A FALSE START: BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN, 1956–62

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ABSTRACT: Historians usually trace the start of the first civil war in the Southern Sudan to the Torit mutiny of 1955. However, organized political violence did not reach the level of civil war until 1963. This article argues that 1955–62 was a period of increasing political tension, local low-intensity violence, and social and economic stagnation. It shows how these conditions influenced the attitudes of government officials, informed the policies that they pursued, and made a Southern insurgency likely. This historical analysis helps explain why a full-scale civil war began in late 1963 and why it was not avoided.

KEY WORDS: Sudan, civil wars, postcolonial.

WHEN John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, formally brought the second civil war in the Southern Sudan (1983–2005) to an end, he stated that 'the war we are ending today first broke out in Torit on 18 August 1955'.[1] Although there was a relatively peaceful interlude between the first and the second civil wars, from 1972 to 1983, few would disagree with Garang that the two civil wars might be seen as two acts in a continuous conflict. Moreover, in today's political discourse, as Garang's speech exemplifies, the 1955 disturbances in Torit are commonly regarded as the beginning of the first civil war. Historical sources from the period between 1956 and 1962, however, indicate that few people, if any, believed that a state of civil war existed. As scholars have already documented, the Southern Sudan did not experience violence during that period at the level of civil war.[2]

Understanding why the Southern Sudan has gone through two civil wars and is now on the path to independence requires analysis of the crucial

[1] 'Speech at the signing ceremony of Comprehensive Peace Agreement', 9 Jan. 2005, reproduced in *Sudan Tribune*, http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=7476 (consulted 1 March 2011).
[2] See, for example, J. Howell, 'Political leadership and organization in the Southern Sudan' (unpublished PhD thesis, Reading University, 1978); D. H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2003). For the historiography of the first civil war, see Ø. H. Rolandsen, 'Civil war society: political processes, social groups and conflict intensity in the Southern Sudan, 1955–2005' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2010).

but neglected period of 1956–62. Why, despite overwhelming evidence to
the contrary, is 1955 commonly regarded as the start of the first civil war?
What actually happened in 1955, and what were the consequences for the
Southern Sudan? This article argues that, in 1955 – the year before the
Sudan became independent from its British and Egyptian rulers – civil war
was not inevitable. The Torit mutiny set off an unprecedented round of
urban violence – what in retrospect we call the '1955 disturbances'. The
mutiny quickly spread to other towns in Equatoria, and hundreds were killed
in two weeks of frantic violence. Although the mutiny was soon suppressed,
the *status quo ante* was not restored. Southern society neither returned
to 'normal' nor was it at war. In the following years, the Southern
Sudan experienced increasing violence, political tension and little economic
development.

Government policy is an essential factor in explaining this development:
in order to bring the situation back to normal and avoid renewed rebellion,
the government – dominated by the Khartoum elite – decided to focus on
public security, while forestalling democratic reforms and curtailing social
and economic development. This perception of exceptional circumstances
served to justify the government's lowering of the threshold for resorting to
violence and exacting punishment. The perceived threat of further large-
scale violence affected the conception, formulation, and implementation of
policy, as well as the attitudes and actions of individuals. These in turn cre-
ated conditions that provided both the opportunity and the motive for re-
bellion. The period 1956–62 was therefore one of *reversible* escalation that
culminated in the start of the first civil war in 1963–64.

General analyses of civil war 'onset' have been dominated by a search for
the structural factors that make societies prone to conflict; processes of es-
calating violence constitute a sub-field deserving closer scrutiny.[3] Structural
factors are of course relevant, and we need to know more about when and
how these factors contribute to civil war.[4] But the Southern Sudan in the
period 1956–62 is an example of how, in an attempt to suppress an incipient
rebellion, a government ended up provoking one. This suggests that one
important factor in explaining why unstable situations deteriorate into civil
war is government reaction to challenges to authority. Indeed, analysis of
events and processes within such periods of escalation may produce more
convincing explanations of civil wars than the search for structural 'root'
causes.

THE POLITICS OF CIVIL WAR HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE SUDAN

In conflict studies, it is common to stipulate that the term 'civil war' should
be used only when a certain level of sustained violence has been attained
(for instance, a specified threshold of annual casualties), and where armed

[3] N. Sambanis, 'Using case studies to expand economic models of civil war',
Perspectives on Politics, 2:2 (2004), 259–79; R. Jackson, 'The social construction of
internal war', in R. Jackson (ed.), *(Re)Constructing Cultures of Violence and Peace*
(Amsterdam, 2004), 61–78.
[4] C. Clapham, 'Introduction', in C. Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas* (Oxford, 1998),
5–6.

opposition is organized and has an official political programme.[5] Such criteria were not met in the Southern Sudan in 1956–62. It is sometimes difficult, however, to determine the 'onset' of civil war. Unlike inter-state wars, civil wars often do not start with a formal declaration. Rebels begin with small, often symbolic, attacks and develop military strength over time while expanding areas of operation.[6] The Sudanese case deviates somewhat from this pattern: linkages between violence in 1956–62 and in the subsequent civil war are tenuous; mutineers released from prison in the early 1960s were more important in starting the civil war than those who had remained at large. Yet the activities of the latter are often regarded as the link between the 1955 mutiny and the Anya-Nya rebellion, as the violence of the 1960s can be called, Anya-Nya being a widely used term for the insurgents. Why then are the 1955 disturbances regarded as the start of the civil war, and the period 1956–62 as part of it? There are three reasons. First, the general public, politicians, and historians alike expect that wars have unambiguous starting points: the 1955 disturbances – a sudden outbreak of massive violence and subsequent state of emergency – seem a serviceable dividing line between war and peace. Identifying the months-long escalation of violence in the period September 1963–January 1964 as the starting point would be more accurate, but the dramatic moment of the mutiny lends itself better to political and popular accounts.

Second, the period 1956–62 has been conflated with that of the subsequent civil war because of the lack of access to sources. The literature consists mostly of foreign journalism and partisan overviews by Northern or Southern intellectuals, with very little access to primary sources and adhering to varying standards of academic rigor. This makes it possible to perpetuate politically convenient interpretations of the period – and to stifle divergent interpretations. The early literature on the first civil war, perhaps because of its proximity in time to the events discussed, makes a clearer distinction between the periods 1956–62 and 1963–72. Mohamed Omer Beshir's *The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict* treats the period 1956–62 as the prelude to war.[7] Oliver Albino's equally partisan *The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint* asserts that 'guerrilla warfare … did in fact break out in at least three attacks by Southerners during Abboud's regime [1958–64]. The first and second of these took place on 9 and 19 September 1963.'[8] Similar points are made by academic observers. Howell states:

The idea of a 'Seventeen Years War' (1955–72) is something of a myth; and the rebels in the early years of the Abboud regime represented nothing more than a small number of the ex-mutineers eking out subsistence in the forest.[9]

But these are exceptions; most analyses of the first civil war are placed in the context of accounts of the second, or in general discussions of developments since independence, and little of these analyses is rooted in empirical sources.

[5] C. Cramer, *Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries* (London, 2006); N. Sambanis, 'What is civil war?', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48:6 (2004): 814–58.

[6] See, for example, cases in Clapham, *African Guerrillas*; Cramer, *Civil War*, 139–44.

[7] M. O. Beshir, *The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict* (New York, 1968).

[8] O. Albino, *The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint* (London, 1970), 47.

[9] Howell, 'Political leadership', 187–8.

Finally, political expediency plays a role in analyses of the period. Khartoum elites have found it opportune to date the start of the war to 1955, when the Sudan was nominally still an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium.[10] The impetus to blame colonial policies for the civil war was already evident during the Round Table Conference in 1965, when the caretaker prime minister, Sirr al-Khatim al-Khalifa,[11] an educator who had served in the South, stated that:

these natural [North–South] differences would not have led to the appearance of corresponding political differences had it not been for the evil colonial policies inflicted upon the country by the British administrators during half a century and had it not been for the grotesquely unjust campaign which enormously exaggerated the role of our ancestors both Northerners and Southerners in the slave trade.[12]

Political expediency is also a reason why Southern intellectuals and politicians likewise consider 1955 the starting point for the civil war. In this perspective, a unitary Sudan was doomed from the outset.[13] Despite a lack of historical evidence, posterity has therefore found it opportune to regard the Torit mutiny as the start of the civil war, and attempts to rectify the record will be ill-received by those with a stake in perpetuating this myth.

THE 1955 DISTURBANCES

Southern Sudan was relatively peaceful from the early 1930s to 1955, but this peace was sustained by the threat of violence and collective fines.[14] In the countryside in particular, the system of government chiefs was a weak, but still important, extension of the state's authority. During the period of Sudanese self-government that led up to independence, administrators and civil servants who had been trained by the British assumed power in

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[10] This line resonates in recent northern Sudanese academic writing. See, for example, A. A. G. Ali, 'Sudan's civil war: why has it prevailed for so long?', in P. Collier and N. Sambanis (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis* (Washington, DC, 2005), 193–220.

[11] The Conference was an attempt to mediate an end to the conflict in the South: M. M. Vambheim, 'Making peace while waging war: a peacemaking effort in the Sudanese civil war, 1965–1966' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Bergen, 2007). See also Beshir, *Southern Sudan*, *passim*; D. M. Wai, *The African–Arab Conflict in the Sudan* (New York, 1981), 97–105.

[12] Sirr al-Khatim al-Khalifa, 'Nature and development of [the] Southern Problem: Africanism, Arabism and new policy', in Abd al-Rahim (ed.), *Fourteen Documents on the Problem of the Southern Sudan* (Khartoum, 1965), 42. The editor presents a critique of British policy, including references to contemporary debates in British newspapers on colonial policy: see 'Part 1: The legacy of British colonial administration', in *ibid.* 1–32.

[13] Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 65. Wai later states that 'between 1955 and 1963 there was mere tension without serious open violence' (90). Another example is B. Yongo-Bure, 'The underdevelopment of the Southern Sudan since independence', in M. W. Daly and A. A. Sikainga (eds.), *Civil War in the Sudan* (London, 1993), 51–77.

[14] M. W. Daly, *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1934–1956* (Cambridge, 1991), 398–9; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 9–19; J. Willis, 'Violence, authority, and the state in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan,' *Historical Journal*, 46:1 (2003), 89–114.

Khartoum.[15] That they were nationalists opposed to foreign domination did not imply disparagement of colonial methods.[16] However, this philosophy of governance was unsuited to the changed circumstances of the postcolonial era. In some areas people had come to expect rudimentary education, health care, and employment. Since the late 1940s, a regional Southern identity had started to take root, different from the Arab-Islamic nationalism of the Northern elite. Christianity, English, and the notion of the Southern Sudan as a territorial concept had provided educated Southerners with an identity that transcended the differences between them, while making those between Northerners and themselves more prominent.[17] Some Southerners therefore saw the influx of Northern administrators and traders in the 1950s as internal colonization.[18] Northerners' demeaning of Christianity, and their expectation that command of written Arabic was necessary to a civil service career, further estranged educated Southerners.

Educated Southerners demanded a share of positions and power in the new government, and expected opportunities within the bureaucracy. But Sudanization was carried out in such a way that British administrators were succeeded almost exclusively by Northern Sudanese.[19] While for most Southerners such personnel changes had little immediate effect, disaffection arose among employees in civil branches of the government, police, prison guards, game wardens, and soldiers of the Equatoria Corps, many of whom supported some kind of autonomy for the South. Egyptians, in an attempt to win support for future union with the Sudan, stoked fears of Northern domination among Southerners.[20] Friction and uncertainty culminated in violent clashes in Juba and Western Equatoria in July and August 1955; several Southerners were killed. These incidents prepared the ground for the initial mutiny in Torit and ensuing disturbances.[21]

[15] H. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley, 2003).

[16] Cf. A. Burton and M. Jennings, 'Introduction: the emperor's new clothes? Continuities in governance in late colonial and early postcolonial East Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 40:1 (2007), 1–25.

[17] L. M. Passmore Sanderson and G. N. Sanderson, *Education, Religion & Politics in Southern Sudan, 1899–1964* (London, 1981), 421, 430–1; J. Howell, 'Political leaders in the Southern Sudan', unpublished paper presented at the 8th annual conference of the Social Science Council of East African Universities, Nairobi, 1972, 2–3.

[18] Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 85.   [19] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 26–7.

[20] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 342–3. See also note 26 below.

[21] Details of the mutiny are chronicled and analysed, not without political bias, in *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Disturbances in Southern Sudan during August 1955* (Khartoum, 1956); and later reproduced (often with limited source criticism) in numerous publications. Important exceptions: Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, 384–8; Howell, 'Political leadership', 104–51; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 325–46. See also, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom (TNA) FO 371/113614, no. 116, 'Inward telegram no 192 from W. H. Luce to FO reporting early signs of unrest in Torit', reproduced in D. H. Johnson (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire: Sudan* (London, 1998), 427–9; R. O. Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918–1956* (New Haven, 1983), 454–6. Evidence of Southern political sentiments may be found in the letters by Southern politicians and barely literate police officers, civil servants, chiefs, teachers, and others reproduced in Y. Wawa, *The Southern Sudanese Pursuits of Self-determination: Documents in Political History* (Kampala, 2005), 23–149.

Khartoum had been warned in early August 1955 that rebellion was brewing among Southern soldiers at Torit. The disturbances began with the mutiny of the Second Company of the Equatoria Corps in Torit, and soon spread; Northern Sudanese officials, officers, and merchants were targeted.[22] Most of the violence took place in Equatoria. The fact that it spread so rapidly testifies to the explosive political atmosphere in the towns. Troops from the North regained control within a few weeks, with the official death toll in the disturbances being 261 Northerners and 75 Southerners.[23] Some Northern Sudanese have blamed the mutiny on the connivance of Southern politicians, British administrators, and European missionaries,[24] but it was largely precipitated by personal grievances and uncertainty upon the sudden departure of the British.[25] However, while the extent to which Southern politicians conspired with the mutineers needs further investigation, Northerners' suspicions were not completely unfounded. Even though some missionaries and Southern politicians, including future rebel leaders, helped Northern authorities to limit the disturbances, the commission of inquiry discovered subversive activities by Egyptian agents and Southern politicians, but this was not disclosed in the final report.[26]

It is difficult to determine the extent of Northern 'revenge' upon Southerners assumed to have participated in the disturbances. Alexis Yangu relates with graphic detail executions, torture, burning of villages, and widespread imprisonments at Juba, Yei, Yambio, Malakal, and Wau in the months following the mutiny.[27] Although a visiting British diplomat concluded that Northern officials fully endorsed the official policy of forgive and forget,[28] there is little other evidence that Khartoum's reaction was lenient.[29] All 1,400 Southern troops in Equatoria were regarded as mutineers. By 19 September, 461 had surrendered, 'roughly' 140 had fled to Uganda,

[22] In Equatoria, Kapoeta, Kateri, Terakeka, Yei, Loka, Maridi, and Yambio/Nzara, as well as Torit, were severely affected; in the Upper Nile, Malakal; and in Bahr al-Ghazal, Wau. Commission of Enquiry, 'Southern Sudan', 47–77.   [23] *Ibid.* 80.
[24] For example, the Southern Record Office, Juba (SRO), EP/TOR/16.C.1, Sudan Ministry of the Interior, 'Memorandum', 9, and 'Minutes'; Beshir, *Southern Sudan*, 73. See also M. A. al-Rahim, *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan: A Study in Constitutional and Political Development, 1899–1956* (Oxford, 1969), 267–8.
[25] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 28–9; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 343–5.
[26] P. Woodward, *Condominium and Sudanese Nationalism* (London, 1980), 147–56; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 343–6, 352–3, 378 n. 4; *Report of the Commission of Enquiry*, 53, 71–6; Sudan Archive of the University of Durham (SAD) 830/1/92, 'The Southern Mutiny – August, 1955'.
[27] A. Yangu, *The Nile Turns Red: Azanians Chose Freedom Against Arab Bondage* (New York, 1966), 43–9. This polemic must be treated with caution. See also S. S. Poggo, 'War and conflict in the Southern Sudan, 1955–1972' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1999), 335–7, referring to interviews by John Ukec and Ben Lou Poggo.
[28] TNA, PRO FO 371/125962/no. 26, 'Southern Sudan: report on tour made by Sir E. Chapman-Andrews between the 1st and 21st April [1957]', 2.
[29] Cf. Johnson, *Root Causes*, 28; Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 65; SAD 890/1/38, H. P. Logali, 'Autobiography' (unpublished); S. Fuli Boki Tombe Ga'le, *Shaping a Free Southern Sudan: Memoirs of Our Struggle, 1934–1985* (Limuru, 2002), 187–93; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 352, 378 n.2.

and about 780 were unaccounted for.[30] By 15 December, some 147 people had been sentenced to death; 121 of these sentences were confirmed. A majority of those condemned were police officers, while the rest were civilians and soldiers.[31] Interviews with ex-convicts indicate that members of the Equatoria Corps were convicted wholesale and that sentences correlated with rank.[32] In 1957 the district commissioner (DC)[33] at Torit, M. A. Nur, stated that Head Chief Lapponya was sentenced to four years in prison, later reduced to two, even though Nur believed that Lapponya had done 'very well during the first 3 days [of the disturbances] and it was he who saved the whole Government money and sent it to Isoke for safe custody'.[34] Wau, the headquarters of Bahr el-Ghazal, was hardly affected by the disturbances. But government intelligence reports indicate that

when the Authorities felt secure enough[,] prosecutions for all those who showed mutinous attitudes and committed breaches of the peace were started, and from the number of such cases it is evident from what disasters Bahr El Ghazal was saved.[35]

These events created deep mistrust and resentment among both Northerners governing the South and Southerners associated with or living close to the centres of government power.

THE DISTURBANCES' IMPACT ON PUBLIC SECURITY

During the second half of the 1950s, a small number of mutineers remained at large in remote areas of Equatoria and were perceived by the government, and possibly chiefs and commoners, as threats to public security. An important aspect of the Torit mutiny myth is the notion that these mutineers maintained armed resistance against the government.[36] Despite occasional attacks on police patrols or outposts, however, DCs' reports, information from politicians in exile, and other sources indicate that only eastern parts of Equatoria witnessed insurgent activity worth mentioning during the period 1956–62, and even there on a very limited scale.[37] It is indeed unclear how

[30] The Equatoria Corps numbered 1,146 at Torit, including 380 'boys' (very young cadets), and 234 in the rest of the region. At Torit, 425 (including 11 'boys') surrendered, and 36 in the rest of Equatoria, TNA, PRO FO 371/113701, no. 139, 'Letter from Sir K. Helm to C. A. E. Shuckburgh reporting the political situation in the Sudan', reproduced in Johnson, *British Documents*, 471–3.   [31] Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, 387.

[32] Interviews with Sovronio Okilan Atari and Korino Ite Ocho, Torit, 3 Feb. 2007.

[33] The title of the highest-ranking official at the district level varies across the period investigated, but for simplicity the title 'district commissioner' is used throughout.

[34] SRO, TD 1, 'Appointment of H/Chief to Ikotos Local Govt. Centre', M. A. Nur to Governor Equatoria Province, 9 Apr. 1957.

[35] National Record Office, Khartoum (NRO), UNP 1/20/168, Intelligence Reports Other Provinces, El Tahir, 'Bahr el-Ghazal Intelligence Report 1 September – 30 November 1955'.

[36] S. S. Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs and Israelis in the Southern Sudan, 1955–1972* (New York, 2009), 60–2.

[37] Sudan African National Union (SANU), 'The memorandum presented by the Sudan African National Union to the Commission of the Organisation of African Unity for Refugees' (Kampala, November 1964) strengthens this impression; since it was in SANU's interest to report incidents of government suppression and injustice, it is probable that the security situation was no worse than it reported. Poggo, 'War', 357–61, provides information from interviews in the Yei area and from John Ukec Lueth, an

many mutineers lived as 'outlaws', with a few hangers-on, rather than simply returning quietly to their villages.[38] Mutineers appear to have constituted no significant threat even in their own vicinity, let alone to overall security in the Southern Sudan. Rather, mutineer activities and the government's ham-fisted efforts in dealing with perceived threats illustrate how the South remained in limbo between peace and war.

The boundaries between banditry and local resistance were blurred, and government reports from this period do not distinguish clearly between cattle raiders and mutineers, but it seems that the main threat to public security stemmed from inter-community clashes in which the government assumed the colonial-era role of 'neutral' arbitrator. Nevertheless, the mutineers hindered the return to normality because their sporadic attacks and mere presence in the bush were seen as a challenge that, if unchecked, could become the vanguard of another uprising. There was an intense hunt for mutineers throughout Equatoria in 1956. By 1957 the search was concentrated in Eastern Equatoria, where a few groups of former mutineers remained, presumably in their areas of origin, and where government retaliation in the months after the disturbances was apparently most severe.

In the period 1956–60 the best-known group, led by Lance-Corporal Latada Hillir and Chief Lomilluk Lohide, had its base in the mountains near Isoke,[39] where it ambushed government vehicles and in one incident killed two chiefs as 'collaborators'.[40] A police station in the Torit area was attacked on 16 March 1959, and two northern policemen were killed.[41] The role of Chief Lomiluk has not been widely reported, but Simonse paints a convincing picture of his central position in the Latada group.[42] Sovronio Okilan Atari, a participant in the Torit mutiny, mentions Lomiluk's influence on Southern soldiers prior to the mutiny.[43] The government regarded him as important enough for an offer of amnesty if he abandoned Latada: Chief Lollik Lado was to convey to Lomiluk that 'the Government has no ill-feelings towards him and encourage him to settle in peace'.[44]

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ex-Anya-Nya officer, in 'A manuscript of the rise of the Anya-Nya movement'. Ukec interviewed a number of veterans from the Anya-Nya in the early 1980s. S. Simonse, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism, and the Scapegoat King in Southeastern Sudan* (Leiden, 1992), 313, by mentioning an SRO file entitled 'Southern corps mutiny', indicates the existence of a more extensive compendium on the disturbances and later events.

[38] SAD (Collins), 919/6/96, 'The elections of 1958 and the army coup'. This is part of a larger draft manuscript by Storrs McCall (SAD 919/6/85–153, hereafter 'SAD (Collins)').

[39] Simonse, *Kings*, 357, referring to Akec's account, mentions Madok mountain as the location of Latada's camp. A government intelligence report corroborates his operations '8 miles from Kiyala', NRO, UNP 1/20/168, S. K. M. Ahmed, 'EP HMIR 16.8–15.9.57'. When the author visited in 2007, 'Jebel Latada' (Latada Mountain) was pointed out.

[40] SAD (Collins), 919/6/96, 'Elections'. According to the US embassy in Khartoum, the DC at Torit was the target, but he was not in the car: National Archieves and Records Administration, College Park, United States (NARA), RG 59/1955–59 Central Decimal File/745W.00/3–2359 (Box 3250), 'Unrest in the South', US Embassy, Khartoum to Department of State, Washington, 23 March 1959.   [41] *Ibid.*

[42] Simonse, *Kings*, 311–14.   [43] Interview with Sovronio Okilan Atari.

[44] NRO, UNP 1/20/168, Ahmed, 'EP HMIR 1–15.12.57' and Ahmed, 'EP MIR 16.10–15.11.57'.

Latada and Lomiluk both died during 1959–60 and their group dissolved.[45]

Paul Yosia at Kajo-Keji and Lasuba Tadajo at Yei have been identified as 'resistance' leaders in other parts of Equatoria. It appears that Lasuba Tadajo was a policeman who avoided capture after the 1955 disturbances and operated alone. He was allegedly betrayed by his wife and killed by police in March 1957. An official reported that this 'put an end to the life of an outlaw who had been a menace to security in Yei District for quite a long time'; a schoolmaster called Lasuba a 'gallant martyr'.[46] Whatever he was, there is little evidence that Lasuba or anyone else managed to form an insurgent group or destabilize the areas where they hid. And the Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal provinces apparently experienced no insurgency until the mid-1960s.[47] An exception was eastern Upper Nile, where the military used harsh methods to control movement and arms sales across the Ethiopian border.[48]

The apparent lack of organization behind the 1955 disturbances, and the accompanying atrocities, confirmed Northern prejudices that Southerners were 'half-civilized' and could be kept in order only through force.[49] One government measure immediately following the disturbances was to dissolve the Equatoria Corps, which was replaced by Northern units. This seems to have contributed to increased Southern disaffection: the Northern soldiers were unfamiliar with the area and were assumed to be inimical to Southerners.[50] One former Southern rebel later recalled that:

it was like living under foreign occupation and we knew that somebody was constantly watching us … These soldiers were behaving like criminals … and we had to leave for the bush to join the Anyanya as that was the only way to escape the humiliation the Arab soldiers were bringing upon us.[51]

The behaviour of the soldiers and their officers probably varied, but introducing soldiers from elsewhere undoubtedly hindered communication, increased the probability of misunderstandings, and perpetuated prejudices.

Although the threat to public security posed by 'outlaws' was limited, the government used methods previously employed by the Condominium government when searching for mutineers and civilians suspected of abetting them. These included large military manoeuvres in the countryside and collective punishments such as confiscation of cattle and the burning of crops

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[45] Most sources agree that Latada died in 1960; the cause of death is disputed: compare Poggo, 'War', 358, with SAD (Collins) 919/6/117, 'The rise of the Anya-Nya/Eastern Equatoria'.

[46] NRO, UNP 1/20/168, Ali Baldo 'EP HMIR for 1st half of March 57'. See also SAD (Collins), 919/6/96v, 'Elections'; Poggo, 'War', 340–1.

[47] In the Bahr el-Ghazal, a certain Madut Chan, a Dinka former non-commissioned officer in the Equatoria Corps was supposedly active.

[48] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 427–8.

[49] See *Ibid*. 429; F. M. Deng, *War of Visions* (Washington, DC, 1995), 136.

[50] The Southern opposition in exile reported that Northern soldiers cuckolded Southerners and shot children, allegedly because they thought that they were monkeys: SANU, 'Memorandum', 9, 11, 42–3.

[51] J. M. Jok, *War and Slavery in Sudan* (Philadelphia, 2001), 60.

and villages.[52] There were at least four instances of entire villages burned by government troops during the period 1956–9: one in Yei District and three in Torit.[53] Public executions were reintroduced even though, as recently as mid-1955, a Northern Sudanese DC had concluded that these were 'out of keeping with modern life'.[54] But while an intelligence report explained that public executions would be perceived as signs of government strength,[55] a Southern source indicates that executions further distanced the public from the government.[56] During the early 1960s commoners started to flee to neighbouring countries, notably Uganda, Congo, and Ethiopia.

The system of government chiefs was also crucial in attempts to suppress local security threats, both for gathering information and for mobilizing the police and 'civilians' for patrols. The motive for participating in these patrols appears, however, to have been fairly parochial, and the line between vigilantism and policing seems to have been blurred. Available sources make it difficult to separate insurgency from non-political violence. In some instances inter-tribal raiding – rather than Southern hostility to Northern rule – may explain the actions and survival strategies of both 'outlaws' and those 'collaborating' with the government. For instance, in March 1960 'outlaw Marchello' of Torit district reportedly attacked the Didinga village of Manita, 'robbed a few cattle camps', and left one Didinga dead after an exchange of fire.[57] Such outrages may explain some Southerners' willingness to participate in the government's 'fighting patrols'.

Another example is from the remote south-east corner of the Sudan. The district report for April 1959 mentions an exchange of fire with an 'outlaw' named Loinet who had crossed the border from Ethiopia with stolen cattle, and a skirmish with 'Marco and his gang' in which stolen cattle were brought back to the Toposa and ammunition was confiscated. Tribal police under

[52] SANU, 'Memorandum', *passim*; Yangu, *Nile*, 49–50. District reports and province intelligence reports corroborate these observations: for example, '38 huts in which the natives were harbouring that mutineer [*sic*] were burnt. They have [*sic*] been abandoned by the natives one day before the incident as they knew what was going to happen … [Following a different incident,] special military operations were launched and extensive general searches were carried out in the surrounding neighbourhood but the mutineers involved entered Uganda. Two civilians were killed on their attempt to spear search parties'. NRO, UNP 1/20/168, MAT Malik (for Gov), 'EP MIR Aug–Oct 56'.

[53] NRO, UNP 1/20/168, A/Gov Saied, 'Equatoria Province Intelligence Report July/Aug 56', reports that villages in Yei district were burnt in July or August 1956. Other sources erroneously mention 1957, such as K. D. D. Henderson, *Sudan Republic* (New York, 1965), 185–6. The SANU 'Memorandum', 20, also reports the burning of Lobira village in September 1957. The burning of Maiji and Haifourere was supposed to have taken place in September 1959: SANU, 'Memorandum', 17–20. The villagers of Haifourere were forcibly resettled at a new site on the Torit–Kapoeta road: SRO, 24/B/1, Ministry of Local Government, 'Torit rural council: monthly reports for the month of April 1960'.

[54] SRO, EP/57.E.3/1–1954/1955, Freigoun to Governor Equatoria Province, 'Annual report – Eastern District', 18 July 1955.

[55] NRO, UNP 1/20/168, S. K. M. Ahmed for A/Gov, 'Equatoria Province MIR 1–31 July 1957'.   [56] SANU 'Memorandum', 27, 29–30.

[57] SRO, Pibor District/57.C.3, 'Monthly diary – Eastern District for March, 1960'.

Chief Soghan of Riwoto reportedly shot and killed one of Marco's men, a certain Lopir, who with four others had come to assassinate him. Another was arrested, and two escaped.[58] June 1959 witnessed several more encounters with 'outlaws'.[59] The DC organized three 'fighting patrols' against them. The Toposa of Lomayen section, armed with rifles, went to hunt Marco's 'gang', found them at Nabatokol near Pibor on 10 June, and in a fight lasting six hours killed Marco and three of his men; the others escaped without their weapons. On 18 June, another patrol went after the 'outlaw' Itawo Lochoroni, who had been seen at Korkomje cattle camp. Four followers were arrested. Itawo escaped, but was later caught and publicly executed at Kapoeta in September 1959, reportedly to the delight of the locals who attended.[60] The DC was enthusiastic in praise of the chiefs, who had not only secured their region but had also been meticulous in paying their taxes.

Without corroborative sources it is difficult to establish either the motives of those involved in local violence or their background, but it is likewise difficult to interpret these events as evidence of organized insurgency. Even though the high level of local violence hardly testifies to a harmonious and peaceful society, monthly reports from the Eastern District during 1959–60 indicate that educational activities and provision of health services were not affected by 'outlaw' activities.[61] Another indication that 'outlaws' posed little security risk is the ability of local government officials in both Torit and Eastern districts to go out on monthly treks, inspect public works, consult chiefs, and collect taxes;[62] while visitors from the Northern Sudan and abroad continued to tour the area, hunt, and engage in other pastimes without incident.[63]

During the early 1960s a more serious security threat arose. Southern soldiers, policemen, and civilians jailed in the aftermath of the Torit mutiny were released from Northern imprisonment in 1961–3, most of them routinely at the end of their sentences.[64] The result was that Southerners with military training but no employment – and nursing grievances against the government – returned to the South. Some had apparently already decided to become insurgents and fled immediately to Ethiopia, Uganda, and the Congo. Others seem to have attempted to settle down, but went into exile after harassment by Northerners in the police and the army, or after persuasion by Southern politicians in exile.[65] Co-operating with politicians and

[58] These monthly reports were written for the DCs' superiors, and their rendering of local events would be biased by Northern officials' general outlook and by their need to please these superiors (see p. 122 below).

[59] SRO, Pibor District/57.C.3, 'Eastern District monthly diary for the month [of] June 1959'. (Cf. Poggo, 'War', 357–8).

[60] SRO, Pibor District/57.C.3, 'Kapoeta monthly diary for September, 1959'.

[61] Based on: SRO, Pibor District/57.C.3, Eastern District monthly diaries, March 1959–April 1960; SRO, Ministry of Local Government, 24/B/1, Torit rural council monthly reports January 1954–August 1961.

[62] For example, SRO, Ministry of Local Government, 24/B/1, 'Monthly report for June 1960'.

[63] SRO, Ministry of Local Government 24/B/1/195, 202, 244, 249.

[64] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 369, 402; Poggo, 'War', 360–1.

[65] Interview with 'Alusjo' Louis Ohoro Loyie, Torit, 26 Feb. 2006; interview with Sovronio Okilan Atari; *Voice of Southern Sudan*, 1:2 (1963). See also Rolandsen, 'Civil war society', 109–39.

defectors from government posts, the ex-convicts began organizing insurgent groups in border areas. Incidents in Eastern Equatoria in 1961–2 appear to have been the work of ex-mutineers who had been released from prison and were led by ex-Lieutenant Emilio Taffeng.[66] There was an attack on a police station near the border town of Kajo-Keji in November 1962.[67] In the wake of these incidents more villages were burned, and refugees poured into neighbouring countries. It is possible to surmise a pattern of intensified government violence following rebel attacks, in particular the burning of villages and killing and ill-treatment of chiefs.[68] Loosely co-ordinated Anya-Nya groups attacked in Equatoria in September 1963 and largely locally organized groups stormed Pochalla in October that same year. With the failed assault on Wau in January 1964 a state of civil war had been reached, although violence continued to escalate throughout the 1960s.

IMPACT ON POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION IN THE SOUTH

Official accounts of governance in the Southern Sudan in the years after the 1955 disturbances sought to create a positive contrast to both the Condominium and the succeeding military dictatorship of General Ibrahim Abboud (1958–64):

The National Government at the time [1956–58] did not wish to confine its efforts to the maintenance of law and order and continued working for the execution of positive plans which had been made before the [Torit] Mutiny took place for the purpose of correcting the injustices which the Sudan inherited from the Imperialistic administration, especially in connection with the levelling up of wages and salaries as between Southerners and Northerners, in the economic development of the South and the levelling up of education, health and other social services.[69]

This characterization departs sharply from contemporary and later assessments by Southerners and foreign sympathizers. These claim that the government set out on a massive campaign to subdue and assimilate the Southerners into the Northern cultural and religious sphere, while abandoning any attempt at social and economic development. Government records and other primary sources confirm that the Southern opposition's description of the situation is more accurate than that of the government. Under the pretext of ill-defined special circumstances, Northern officials did in fact prioritize policing and public security over freedom of worship, education, and economic development. But the desire to maintain control and forestall new uprisings was perhaps a more important motive for these policies than cultural imperialism.

After the 1955 disturbances, the Northern and Southern elites were driven apart at the national political level. Although it is likely that this would have

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[66] Taffeng, a veteran of the Equatoria Corps and one of three Southerners promoted to officer rank shortly before the 1955 disturbances, was perhaps the most prominent leader of the Anya-Nya rebellion during the first five years, but was increasingly marginalized by Joseph Lagu in the late 1960s.   [67] Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 92.
[68] SANU, 'Memorandum'.   [69] Sirr al-Khatim al-Khalifa, 'Nature', 44.

happened even if the 1955 disturbances had never taken place,[70] the radicalization of politics in the South and fear of another uprising increased the urgency and intensity of government action. The disturbances profoundly influenced Khartoum's attitude towards the South, and the independent government maintained that the time was not right for modernizing local government and administration. The colonial Closed District Ordinance remained in effect throughout the period 1956–62, and the state of emergency imposed after the disturbances was apparently never officially lifted.[71]

The impact of the 1955 disturbances is evident in the record of a meeting of the governor of Equatoria and his district commissioners in December 1955. This opened with a minute's silence for 'the lives of the Northern officials and merchants who were brutally murdered during the sorrowful disturbances'. Southern victims were not mentioned. The governor charged that Southern politicians and foreign missionaries had been the main sources of trouble; 'the man in the bush' had no interest in politics and should be 'protected from harmful influences'. Regarding social services, the meeting agreed that 'enormous expansion' should 'be checked or even curtailed in certain spheres until life becomes normal again'. The province was 'not yet ready for Local Government at least in most parts. The introduction of existing councils [had] weakened Chiefs in particular and administration in general.' The meeting resolved to cut government spending except for the building of police stations and jails and improving roads. And it was 'high time to start a proper intelligence service for the three Southern Provinces with headquarters at Juba and branches in other places'.[72] These statements echoed an earlier British philosophy of 'care and maintenance'.[73]

In the second half of the 1950s, the political climate in the Southern Sudan was characterized by mistrust and antagonism. Since the 1940s, Southern politicians and the educated elite had come into their own as intermediaries between ordinary Southerners and the often distant government.[74] Seen from Khartoum, Southern politicians were agitators opposed to the new Sudanese nation and possibly in league with foreigners. Fear of another uprising contributed to suspicion and alienation of the educated elite, the very Southerners who were potential allies in expanding a sense of Sudanese nationalism. Except for a short period before the 1958 parliamentary elections, there was a steady deterioration of Southerners' opportunities to participate in national politics. Mistrust made Southern politicians' demands for federalism even less acceptable to Northern opinion than they had been before independence; it was feared that a federal system would obstruct cultural assimilation and inevitably lead to secession.[75]

[70] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 293–4, 297–301, 310–11.
[71] Some measures seem to have been relaxed during 1956–7: TNA, FO 371/125962/no. 26, 'Southern Sudan'.
[72] SRO, EP/SCR/16.C.2/11–21, 'Minutes of the District Commissioners' meeting held in Juba on 6th–9th December 1955'.
[73] Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, 25–45 *et passim*.
[74] C. Leonardi, 'Knowing authority: colonial governance and local community in Equatoria Province, Sudan, 1900–1956' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2005), 151–61.   [75] Howell, 'Political leadership', 152–3.

Many Southern politicians in turn became more antagonistic towards the Northern elite. Southerners regarded the repressive measures taken in the aftermath of the 1955 disturbances as confirmation of their views about 'internal colonialism' and their status as second-class citizens.[76] A degree of radicalization among Southerners during the period 1955–8 is also related to other measures taken to avoid perceived threats to public security. Minutes from a meeting that the governor of Equatoria, Ali Baldo, held with DCs on 29 March 1958 illustrate the point. Baldo explained that the arrest of a Southern politician had

led to the discovery of some documents of a serious nature which indicates the existence of a vicious conspiracy which aims at realizing the Federal Status through the incitement of the public and the use of violence. This is now being investigated and until such investigation is concluded nobody can definitely say whether it is something imaginary or an actual plan which is going to be put into execution.[77]

The assistant governor, the Southerner Clement Mboro, warned against overreacting and worsening the estrangement between the government and the public. To this, Ali Baldo replied that the government could take no chances.

Even before the Abboud coup, relations between Southern politicians and the government had deteriorated. Contemporary correspondence between the government in Juba and leaders of the Liberal Party (a purely Southern entity) shows that politicians had to apply for permission for every meeting they wanted to hold, publish donors' names, and refrain from door-to-door and marketplace solicitation of funds.[78] After the 1958 elections, further restrictions were imposed. In Equatoria these began even before Abboud's coup: the arrest of a Southern politician mentioned above led to a complete ban on political meetings and the collection of funds.[79] Ali Baldo told the DCs that such contributions were 'likely to be used in feeding subversive activities especially after it was reported to him that the approval he had previously issued to the Liberal Party was greatly abused'.[80] DCs were further reminded that chiefs were government officials, should report 'activities leading to breaches of the peace', and must not 'indulge in politics'.[81]

Following the 1958 coup, the radicalization of Southern politicians accelerated significantly. The new regime immediately banned political parties and dissolved parliament. For Southern politicians this was a personal blow because they depended on their positions for income and they lacked the Khartoum elite's informal channels to influence the new regime. Abboud

[76] E.g. Deng, *War*, 211–16; Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 85.
[77] SRO, EP/SCR/16.C.2/25–30, 'Minutes of District Commissioners' meeting held on 29th March 1958 at 10.30 a.m. at Governor's residence', 8 April 1958.
[78] SRO, SCR/EP/10.B.23/69–70, Baldo to Asst. Governor Juba District ('Permission for collection of donations' attached).
[79] See below; Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 356–7.
[80] SRO, EP/SCR/16.C.2/25–30, 'Minutes'.
[81] *Ibid*. See also SRO, TD/1, Kn. P/SCR/1.A.1, Governor of Kordofan to Permanent Under Secretary, Ministry of Interior, 23 Dec. 1956; MI/SCR/1.F.1, Minister of Interior to Governor Kordofan Province, 30 Dec. 1956; EP/SCR/1.F.12, Governor Equatoria to DCs, 5 Jan. 1957.

and his ministers were even more hostile to the idea of a federal Sudan than the Northern politicians of previous governments. Several Southern officials who had been posted to the North after the disturbances formed secret cells that collected money, shared news, and, in the period 1961–4, provided support to politicians in exile. Southern politics went underground and into exile.[82] This development increased the government's fear of another uprising in the South and resulted in tighter control over and more harassment of those of the educated elite remaining in the Sudan.

The drive to propagate Islam and Arabic in the South has often been ascribed to the intolerance of the Northern elite. It is, however, important to consider both the anti-colonial and nationalist aspects of this policy and also its internal security dimension. Arabic and Islam were twin pillars of the Northern Sudanese nationalism that had developed during the 1930s and 1940s, while secularism, Christianity, and English came to be associated with colonialism and foreign dominance.[83] In the aftermath of the 1955 disturbances, assimilation of the South and ensuring Southerners' allegiance to the central government therefore appeared to be matters of national unity and state security. Curtailing the activities of Christian missionaries was seen as a crucial element in the effort to reduce 'foreign' influence in the South; allegations of subversion were a prominent element in official propaganda against the missionaries.[84] Christian proselytizing and congregational affairs were increasingly subjected to new regulations administered by uncooperative bureaucrats. Under Abboud's rule, a policy of expelling the missionaries entirely was introduced, which was completed in early 1964.[85] Southern politicians, aware that the missions had some political leverage in the US, Britain, and Italy, took advantage of that interest to draw attention to their demand for self-determination;[86] and the treatment of missionaries further alienated educated Southerners, many of whom were Christians and even more of whom had attended missionary schools.[87]

Within the education sector in general, effects of the 1955 disturbances were felt immediately. Primary and intermediate schools in the South were closed for a year. The activities of the three Southern secondary schools – Rumbek, Juba Commercial, and the Maridi Teachers' Training

[82] For a comprehensive analysis, see Rolandsen, 'Civil war society'.

[83] H. J. Sharkey, 'Arab identity and ideology in Sudan: the politics of language, ethnicity and race', *African Affairs*, 107:426 (2007), 21–43.

[84] Sudan Ministry of the Interior, *Memorandum on Reasons That Led to the Expulsion of Foreign Missionaries and Priests from the Southern Provinces of the Sudan*, 5 March 1964, 16–17; R. Gray, 'Some reflections on Christian involvement 1955–1972', in Y. F. Hasan and R. Gray, *Religion and Conflict in Sudan* (Nairobi, 2002); Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 367.

[85] [Verona Fathers' Mission], *Sudan Government Secret Plans Against Christian Missions in the South … During the Years 1957–1960* (n.p., 1965?); Verona Fathers' Mission, *The Black Book of the Sudan on the Expulsion of the Missionaries from Southern Sudan: An Answer* (Milan, 1964), 62–86 and *passim*.

[86] See Sudan African Closed Districts National Union (SACDNU), *Petition to the United Nations* (1963); J. Oduho and W. Deng, *The Problem of the Southern Sudan* (London, 1963), 59–60.

[87] See, for example, Deng and Oduho, *Problem*, 55–8; J. J. Akol, *I Will Go the Distance: The Story of a 'Lost' Sudanese Boy of the Sixties* (Nairobi, 2005), 177–80. See also Gray, 'Reflections'.

College – were temporarily transferred to Khartoum.[88] The government took steps to limit instruction in Christianity and English, and in 1957 the missionary schools in the South were nationalized.[89] Since private schools in the North and Islamic schools in the South were not subject to this takeover, it was clear that this was intended not only to unify the education system but also to limit the operation of the missionaries. Although the government boasted of the increased number of schools since independence, the quality of education deteriorated.[90]

Government expansion of educational services concentrated on primary schools, religious education, sports, and vocational skills.[91] Although this strategy may have conformed with Northern disdain for Southerners' academic abilities,[92] it was also motivated by suspicions of subversion: just as the British had found the *effendiyya* the source of nationalist opposition to colonial rule, so now Southerners with higher education were seen as those most likely to rebel against a government dominated by Northerners.[93] Applying the British strategy of closing off the area to cultural and religious competition while focusing on education and proselytizing seemed the best means towards this end.[94] Several schools, in particular Rumbek Secondary, became places of intense political activity and opposition to the government. During the absence of formal political activity after the Abboud coup, two strikes took place among secondary and intermediate students: the first, in 1960, was occasioned by the government's changing the day of rest in the South from Sunday to Friday. After the larger and more momentous strike of 1962 many students quit school and fled the country, and some subsequently became involved in diaspora politics and insurgency activities.[95] As G. N. Sanderson and L. M. Passmore Sanderson forcefully conclude: 'educational policy [in the South since 1957] can be seen as the central and crucial Southern grievance; it was resented and resisted with corresponding bitterness and determination'.[96]

Government policy gave public security priority over general economic improvement in the South. After independence most of the development projects initiated during the 1940s – notably the comprehensive Zande Scheme – stagnated and were eventually abandoned.[97] In the districts of Torit and Yei the government and Northern traders attempted to introduce

[88] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 336, 362; Albino, *Sudan*, 81.

[89] R. O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan in Historical Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1975; 2nd edn 2006), 75; SACDNU, 'Petition', 10–11; SAD (Collins), 919/6/99v–100, 'Elections'.

[90] Pupils above village school level numbered 16,985 in 1953–4 and 30,908 in 1961–2: Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 361–77. See also Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 203 n. 22; Akol, *I Will Go*, 178–9.

[91] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 337–9; Howell, 'Political leadership', 184–7.

[92] This attitude was not limited to Northern officials. In 1957 the British ambassador made this observation: 'The Northerner is quite unlike the marissa [beer]-drinking, banana-eating, lazy, immoral, squat black forest people who seem to live for little but the Saturday night dance': TNA, FO 371/125962/no. 26, 'Southern Sudan', 3.

[93] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 364.   [94] *Ibid.* 357–69; Deng, *War*, 135–6.

[95] On the 1960 and 1962 strikes, see Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 368–9.

[96] *Ibid.* 377.

[97] Collins, *Shadows*, in particular 293–364. Se also C. C. Reining, *The Zande Scheme: An Anthropological Case Study of Economic Development in Africa* (Evanston, IL, 1966);

cash crops such as cotton, coffee, and tobacco, but met with only limited success.[98] However, the extension of the national railway to Wau through Aweil in the early 1960s had an important strategic aspect: it improved the government's ability to move men and equipment to areas of the South less accessible by river transport.

Political instability had not brought the South's economy to a standstill. As late as November 1962, an official of the British embassy in Khartoum toured Equatoria, assessing commercial opportunities within agriculture and processing industries.[99] Although he mentioned Southern discontent and the recent school strikes, his report was fairly optimistic. Retrospectively, however, the social and economic stagnation which was abetted by lack of government intervention and lack of normalization was evident.

The impact of the 1955 disturbances and the new government policy towards the South was also felt in local governance. During the late 1940s and early 1950s the Condominium government had undertaken a series of reforms.[100] Native administration – the system adopted in the 1920s, whereby political control would be maintained indirectly through tribal chiefs – had proven increasingly incapable of meeting modern challenges and anachronistically inconsonant with representative government. The British had therefore decided to introduce elected councils at the province, district, and, in some cases, town and village levels, but these reforms were still in their infancy when the Condominium ended.[101] The new independent government's decision to reverse local governance reforms was partly motivated by the 1955 disturbances and the desire to control the population in the South. But this tendency of reversing elected councils started earlier. The provincial council in Equatoria – consisting mainly of chiefs, supplemented with some educated Southerners and Northern administrators – which had been established in 1948, had its last meeting in March 1954.[102]

Bolstering the chiefs was advantageous for short-term security purposes, as this was a low-cost system and an adequate extension of government power into the local community as long as ambitions for governance and development were minimal. During the early 1950s rural district councils had also been established. These continued after independence, but were first and foremost part of the local administration. They were hardly devices for local democracy, since chiefs retained dominant positions in the councils and remained their communities' main intermediaries with district commissioners. A letter from Chief Justice Abu Rannat, dated 18 March 1957,

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Southern Front, 'The Southern Front memorandum to O.A.U. on Afro-Arab conflict in the Sudan, Accra, Oct. 1965' ([Khartoum], 1965).

[98] SRO, TD/1.G/60, 'Agriculture in Torit District', 1959. In Yei there was a labour shortage: SANU, 'Memorandum', 45. See also J. Cookson et al., *Area Handbook for the Republic of the Sudan* (Washington, DC, 1960), 373–4.

[99] TNA, FO 371/165683, 'Short Tour of Equatoria, October 28–November 6', 4 Dec. 1962.

[100] G. M. Salih, 'The heritage of local government', in J. Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan* (Khartoum, 1974), 23–4; G. M. Salih and J. Howell, 'Local government after independence', in Howell, *Local Government*, 33–44.

[101] Leonardi, 'Knowing authority'.

[102] A set of minutes from council meetings in the period 1948/9–1954 is available in SRO, EP/1.C.1/3. See also Howell, 'Political leadership', 52–3.

directed governors to implement recommendations of the ministerial committee for the affairs of the South, specifically to warrant 'wider administrative and legal powers [to the chiefs] under supervision of the District Commissioners'.[103] This appears to have resulted in few practical changes in the Southern Sudan, where reform of the autocratic system of DCs and chiefs with a goal of participatory democracy and modernization of the administration had already been put on hold indefinitely.[104]

Northern politicians' and administrators' prejudice and paternalistic attitude towards the Southerners may also have contributed towards the reversal of the policy of modernizing and democratizing local government. The DC of Eastern District wrote in 1956 that the people of his district, 'primitive as they are', were 'below the standard of any form of Local Government'; it would be a 'waste of time and money' to institute local government among them.[105] The DC at Torit chimed in with a Sudanese version of the White Man's Burden:

The South is still an ignorant and blind community which has to be taken by the hand until it passes the dark stage in which the British wanted it to stay for ever. The South, though a part of a whole, is a grave trust placed on our shoulders since the Independence Day; and we will be betraying that trust if for cheap propaganda or for winning a handful of M.P.s we impose a system which we know before hand [sic] that it [sic] is not even suitable for the north.[106]

It is, however, difficult to determine to what extent Northern administrators' misguided assessments of Southerners' ability to govern their own affairs motivated the reversal of reforms of native administration or whether these assessments masked an unwillingness to invest in modernization and risk losing control.

CONCLUSION

It is often claimed that the Northern elite's exclusivist vision of the Sudan as an independent state – and its perception of the Southern Sudan, its history, and people as inferior – was the reason the government was unable to find a solution to the national problem acceptable to all parties. The 1955 disturbances might have been seen by decision-makers in Khartoum as a signal that the policy of integrating the South had been implemented too rapidly. But instead the violence of the 1955 disturbances, the desire to return to 'normality', and the fear of another uprising reduced the willingness to compromise. These circumstances fortified Northern administrators' prejudices, justified ill-advised reforms, and resulted in counter-productive actions. If the Northern Sudanese who controlled the state in 1956 had pursued a conciliatory approach in the aftermath of the 1955 disturbances and had chosen different policies in the following years – or at least slowed down the integration policy – the Southern Sudan might not have descended

[103] SRO, TD/1 (JUD/A/10.B.1).
[104] Wai, *African–Arab Conflict*, 83–4. See also M. El-Beshir, 'The political role of the local government officer', in Howell, *Local Government*, 81–2.
[105] SRO, TD/1 (SCR/ED/1.C.1/1), Freigoun to Governor Equatoria Province, 24 March 1956.   [106] SRO, TD/1, Basit to Governor Equatoria Province, 7 April 1956.

into civil war. A fully fledged civil war cannot be considered an *inevitable* outcome of the 1955 disturbances. In the wake of the mutiny, the actions and counter-actions of the government and militant Southerners generated a spiral of violence in the period 1956–65. That violence fomented a conflict that continued into the period of the Addis Ababa Peace and was taken to new extremes during the second civil war. An independent Southern Sudan has grown out of opposition to the North; now the rulers of Juba are tasked with cultivating a Southern identity and government authority that is already challenged. History never repeats itself, but one may still have a strong sense of *déjà vu*.