergence of widespread famine. Since the mid-1970s and the advent of the IMF and World Bank, however, the situation has changed. A significant shift took place within the Jellaba with the opening to the West that started in 1972 and the move from internal markets to export. By the mid-1970s Sudan was being hailed as the potential bread-basket of the Arab World, and plans were laid to expand mechanised agriculture westwards using freely available petro-dollar loans. Objection to these policies became evident with the revolt of the indigenous agricultural parties - two coup attempts were made, by Hassan Hussein in 1974 and Mohamed Nur in 1976.

Despite the rapid increase in the area of land under cultivation and the increased export capacity, the overall effect of the new export-oriented policies was negative. The

value of primary commodities in the international market was declining steadily from the early 1970s onwards, while at the same time oil prices soared to record heights. Debt was growing, as were repayments and servicing dues. The economic crisis came to a head in 1978, when the IMF intervened and negotiated the first of several adjustment programmes. From then until 1984 the IMF concluded five agreements with the Sudan.

The IMF structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) were directing towards curbing the government's budget deficit and encouraging the export sector, mainly through selective promotion of export crops and devaluation of the Sudanese currency. By greatly encouraging the expansion of mechanised farming, reducing the land available to traditional farmers and pastoralists, devaluing their monetary assets and reducing subsidies for basic needs and social services, the whole edifice of agro-pastoralism, the livelihood of 14 million Sudanese, began to collapse. Because agriculture was no longer geared towards the domestic market, the living conditions and spending ability of the labouring classes became a secondary issue.

Between 1978 and 1984, a further 4.5 million people joined the army of the asset-less, and at the same time: "not only had the crisis within the subsistence economy deepened, producing a growing poverty of a new type unsupported by traditional systems of redistribution and reciprocity, but the economy had been redirected towards external markets, becoming increasingly vulnerable in the process. The result was the well-publicised famine of 1984-85." (1)

The Sorghum "Success" Story

By 1980/81 sorghum had become the Sudan's second largest export. Increase in sorghum exports was due mainly to import subsidies by Saudi Arabia, which paid \$220/mt for Sudanese grain, compared to only \$170/mt for sorghum from Thailand. The IMF pressure on Sudan to export continued unabated, even during the famine years of 1982/83-1984/85. During this period the Sudan exported 621,000 metric tons of sorghum, prompting praise from leading IMF economists for an apparent success story: "an interesting example of the role of devaluation in encouraging non-traditional exports." (11)

Cotton versus Food

Prior to the implementation of SAPs, wheat self-sufficiency averaged 48 per cent. After the SAP implementation had begun (1978-87) the figure deteriorated to 26 per cent. This was a direct consequence of IMF bias against wheat production because it clashed with profitable export crops such as cotton.

The area under wheat was halved to make way for increased cotton cultivation: the World Bank gave generous support to the rehabilitation of the Gezira and other irrigated cotton-growing schemes. In view of the depressed market for cotton, Sudan lost on both counts - foreign currency earnings and food security - because of increased dependence on wheat imports, whether commercial or concessional. (12)

Political Coercion and the Privatisation of the State

The internal conflicts which mushroomed in the Sudan from the mid-1970s onwards reflect the growing resistance of millions of dispossessed against the new economic regime based on export of resources. To implement these policies with their harsh effect on an embittered population, the commercial and financial interest of part of the Jellaba needed a new type of state, more completely in the grasp of their elite group and with strong powers of coercion.

Coercive acts against traditional cultivators and pastoralists were swift and brutal. When victims of famine and drought moved into the wetter zone in search of survival alternatives, they were often intercepted by the army. The only way left open for survival was to move to towns and relief centres; to eke out a degraded existence dependent on begging, charity and petty labour or theft and prostitution.

Even in the towns these people were treated as third class citizens. The police were mobilised in arbitrary round-ups known as kasha, which sought to repatriate the migrants to their homelands, despite the fact that the land could no longer sustain them. These uprooted and homeless people are collectively known to the authorities as Shamasa, literally those who have no roof but the sun.

State aggression escalated in line with the growing poverty and resistance. In 1983 Nimeiri introduced his harsh version of the Islamic Sharia laws, and the penalty of amputation was enforced on 200 people in eighteen months. All were displaced Shamasa.

Resistance continued, however, with the Shamasa providing the spark for the 1985 popular uprising which, in informal alliance with the impoverished middle class of public employees, teachers and professionals, overthrew Nimeiri's military regime. In 1986 parliamentary democracy was reinstated, but it did not take long for people to realise that very little had actually changed or was likely to, since the same interest groups continued to implement the same policies as before.

Eventually the more ruthless business and finance segment of the ruling elite became impatient with the obstacles created by the new democratic atmosphere, the democratic checks and balances in the state apparatus and the judiciary, and the pro-

spect of concessions to the South in the search for peace. They wanted the system dismantled and irreversibly destroyed, and so staged a putsch against an already weakened civilian government and intensified the war.

The Move Southwards

Mechanised farming reached southern Kordofan and the Rahad reserve area by the end of the 1970s. By 1989, some 60 per cent of the Rahad reserve was under illegal mechanised farming, and it is astonishing that the government has provided these unlicensed schemes with agricultural extension services and even fuel quotas.

The horizontal expansion of mechanised farming exhausts the soil very rapidly. In the degraded land, yields of sorghum, millet and groundnuts fell by as much as 80 per cent, and some 17m ha. have been lost to soil erosion. In some areas the land is depleted within 3-4 years by this large-scale version of shifting cultivation, which rolls like a fire-ball across the land, deforesting and destroying the soil before moving on. Its appetite for new land is rapacious and continuous, and the only natural direction for it to go is southwards.

With the discovery of oil at Bentiu, the Jellaba became aware of a new form of wealth in the South to add to those of land and water. As far as the Jonglei canal was concerned, its construction during this period paralleled the agricultural expansion drive, even though it had been contemplated for several decades.

By the end of the 1970s the south, which had been left to its own devices for so long, moved into the sphere of interest of the Jellaba and their state.

Oil, Water and Land

Oil

In April 1981 Chevron announced the discovery of commercial deposits of oil in the Unity field in its southwestern concession. Recoverable reserves from Unity and the adjacent Heglig field were officially estimated at about 236 million barrels. Confirmed oil reserves for the whole of Sudan are estimated at 2,000m barrels, enough to earn the country some \$10,000m or cover its projected energy needs for ten years.

Original plans to process the oil locally were deferred in September 1982; instead, with Chevron's encouragement, the Nimeiri government opted for the construction of a refinery and export terminal south of Port Sudan, linked to the oil fields by a 1,400 km pipeline.

This sudden reversal alerted people in the South to the probable intentions of Nimeiri and his backers among the Jellaba. One of the first acts of the SPLA was to attack Chevron's oil field operations, compelling the company to suspend work in February 1984.

Since then, despite pressure from Nimeiri and all subsequent governments, oil operations in the southwest have practically halted.

Water

Since the beginning of the century the idea of constructing a canal to drain the Sudd marshes of the White Nile at Jonglei has been debated by developmentalists and environmentalists. Motivated by the desire for more water downstream and the prospect of uncovering a vast expanse of fertile land, the Jonglei canal is one of the most intensively researched water projects in the world. What has always been conspicuous by its absence, however, is any serious assessment of how the local people - some 1,700,000 Dinka, Shilluk and Nuer, Murle, Bari and Anuak directly and indirectly affected by the project - actually felt about it. (13)

Actual construction of the Canal began in 1978; a joint Sudanese-Egyptian project working with the French CCI company. Aimed at conserving some 4,000 m³ of water "lost" annually through evaporation, the operation was forcibly suspended in 1984, having completed 250 km of the proposed 360 km, following a series of attacks on the construction site by the SPLA.

Egypt desperately wants the additional water represented by its half share in Jonglei, to help grow food for its burgeoning population. Before the expansion of mechanised farming, the Sudan was not under the same pressure to obtain water. Since the mid-1970s, however, water has become the limiting factor for agricultural expansion in many parts of northern Sudan: new irrigated projects need more water.

The 450,000 Dinka, Shilluk and Nuer who were directly affected feared the drastic changes the Canal would bring to their way of life. They could not accept the prospect of life without the migration to the toich during the dry season, when they would find fish and improve the milk yield of their cows. They also feared the prospect of alien people being settled in their midst, and the possibility of conflict. Rumours that Egyptian farmers would be sent to the canal area sparked student riots in Juba in November 1974. There was justifiable mistrust of the project from Southerners who saw the North and Egypt benefiting while their own lives were irreversibly changed, and not for the better. By drying out the swamps and taking away the "grass curtain", it would open up the entire Sudd area for mechanised farming, and also allow the north to move military equipment and troops into the South with greater ease.

It would also open the Sudd area for the expansion of mechanised farming, the domain of the northern Jellaba. Thus the project's giant earth-excavating machine, the biggest in the world, was one of the SPLA's earliest targets, much to the chagrin of the government and Egypt.

The Land

The fertile savannah plains of acacia trees and tall grass is where the "bread-basket" was envisioned. The more predictable rains make it suitable for sorghum, millet, maize, sesame, groundnuts and cotton. The huge expansion of large-scale mechanised farming needs new land all the time. It expanded into southern Kordofan and the northern parts of Upper Nile province. The owners of the mechanised farms, having exhausted vast tracts of the north, pushed inexorably southwards into the area inhabited by the Nilotic tribes, the major cattle economies of the South. Having seen how the Nuba were squeezed off their land in southern Kordofan, the local people were hostile to this incursion, and their response was the same.

The Nuba joined the SPLA in large numbers, attacking and burning the large mechanised schemes. There was a similar reaction from the people of the Ingessana in southern Blue Nile province, who have also become sworn enemies of the mechanised farmers. And in northern Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal, the main stream of the SPLA attacked government troops and forced mechanised farms to close down.

Once again the plans of the Jellaba were frustrated. The call for "strong" government as the only solution to all Sudan's problems began to spread, and with the National Islamic Front coup its advocates got exactly what they were looking for. When the new cultural attache at the Sudan Embassy in London addressed the Uppsala Forum in August 1991, he said:

"The trade unions, sectarian lords, big merchants, tribal leaders, have all grown very powerful in the absence of effective state power. ... The winner in the long struggle for supremacy is as often as not determined by single-minded ruthlessness and efficacy rather than by any other qualities" [*italics mine*].

And:

"... the primary obstacle to the establishment of a proper state in the Sudan had been the refusal of the South to cooperate ... their resistance has weakened the state and deprived it of its legitimacy. ..." (14) The NIF's military regime has intensified its brutal treatment of Southerners, including those fleeing the war, and has used inter-tribal rivalry and some corrupt southern "intellectuals" to spread conflict among them. It has also destroyed the relative autonomy of the state apparatus that constituted a potential threat or obstacle to the implementation of its aims.

The Resistible Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism

One implication of the austerity measures and currency devaluations of the IMF's SAPs was the impoverishment of the middle classes and a marked polarisation among the Jellaba themselves. In the new economic atmosphere only the Jellaba, with strong connections to finance capital and to the state power, could prosper.

"In response to the declining profitability of more conventional activities, commodity speculation, hoarding and the use of state office for personal gain have grown in importance. ... The leading edge of this new economic regime has been the Islamic banking system, which first appeared in Sudan with the opening of the Faisal Islamic Bank (FIB) in 1978. This development found political expression in the fundamentalist National Islamic Front, NIF." (1).

On the international level the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran raised the hopes and aspirations of all fundamentalist movements in the Islamic World. They were also assured of a high degree of direct material support from a relatively wealthy state, an element that has been missing for quite a long time.

The leadership of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the Sudan is made up of urban, male, northern intellectuals with strong connections to the business and finance sectors. They have a strong anti-rural bias. Because of the shortened time in which to show a return on investment, they have adopted adventurous and aggressive forms of accumulation. Aggressive accumulation often demands an aggressive state and people with a single-minded determination and ruthlessness. The ideology behind the movement must appear pure, straight and simple, backed up by swift deterrent punishment for transgression (fascism, fundamentalism, etc.).

The breath-taking speed of the NIF's transformation from the "softly-softly" Muslim Brotherhood to a quasi-military organisation can only be explained by the move from "liberal" accumulation methods by the segment of the Jellaba, which the NIF represents, to aggressive, ultra-capitalist short-termism in the last decade or so.

South-South Conflict

When the government's armed forces take prisoners of war from the SPLA, they are usually executed, and reports by Amnesty International and Africa Watch back up a picture of thousands of extra-judicial executions in the Nuba Mountains and the South. Atrocities against the civilian population were committed not only by the armed forces but also by a number of militias organised and armed by the government. The Murahaleen militias were drawn from the "Arab" tribes of the west - the Rezeigat, Misiriya, Humur, Zurug and Rufaa tribes - who had traditionally engaged in

skirmishes with neighbouring Dinka over grazing lands. These encounters had hitherto never escalated into war, and peace was usually restored fairly quickly by means of inter-tribal conferences and long-standing protocols for settlement of disputes.

Smaller Southern tribes distrustful of Dinka hegemony in the SPLA were also formed into pro-government militias, their opposition often stemming from harsh treatment at the hands of the SPLA. The Mundari at Terakeka responded in this way, as did the Toposa, Acholi, Latuka, Madi and Azande in other parts of Equatoria. Remnants of the Anyanya 2 and the Murle militia operate in Upper Nile, and the Fertit make up the main pro-government "Popular Defence Force" in Bahr al-Ghazal. The Khartoum regime plays off one against the other.

Although the North-South conflict is gradually losing its predominantly ethnic aspect, in the smaller scale South-South conflict this aspect is still alive and killing. The split in the SPLA in September 1991 probably had more significant negative impact than the entire militia operations, and although it represents division over policy and leadership, the driving force behind the rupture also had a strong measure of ethnic tension. When Cdr Riek Machar, a Nuer, and Dr Lam Akol, a Shilluk, announced the overthrow of SPLA leader John Garang, a Dinka, they failed to dislodge him but set in motion a tragic chain of tribal killings. Such events feed off long-standing rivalries.

In my opinion the SPLA split, and the dissidents' adoption of calls for a separate South, represent widespread fatigue with the ideological aspect of the movement. The declared aim of a united, secular, democratic state had come to seem impossibly utopian, and the example of neighbouring Eritrea and its secession (following the fall of the SPLA's socialist mentors in Ethiopia) seemed to open up new possibilities. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the rise of nationalism, the temptation - always present - to say "Why fight and die for a North that will never treat us as equals?" must have been very strong. The northern opposition, the National Democratic Alliance, has not been involved in the fighting, yet the problem of Islamic fundamentalism is mainly that of the North, not the south. Many Southerners question the wisdom of fighting on behalf of the opposition parties of the North.

Col Garang has pragmatically moved to accommodate the possibility of separation with a joint call for "self-determination", keeping all of his options open.

5. Conclusions and Prospects for Peace

Conclusions: From ethnic to ecological conflict?

Sudan is such a large country that over long periods most Sudanese tribes were able to live in relative isolation from each other. This isolation encouraged the development of strong ethnic identities very suspicious of all aliens. An unhappy diversion from this tradition occurred during the slave trade period, when the Northern Jellaba raided the South and enslaved thousands of its people. However, the implementation of the so-called Southern Policy the South and the North returned to mutual isolation. With the advent of independence northern Sudanese replaced the colonial administrators and brought back all the ethnic suspicion and mistrust, never forgotten nor forgiven. The ethnic conflict erupted violently in 1953 and continued unabated until the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace Accord in 1972. In the same year all attempts at independence from international capital were abandoned. The temporarily successful coup of so-called free officers backed by the Communist Party in July 1971 gave them a shock, but with international backing the coup was rebuffed and the same forces hung on to the levers of state power.

The price for this reprieve was the dropping of all pretence to independence from the international market and the lifting of all the barriers to foreign capital and "mutual cooperation". Within two decades of this surrender, some tremendous upheavals had taken place - man-made and otherwise.

- About six million people mainly in northern Sudan have become assetless and homeless poor. Some 4-5 million people are displaced inside the country, and some 2-3 million have left the country either as migrants or as refugees.
- Practically all remaining forested areas in northern Sudan, an area the size of western Europe, have been denuded. 17 million hectares of rainfed arable land - half the total of usable land - have lost topsoil and turned irreversibly to dust. Crop yields fell to 30 percent of their previous levels in some areas of rainfed agriculture.
- Rainfall has been less than half the average, and its occurrence has been more erratic.
- Industrial production, mainly substitute industrialisation, averaged only 15 per cent of capacity. Foreign debt went up from \$298 million in 1972 to \$14 billion in 1992. Capital flight also reached a staggering \$14 billion. The Sudanese pound lost 99.7 per cent of its value, falling from three US dollars to one US cent.

- Population growth rate increased from 3.0 to 3.5 per cent, resulting in a 60 per cent increase in numbers. Social services deteriorated to an absurdly low level. Illiteracy, previously declining, began to rise.

The unprecedented exploitation of the central clay region of the Sudan through extensive tractorization coupled with persistent drought exhausted large areas in the North and forced the unscrupulous landlords to expand in the virgin lands in the South, the Nuba mountains and the Ingessena region. By the end of the 70s they started a number of schemes based on the oil- water- and land resources in the South.

The response of the South was the formation of the SPLM/SPLA. It is very significant, that the first attacks by the SPLA were directed against the installations of the Jonglei Canal and the oil exploration companies. This new resource aspect changed the character of the war. The indiscriminate killings of Northerners, as was the case during the first civil war, became no longer significant. On the contrary, some Northerners and many people from the Nuba and Ingessena joined the ranks of the SPLM/SPLA, which maintains that it is defending the whole of rural Sudan against the onslaught of the Jellaba. Many of the fighters from both sides of the divide may still conceive the war as an ethno-religious conflict. The truth of the matter is that these elements are no longer as prominent as before and that the competition over resources triggered by ecological degradation in the North may already be the most important factor in the second civil war in the Sudan.

Here we have an outstanding example of an ethnic-cultural conflict being gradually but firmly transformed through persistent ecological degradation into a resource conflict.

The large-scale mechanised farming which is the main culprit of the ecological degradation is best understood as large-scale shifting agriculture, exploiting the soil to the limit before moving to fresh land to repeat the process. It destroys the basis of survival for the people as well as the flora and fauna. The mechanised touch turns everything to dust.

In my opinion, the Sudan offers a prime example of how Third World ruling elite, driven to specialize in resource utilization, have degraded the resourcebase to such an extent, that its expansion becomes a necessity for them, justifying aggression against their own people and/or their neighbours.

The Prospects for Peace

Bearing the above mentioned in consideration means that the prospects for lasting peace will depend on understanding the changed nature of the conflict. It is our con-

tention that to avert future conflicts it has been imperative to drastically change the present mode of land-use by halting the senseless tractorization of vulnerable lands, abandon the monopoly of the state over landownership and reorientate agricultural production to the internal market and the satisfaction of people's food needs.

Lasting peace will therefore depend on:

- 1) Land reform, to return the land to its original owners, rolling back mechanised farming and nullifying concessions of large tracts of land to absentee landlords.
- 2) Assisting the peasants and pastoralists to rehabilitate their natural habitat.
- 3) Direct agricultural production to meet food self-sufficiency needs, by gradual, selective delinking from international trade as it is currently practised.
- 4) Exploring all the links, the direct and the intricate, between implementing sustainable development policies and the maintenance of lasting peace.
- 5) Achieving far-reaching democratization in all walks of life as well as respect in law and praxis of the rights of all minorities. Empower the people and they will green the land.

At the beginning I mentioned Sudan's resemblance to the entire African continent. Unfortunately that resemblance extends to the narrow specialisation in production demanded by the international market, namely that of primary producer and therefore deplete (par excellence) of resources.

The rural people, the Shamasa and the impoverished middle classes have been struggling for two decades against the effects of this myopic asset-stripping. It would be a tragedy for Sudan and its people if the outcome of the civil war means the continuation of the resource war of which it is but one manifestation.

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