KHARTOUM'S INFLUENCE ON JUBA'S POLITICAL CULTURE

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Introduction

International support for the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) under John Garang, which ultimately led to separation of Southern Sudan, was based on simplified presumption that the African, Christian-dominated South would present a different approach toward governance than the Arab-dominated and Muslim-oriented (Northern) Sudanese regime. Analysis of manifestations of political culture of the Southern Sudanese autonomy (2005-2011) and independence (2011-2015) proves the approach to binary opposition and mismatch between the North and the South to be false. The SPLM-run government repeats schemes of political behavior developed in Khartoum thanks to the history of common experience in the pan-Sudanese political environment and continued transfer of ideas from the North to the South. Performance of the Juba-based Southern government provides arguments to support the approach to understanding contemporary Sudanese political history in centre-periphery terms rather than on religious and cultural oppositions.

From enthusiasm to confusion

In the last decade, there were 3 major turning points in what is known nowadays as South Sudan, which translated into the dominant Western narrative about the country and its international perception: 2005, 2011 and 2013. However, while the first two were enthusiastically received as ground-breaking steps toward freedom and equality, the last one, consequence of the former ones, nullified the previously prevailing optimism and brought confusion. The reality on the ground and regional context did not fit into the long-developed understanding of the nature of South Sudan, which was expected to evolve toward strengthening a free society and developing a political culture that would be "naturally" different (if not opposite) to the one of Sudan (Khartoum). In reality, South's political leanings have always been products of the pan-Sudanese political tradition and perceiving it differently led to miscalculated policies and failure of the state-building process.

The year 2005 was marked by the signing of the landmark Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government of Sudan and the (mostly) South-based rebel faction the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, which effectively created an autonomy for Southern Sudan, and provided its newly created government with 50% share of the all-Sudan's oil wealth[1]. The settlement of the decades-long conflict between the mainly Arab-Muslim North and the mainly African-Christian/animist South was possible thanks to the US recognition of the South-based SPLM/A as a major liberation movement and legitimate representative of the South Sudanese[2]. Effective exclusion of the South from Khartoum's jurisdiction was heralded as a victory of justice, providing South with an opportunity to determine the shape of its own future[3]. It also empowered Juba, the autonomy's capital, to secede from Sudan after a transitional period of six years. This materialised in 2011,

a year when a widely acclaimed referendum on independence took place, and the creation of the world's newest state was officially declared. The step was seen as a logical consequence of the 2005 peace deal and a fortunate final step of a long journey toward freedom[4]. The vote resulted in strengthening of the SPLM's international mandate to govern the South and, despite worrying signals, led to hopes that the "new beginning" would lead to a fast integration with the East African Community and would play a constructive role in the region[5]. In December 2013, surprisingly for many South Sudanese observers, the country's ruling party broke in half, which was immediately followed by massacres of civilians carried out by pro-government militias, establishment of the rival warring armies which committed massive human rights abuses, split of the society among ethnic lines and a massive retreat of the urban population to the UN refugee camps[6]. Breakup of the civil war and fast destruction of the long-built international support created confusion – the events of 2013 and the following years proved that the system that was being formed and approved by political decisions of 2005 and 2011 never fitted into definitions by which it was being explained. The need to re-conceptualize the legacy of (Northern) Sudan in the South, emerged as a requirement to properly assess the current developments and project the future of the region. For a long time it was not taken into account as the South was widely and wrongly perceived as "opposite" to the North[7].

Simplified perceptions of the nature of the 1983–2005 Sudan's civil war ("North-South")

The basic distinction between the North and the South was being made on religious basis. It described the North as Muslim and the South as Christian, the differentiation that clearly resonated in the West, was putting the sympathies

on the South and picturing the Sudanese conflict in a simplified framework of a frontline of civilization between anti-Western, aggressive forces and Western-like, peace-loving people[8]. Obviously, Islam was identity and a major policy-making factor in the North throughout the conflict, and Christianity in Sudan was mostly South-based, and the South was not willing to accept periodical attempts to impose Islamic laws on its territory as not conforming to the local cultural patterns and identity[9]. However, the simplification ignored the fact that in the South the religious component of identity was being formulated only as a result of episodes of the North-South war, and not as a reason thereto. When the conflict started in 1955, on the eve of the end of colonial rule, Christianity had marginal following in the South[10]. Its massive spread occurred in consequence of an unprecedented crisis of trust in traditional values following an outbreak of the Bor massacre in 1991, when militias of the rival Nuer tribesmen killed 2000 Dinka civilians[11]. As the newly-converted Dinka-Bor composed core of the support base for the SPLM movement, the Christian perspective received a boost and was incorporated into the centre of the narration (especially as the holy war approach peaked after the Islamist coup of 1989 in the North). It is also worthwhile to emphasize that northern areas of the rebellion (from Bahr el-Ghazal in present day South Sudan, to Blue Nile state and the Nuba mountains of South Kordofan state, north of the 2011 border) are religiously mixed and big proportion of local fighters and leaders were Muslims. Muslims ran the SPLM-North, a South-leaning part of the historic rebel movement, which – after separation of the South – was left in northern Sudan, and religion is not part of its political agenda. Yasir Arman (secretary general of the SPLM-N, and South's-supported candidate in 2010 presidential elections in Sudan), Malik Aggar (SPLM-N leader in Blue Nile), and Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLM-N leader in South Kordofan) are

Muslims who follow a secular legacy of late John Garang, the historic leader of the SPLM. The history of Islam in the southern part of Sudan (currently independent South Sudan) throughout the XIX and the XX century, apart from attempts at violent proselytism, included peaceful promotion by coexistence, through Sudanese merchants (jellaba) interacting with local customers[12].

The Christian-Muslim dimension was not the only over-simplified and misleading aspect. The ethnic dimension, similarly to the religious one, does not provide a clear black-and-white picture either. The notion of "Africanness" is somewhat peculiar in the Sudanese context. Arab-Sudanese themselves are descendants of Arabic tribes expanding from Egypt into Nubia, than intermarrying with indigenous Funj Kingdom inhabitants (many of Shilluk descent – today Shilluk tribe is found in South Sudan), absorbing thousands of members of local and neighboring African tribes (former slaves, soldiers)[13]. In consequence, Arab Sudanese are mostly dark-skinned. Often it is difficult, or even impossible, to define clear anthropological criteria for differentiation between a Sudanese Arab and a Sudanese African. Historically, Arab identity in Sudan was defined by two contradicting factors: the sense of being a frontier of the Arab/Muslim world in its expansion south, therefore treating indigenous and neighboring people as inferior, and – on the other hand – uncertainty if, due to its mixed origin, the rest of the Arab world would recognize Sudanese Arabs as Arabs. This feeling produced a psychological reaction of combating those bearing features of non-Arabs, in order to prove ones' own Arabiness[14]. Although the core of the Khartoum's elite, recruited from Arabic tribes located on the banks of the river Nile are light-skinned, explaining the North South conflict in racial terms, as in the case of religious factor, falls short of providing a full and clear picture.

Not only racial borderlines are blurred, but notions of both Africanness and Arabiness are additionally questionable

due to a peculiar linguistic situation in Sudan and South Sudan. Arabic language became the language of inter-ethnic and urban communication of South Sudanese, forming a local pidgin/creole, Juba Arabic, dominating in daily life[15] (although after 2011, the newly-independent country took effort to gradually introduce English as main language for the public sphere[16]). Common possession of Arabic in the pan-Sudanese zone created a space for exchange of ideas, and made Southerners exposed to the content of Northern political discourse. On the contrary, the fact that the Ugandan-South Sudanese border equals the border of the Swahili language, a *lingua franca* in East Africa, contributes to the separation of South Sudanese institutions from influences of the Kenyan or Ugandan political thought and practice. Predictions that with political independence from Khartoum, South Sudan would naturally integrate into the East African Economic Community, an economic block grouping Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, proved to be unrealistic and based on wrong assumptions. Not only did the EAC states postpone the eventual integration until some unspecified future moment due to poor economic record of Juba[17] (EAC consider itself a club of relatively strong economies and stable political systems), but it became evident that East African neighbors did not look at South Sudan as a long gone member of the family, but rather as a stranger, with a different language and violent political culture.

Oversimplifications of the understanding of the nature of the Sudanese civil war in religious and racial terms produced intellectual constructs allocating certain (misleading) characteristics to both the North and the South that could be tactically used for the purpose of gaining international support. Hassan Turabi, an influential Islamist leader, whose movement supervised the Khartoum government in the 1990s, noted varied explanations for the conflict depending on the SPLM leader's audience: "when

John Garang goes to Africa, he will tell them: 'we are Negroes, Africans being persecuted by Arabs'. If he comes to Europe he will probably say it's a case of Muslims persecuting Christians. If he goes to [Marxist] Ethiopia he'll say this is the bourgeoisie persecuting the oppressed classes of Northerners and Southerners alike"[18]. For the West, and particularly the United States, those simplifications translated into a clean-cut distribution of sympathies which seem to be fitting the binary schemes: evil – good; dictatorship – freedom; black – white, etc. The constructs suggested that conflicting parts of the country formed coherent entities with no common points of reference, deriving from different cultural and historical contexts, representing different civilizations and inclined to develop political future differently to one another. Such a vision did not allow for an exchange of ideas, transfers of models, inspirations, or simply developing political systems on the basis of common roots. It contributed to confusion in the reception of post-independence (2011) developments, particularly an eruption of civil war in 2013, when the Southern system failed to take effort to produce some sort of equality, freedom and democracy, failed to emerge as an East African-modeled society, and continued to absorb political models from Khartoum.

For the purpose of this article, the author would understand *political culture* as patterns of political behavior (whether top-down, or bottom-up), which are rooted in history, culture and political experience, and tend to reproduce automatically by subsequent generations of political actors. In the Sudanese context, it is primly a circulation of models of leadership, regardless of the ethnic/religious/political/regional background that account for the influence of Northern Sudan's political culture in the South. It is not possible to properly conceptualize political developments in the South throughout the last 30 years, including the ongoing civil war (2013-) without putting them into a framework of pan-Sudanese political culture.

Northerners and Southerners
sharing common political environment

Obviously, South Sudan has developed some unique, localized elements for its political culture, due to its specific history and the formation of autonomous or informal, homegrown institutions. Still, it has maintained many typical Sudanese features and continued to be influenced by Khartoum as a model until today. The main reason is that the post-1956 independent Sudanese state created framework for private and public life for generations of both North and South Sudanese. Whether supporting or opposing the policies of Khartoum, all the citizens were in daily contact with government's institutions and played by the formal and informal rules of public engagement.

The Addis Ababa agreement of 1972, ending the first North-South war and creating the first autonomy for South Sudan, produced a massive "rush for jobs" in government administration among the former Southern rebels of the *Anya Nya I* movement. John Garang recalled, "Many southern people were prepared for jobs than the continuation with the war. The priority was rather who would get what jobs. (...) who would be a director, who would be a Minister"[19]. Southerners who worked for the central government familiarized themselves with internal modus operandi of the public institutions, and operated on the national level, often in predominantly Arab regions. This especially relates to the military, an institution which throughout the entire post-1956 period, and particularly on the basis of the 1972 peace agreement[20], absorbed hundreds of thousands of Southerners, including future leaders of the anti-government movements, such as John Garang. Before starting the biggest rebel movement SPLM, he served as a career soldier in the rank of colonel, having regular access to the General Staff[21].

In addition, the very North-South war resulted in an unprecedented movement of Southern refugees north. Most

of them felt Khartoum and other areas of the North gave hope for a more stable habitat than what they could find in the war-torn home areas, and also offered more opportunities for development than the impoverished South. In the early 2000s, there were approximately 5 million refugees in Sudan, mostly South Sudanese[22]. For the younger generation, Sudanese-Arabic (not the locally spoken *Juba Arabic*) was becoming not only their first but also the only language of communication, Sudanese school and university curricula – the only education experience, and the bustling 6-milion capital city Khartoum, an agglomeration incomparable to the peripheral towns and villages of the South – the space they identified with.

On the other hand, but under a similar scheme, common grievances that were shared above ethnic or religious lines, such as marginalization of the peripheries, lack of political pluralism or free debate pushed different anti-government groups, (may them be strictly political, leftist, religious, or separatist) to socialize, communicate and coordinate. This tradition continues with the SPLM-North (a South-leaning rebel group) that coordinates with other Darfur armed rebel groups, namely the Justice and Equality Movement and two factions of the Sudan Liberation Army (by Minni Minawi and Abdul Wahid al Nur), and interacts with the political opposition parties within scopes of the Sudan Revolutionary Front[23] or the National Consensus Forces[24].

SPLA – Southern or Sudanese

The history of the iconic rebel movement, recognized as triumphant for Southern resistance, offers critical, but largely ignored insights into the symptoms of increasing absorption of the Northern political models in the South. These were officers and soldiers from the Sudanese armed forces who created the first core military cadres of the 1983-established SPLA/M – a South-based military opposition that later

evolved into the ruling party of the pre- and post-independent South Sudan. Garang and his colleagues spent years within the Sudanese army structures throughout the country. He consequently opted for unity of Sudan as a secular, multi-ethnic state ("New Sudan")[25]. However, despite being ideologically and verbally opposed to Khartoum's oppressive system, which instrumentalised religion, he developed a highly authoritarian style of leadership, which did not accept resistance, the use of child soldiers or collective responsibility[26]. On the territories inhabited by tribes different to his native Dinka, the SPLA/M was often considered an occupying force, resorting to mass persecution, displacements and killings. According to de Waal, throughout the history of the movement, at any stage of the war, its human rights record was never any better than Khartoum's[27], and was obviously a product of Khartoum-style management of conflict and governance. As the core of the SPLA fighters recruited from the Dinka tribe, rebel institutions quickly produced a system of a Dinka-centred tribalism[28] and a highly centralized structure that violently suppressed its peripheries, like the Equatoria province. The system of governance imposed by the SPLA/M widely resembled the one of the consecutive Arab-dominated Khartoum governments. However, being opposed to the Arab-Muslim dictatorship of the central government, and considered to be largely Christian and to represent the oppressed peoples, Garang's movement gained international recognition and diplomatic support. Unconditioned media and political support for Garang demonstrated ignorance of clear signals that this style of governance did not represent any new quality in relations between the authority and an individual, and largely replicated the very model it officially and faithfully stood against. Another factor that contributed to the Khartoum-like authoritarian drift of the SPLM autonomous government (established in 2005) was that at the end of the armed conflict it was a minority group.

Most of the fighters on the ground were allied to the Khartoum supported coalition the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) and local tribal militia. This did not refrain the international community from awarding the SPLM status of a *de facto* representative of the entire South's population in the course of peace negotiation that led to the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Proxies for controlling restive peripheries. Divide and rule

Another boost for the Khartoum-experienced factions came when Salva Kiir replaced John Garang (who died in a plane crash) as a leader of South's autonomy and the SPLM in 2005. The share of oil wealth that was provided by the CPA gave an opportunity to increase the scale of a personal patronage system in which essential powers are concentrated within the government-military elite centered around the leader – as in Khartoum – to buy support of the previously opposed factions or to sponsor local proxies to control the peripheries[29]. First, inclusion of the SSDF militias under the 2006 Juba Agreement brought into the autonomy's structures combatants with long history of cooperation with the Sudanese government. Loyalty of the new army commanders, who retained control over their ex troops, now within the SPLA, such as its deputy Commander in Chief (2006-2012) Paulino Matip Nhial, hailing from the Bul-Nuer sub-tribe (known for "swing" loyalties), was not self-forgetful. They brought in the Khartoum's "ways of doing things" and contributed to merging political cultures of the two Sudanese entities on the eve of independence. Back in the 1980s, Matip himself was a colleague of Omar al-Bashir, future Sudan's president, in the Sudanese army[30]. Bashir staged a coup in 1989 and remains Khartoum's strongman until today. Absorption of the SSDF and other groups confirmed constitution of a system where local proxies provide control of the peripheries using the

"divide and rule" scheme, similarly to the way Khartoum has been trying to maintain control over peripheral South Sudan, Darfur or South Kordofan. In the late 1990s/early 2000s, Khartoum found loyalty of Matip a key for control over the entry gate to the Southern oilfields in the strategic Unity state; for autonomous and independent South Sudan he was a proxy securing the main source of revenue and a gate to the culturally autonomous areas of restive Shilluks on the South-North border. The same mechanism was replicated during the 2013–2015 civic conflict in South Sudan when swinging loyalties of such locally popular commanders like Johnson Olony offered critical changes in the power balance between Kiir's loyalists (SPLM-Juba) and the rebel Riek Machar (SPLM-In Opposition)[31].

Another influx of the Northern-trained cadres came a year after the 2011 independence, when the Southern structures of the ruling Khartoum-based pan-Sudanese party NCP collapsed and its leaders joined Salva Kiir's SPLM[32]. Kiir, who intended to sideline the "Garang boys", an influential faction of his party deriving its political identity from the original SPLM leader's political thought, found this transfer useful and offered ex-NCP officials a number of key posts in his administration[33]. It is worth noting that the NCP veterans contribute to sections of the opposition to the Juba regime as well. After an eruption of the newest civil war in the South, some of the former NCP officials found themselves within the opposition ranks. Ramadan Hassan Laku, a former MP hailing from Mundari ethnic group, was appointed director for organization in the office of the chairman of the armed opposition, Riek Machar, and one of his key advisors[34].

The post 2005 oil-wealth-based "big tent" policy (sinecures for everyone) took former enemies on government payroll – it worked in favor of cementing the new, SPLM-centered balance of power as long as the economy could maintain so extensive yet informal spending[35]. The

SPLM not only locally took the same role as its archenemy, the Bashir's NCP, played in the "old" Sudan, but also extended its domination over the local political system beyond the Sudanese standards. Conduct and results of the first elections in South Sudan in 2010, a year before the independence referendum, proved clearly that the Southern ruling party was following in the footsteps of its Northern counterpart in securing its central position in the political system. A Human Rights Watch report "Democracy on Hold" summarizing breaches of international standards during elections in the North and in the South of Sudan in 2011 concluded that identical methods had been used by both ruling structures to limit space for oppositions' agitation, to limit space for possibilities to monitor the elections in order to observe and report irregularities. Out of eight recommendations extended to Khartoum and Juba, six were identical due to similar policies of the ruling groups[36].

Transfer of institutional models from the North to the South

It was widely expected that in the post-2011 reality, the two independent Sudanese states would have shifted away from one another with the South connecting with the East African systems and the North's model becoming increasingly left aside as a culturally foreign and historically oppressive reality of the past. However, as described above, assumptions that political culture of the South is rooted in different grounds than the one of the North proved to be lacking basis, and eventually false. Khartoum remained a point of reference for the South because of a long tradition of political socialization of elites and citizens of both entities, histories of both pro- and anti-government movements, and finally thanks to an influx of Khartoum-trained or Khartoum-leaning elites between 2006 and 2012. Those factors contributed to examples of direct repetitions of

Northern solutions in institution-building and conflict resolution.

The year 2014 brought a massive confusion around the proposed National Security Service Bill[37] which sanctioned revolution in the role of a security service of South Sudan. The 2011 provisional constitution defined its role as a mainly analytical body collecting and analyzing information[38]. The government's proposal intended to provide it with full powers to spy, detain and punish citizens without charges and without any effective control, away from the officially sanctioned detention centers. Its logic was to break away from the separation of powers principle, derived from the Western-influenced formal democratic model and to directly repeat Khartoum's experience of government-citizen relations[39]. Similar shaping of the national intelligence agency (NISS) in Sudan (Khartoum) dated back to the legacy of Gaafar Muhammad an-Nimeiry's government (1969–1985). Some of the darkest parts of the Southerners' experience in the "old" Sudan were *ghost houses*, informal investigation and detention centers operated by the NISS in clandestine locations, where tortures and executions occurred on a daily basis, detainees were deprived of all their rights, and had no means to seek justice. The Kiir-sponsored bill sought to sanction re-emergence of the infamous *ghost houses* in Juba, which had already been a reality on the ground before 2014[40]. The proposed bill was met with massive resistance from the international human rights groups as well as opposition from some South Sudanese MPs, which resulted in watering down the initial proposal[41]. It did not,however, affect the fundamental shift in the role of the NSS that the law had brought.

In another development, a long-standing conflict over marginalization of the Murle ethnic community (for self-defense often allying with the North during the 1983-2005 war), inhabiting South-Eastern peripheries of the South Sudanese Jonglei state – the largest of the 10 states

of South Sudan – took unexpected turn. As Murle complained about a hostile approach of the neighboring tribes (especially the Nuer youth militia), lack of security within the Jonglei state and disappointing results of the contested local elections, local rebellion launched by David Yau Yau in 2012 put separation of the Pibor county from Jonglei on the agenda[42]. In the course of peace negotiations to end the conflict in the Jonglei state, it was agreed that the new, autonomous administrative entity called the Greater Pibor Administrative Area would be formed (adequately to the history of formation of the autonomous South Sudan), and without formal separation it would effectively be awarded powers equal to other 10 states of the country in a way the South became effectively separated while formally remaining within a united Sudan. According to the 2014 agreement, it obtained its own semi-national symbols (just like the South), would be governed by the very faction that led the armed struggle, the Yau Yau's Kobra Facion (just like Garang's SPLM), and other minority groups and peripheries would need to adapt to the *de facto* one party rule (equally to the role granted to SPLM in the South, being itself a copy of the NCP's position in the North). The demand for creation of the new state or *quasi-state* to accommodate Murles' grievances resonated to the Juba government in a familiar way, and was solved based on its own experience with establishing autonomy under the NCP-governed Sudan. Adapting a remarkably similar scheme to the one that Khartoum offered for Juba, was possible after "naturally" translating historic Sudanese solutions to a localized conflict.

Conclusions

Southern Sudan's political culture remains highly influenced by Khartoum. Division of Sudan and creation of the two independent states, largely defined by their ethno-

-religious identities, where the South was expected to side away from the Arab-Muslim legacy, has not stopped Juba's political and military elites from absorbing the Khartoum models of governance, institution-forming and conflict resolution until today. Waves of influx of formerly Khartoum-allied elites to the South, budgetary crash, deepening international isolation and putting South Sudan's government in the struggle-for-survival mode after an eruption of the civil conflict in 2013, and reluctance of the East African Community to offer a clear integration perspective, have contributed to the adoption of further elements of Khartoum's political culture. The trend is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

NOTES

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