

## ***Sudan and its Neighbors: Geopolitical Implications of a Sudanese Peace***

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Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Fletcher School, Tufts University, for inviting me to participate in this important and timely seminar on: "Sudan at the Crossroads: Transforming Generations of Civil War into Peace and Development". I will try in my paper to shed the light on Egypt's role in the peace process in Sudan, including its future role in the post peace era.

Egypt's relation with Sudan is a vital one. History, geography, the River Nile and close interaction between our communities, including intermarriage, are what formulate and govern the Egyptian-Sudanese relations. As early as 2300 B.C., the Pharaonic kingdoms of Egypt had begun to expand south.

From it, around 1000 B.C., in Nubia, Northern Sudan grew the independent kingdom of Cush, whose rulers conquered Egypt in the 9th century BC, making Napata their capital. The bilateral relations have been consolidated with the existence of more than two million Sudanese's in Egypt. Consequently, Egypt's concern over the situation in Sudan is a reflection of its close relations, as well as, its regionally repercussions.

### **Egypt's efforts to achieve peace in Sudan during the Pre Machakos Era:**

Egypt has a strong interest in avoiding disintegration and instability in the region through achieving peace and stability in a unified Sudan where all of its people can live in equality and justice. In its commitment to achieve this goal, Egypt launched the Joint initiative with Libya in 1999. It was primarily designed to provide a comprehensive solution to the Sudanese problem by engaging all the Sudanese parties in the North and in the South. All the Sudanese parties accepted the Initiative, including the SPLA in 2001. The Initiative's nine points include; Preserving Sudan's unity, having citizenship as the basis of rights, recognizing Sudan's diversity, safeguarding democratic pluralism, guaranteeing basic freedoms, establishing a decentralized government and implementing an immediate end to hostilities.

In one of the reports issued by the International Crisis Group, it stated that "the Joint Initiative has been credited as being a highly practical one that recognizes the on the ground realities of the conflict, and by avoiding self-determination, it is argued that it actually is preserving the South from future internal divides, since it is by no means a cohesive entity". What can be taken against the Egyptian-Libyan initiative is that it did not move with adequate speed.

There were common elements between the Egyptian- Libyan Joint Initiative and the IGAD Initiatives; and one of the main difference was that while the Joint Initiative designed to address the problems of all Sudan, the IGAD Initiative focused only on the problem between the North and the South. Therefore, there was an agreement on coordination between the two initiatives, which unfortunately did not materialized.

### **Egypt & the Peace Process in Sudan: Machakos and After**

With the slow down on the Egyptian-Libyan Initiative, the IGAD Initiative had been accelerated, with the American support. The IGAD efforts resulted in signing the Machakos Protocol on July 2002. In this regard, Egypt's stand is unequivocal from the very beginning; it will be in touch with all the Sudanese parties and others to help settle the Sudanese issue, within the framework of Sudan's unity and absolute justice and equality for all its citizens.

Egypt is engaged in a dialogue with all Sudanese parties, with the aim of settling the problem. It is working for the Sudanese people's interests and assistance, fostering stronger and closer ties between the North and the South. Its support for Sudan's unity, noting that Egypt is dealing with all the Sudanese people stemming from this belief.

For Egypt, water is not the only incentive for advocating the unity of Sudan, since ten countries are already debating water rights on the Nile Basin; adding one more country won't make a difference. Egypt's preference to avoid the cessation of the South is due to its conviction that it will not serve neither the interests of all the Sudanese people, nor of the African Continent. Cessation of the South will not be the end rather than the beginning to the disintegration of the Sudan be it in the East or in the West, which will lead to a regional balkanization. In addition to that, Egypt is committed to the wisdom of the Founding Fathers of the OAU when they called for the adherence to the existing boundaries inherited from the colonial age in order not to open doors for tribal dissensions and the likes.

Egypt views that South cessation is a contagious phenomenon that would spread to surrounding countries and will have a domino effect on the neighboring countries which are facing –with different degrees- ethnic and religious problems. Fortunately, the Machakos Agreements indicates the full desire of all Sudanese parties for unity, which is the sole choice to realize equality and prosperity.

In order to achieve peace and stability in the entire Sudan, Egypt is in close contacts with all parties concerned, including the Government, the Northern opposition, the National Democratic Alliance and the SPLM. Maintaining the unity of Sudan, providing equality and prosperity to the Sudanese's, is the crux of the Egyptian efforts that all parties have welcomed.

During his frequent visits to Egypt, Dr. Garang described himself as a unionist, and asserted that he is advocating unity in a Sudan, where all citizens enjoy equal rights. He also emphasized the importance of the Egyptian role in settling the Sudanese problem, especially during the six-year and half transitional phase. Egypt, on its part, assured him its support of creating a new Sudan, which should ensure equal rights to all citizens and equal opportunities to their country's wealth.

Egypt welcomed the latest security and wealth sharing agreements that was concluded between the Sudanese government and the SPLM. It hails the two parties' efforts for achieving peace and prosperity, hence the unity of the Sudanese people based on equality for all citizens. Egypt considered the agreements as an important phase on the course of the settlement of the Sudanese issue, and in the benefit of the Sudanese

people and the African Continent. The agreements are the fruits of Egyptian, regional and international endeavors as all parties were aware that the unity of Sudan is in the benefit of the Sudanese people and of the African continent as a whole. The U.S. has already informed Egypt that it favors unity; however, it will abide by the results of the referendum of the South.

### **Egypt and the Post Peace Era in Sudan:**

The Post Peace era will be crucial in determining the future of Sudan. A package of incentives needs to be constructed in support of implementation of a comprehensive agreement. International development assistance and high level participation in and generous support for the Assessment and

Evaluation Commission, already envisioned in the agreement, would be a catalyst to ensure the successful implementation of the Agreement and that all issues were moving forward.

Egypt believes that the International Community has to win the unity of Sudan and work together for this end. Our task is to help the forces that inspire for the union of the south and north so that they can feel during the transitional period. The post peace era should address the main problem which is that the South feels negligence from the North and that there is uneven-handed treatment on the part of the government for the South and the North. Egypt's mission now is to support the Sudanese people's option for unity.

Key Egyptian officials said that they will work through the existing peace process to make unity appealing to the South. They emphasized that the forthcoming phase will witness a significant Egyptian role in rebuilding Sudan and keeping its integrity. Egypt will also participate in the Assessment and Evaluation process to take place in the interim phase to follow up the implementation of the agreements as follows:

### **The Assessment and Evaluation Process**

As one of the ICG report stated, "Any peace agreement should include external guarantees, likely a robust international peacekeeping or observer force". An agreement should also include a transparent wealth sharing mechanism that would allow both sides to fund their own development and governance efforts.

The largest and most expensive element of the international community's involvement will be in the form of an international observer force to oversee the main tenets of the agreement, particularly the vital security arrangements.

In this vein, Egypt decided to participate in the Assessment and Evaluation process to take place in the interim stage to follow up the implementation of the agreements. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan decided to send his envoy for the African Horn Affairs to the region for talks with officials in Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Eritrea on

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the UN role in the Sudan's peace talks between the Sudanese government and the Sudan's Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM). Egypt is following up efforts to form a role of the UN in supporting the implementation of the forthcoming peace deal in Sudan. Egypt's Permanent Representative to the UN stated that Egypt has accepted, in principle, to take part in the UN peace-keeping mission to restore peace and stability in Sudan.

**The Economic Development in the South**

Egypt considers that the transitional period is a period of work and activity on the ground in order to improve the standard of living of the Southerners and to achieve the justice and equality.

In order to contribute to the socio-economic development in the South during the coming six years, Egypt has to work with all Sudanese people through bilateral assistance and in cooperation with third parties, such as the League of Arab States and the International Community. Our vision is the development of the south Sudan and deepening the ties between the different parts of Sudan. We will study with the Sudanese government and other parties in the South the plan in which Egypt will have a pioneering role. Egypt will consult with the Sudanese Government and the SPLM to draw up a plan on how to develop the South, and to achieve equality among the Sudanese people. A plan, in which, Egypt will have an important role in cooperation with the Arab League and the International Community.

On the bilateral level, the Egyptian competent authorities have prepared studies on development projects to be implemented in the South during the transitional period in different sectors such as: electricity grids, agriculture, health, irrigation and education. Egypt has already embarked in implementing some pilot project in health and education sectors, it decides to open a branch of the Alexandria University in Juba, and it provides technical assistance to the Southerners. What is needed to secure the necessary funds to implement our ambitious projects to develop the southern of Sudan.

One of those massive development project is the Jonglei Canal Project which its initial works started after the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. The aim of the project is to increase water in the South and the North of Sudan by diverting it around the massive swamp called the Sudd, where much is lost to evaporation. The project would have benefited the people of the South in different domains such as agriculture, irrigation, oil transportation, and expanding trade with the North.

On the regional level, Egypt is exerting its efforts to revive the Arab League's Special Fund to Assist Sudan to develop its South. The Arab states pledged over U.S. \$400 million for this Fund. Egypt participated in the meetings of the Arab League's Ministerial Committee to encourage the Arab Sates and Specialized Arab Funds to help and to invest in the development of Southern Sudan.

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In this regard, Egypt is supporting the efforts by the Arab League's Secretary General who invited representatives of Arab development funding agencies to meetings to discuss detailed programs and projects for rehabilitation of the war-ravaged region. Recommendations and blueprints from the meetings are reviewed and acted upon by the League's special Sudan group.

Furthermore, Egypt is working hard with the donors countries, including the US, Norway and Canada to explore ideas on how to help Sudan to develop its South during the transitional period.

In conclusion, Egypt is supporting the current peace process in Sudan and will spare no effort to bring it to its successful end, through building an new Sudan where all of its people, whether in the south or in the west or in the east of Sudan, can live in equality and justice. Egypt has a strong interest in avoiding balkanization of the region through achieving peace and stability in a unified Sudan. Therefore, Egypt is going to participate in the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, as well as, to contribute to the International Community's efforts to develop the Southern of Sudan, in order to make the unity option an attractive one.