

## SUDAN'S NATIONAL UNITY: THE PEACE AND INTEGRATION IN THE TRANSITION

### SUDAN'DA ULUSAL BİRLİK: GEÇİŞ DÖNEMİNDE BARIŞ VE ENTEGRASYON

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#### Abstract

Unity and fragmentation are two edges of modern political spectrum of Sudan since it emerged in the 19th century as a result of annexations and diplomacy. As ethnic and religious identity politics have created deep ethnic and religious divisions in the country, several regions in the periphery of Sudan have remained marginalized and disintegrated. On the other hand, there have been always peace initiatives addressing partially or wholly root causes of regional conflicts in order to integrate and unite the country. It seems that Sudan's peace processes might be considered as integration processes addressing political, economic and social issues either on national or regional levels. The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement in 1972 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 were major attempts in order to save Southern parts of the country and unite Sudan territorially. Today, once again, we witness that transitional government body, which came to power after ouster of former President Omar al-Bashir, designates ending regional conflicts and disputes throughout 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, signed between Khartoum and regional elites in Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Northern, Eastern, Central parts and the Third Front-Tamazuj. This paper aims exploring Sudan's regional disputes and the Juba peace deal from the angle of national integration approach in order to understand whether this time construction of a new Sudan based upon civic values is possible or not.

**Key Words:** Sudan, Unity, Fragmentation, National Integration, the Juba Peace Agreement, Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, South Sudan

#### Öz

Fetih ve diplomasi yoluyla 19.yy'da günümüzdeki görünümünü kazanan Sudan'da bütünleşme ve parçalanmanın modern siyasetinin iki ucu teşkil ettiği görülmektedir. Etnik ve dini kimliğe dayalı kimlik siyaseti ülkede derin ayrışmalar yaratırken çok sayıda çevre bölge marjinalleşerek ülke bütünlüğünden uzaklaşmıştır. Buna karşın, bölgesel sorunları doğuran faktörlere kapsamlı ya da kısmen değinerek ülkenin birlik ve bütünlüğünü sağlamaya yönelik barış girişimleri ise her zaman olagelmıştır. Bu bağlamda Sudan'ın barış süreçlerini siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal sorunlara ulusal ya da bölgesel düzeyde

değinen birer bütünlüşme süreci olarak da değerlendirmek mümkündür. 1972’de gerçekleşen Addis Ababa Barış Anlaşması ve 2005 yılında imzalanan Kapsamlı Barış Anlaşması ülkenin güney bölümlerini kurtarmak ve ülkenin teritoryal birliğini sağlamak adına gerçekleşen girişimleridir. Şimdilerde ise Sudan’da Ömer el-Beşir iktidarının son bulmasının ardından iktidara gelen geçici hükümet yapısının ülkedeki bölgesel sorunları ve anlaşmazlıkları 2020 Ekim’de geçici hükümet ile Darfur, Güney Kordofan, Mavi Nil, Kuzey, Doğu, Merkez ve Üçüncü Cephe-Tamazuj arasında imzalanan Juba Barış Anlaşması ile sonlandırma çabasına şahit olmaktadır. Bu makale Sudan’ın bölgesel sorunlarını ve Juba Barış Anlaşmasını ulusal bütünlüşme perspektifinden ele alarak Sudan’da sivil esaslara dayalı ulusal bir bütünlüşmenin olup olamayacağını araştırmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sudan, Birlik, Bütünlüşme, Ulusal Bütünlüşme, Juba Barış Anlaşması, Darfur, Güney Kordofan, Mavi Nil, Güney Sudan

### Structured Abstract

For modern states, unity is a national condition that wanted for the sake of peace, harmony and development. The term implies territorial integrity and peaceful co-existence within a state. However, few countries enjoy Çunity while considerable number of countries face risks of fragmentation because of incompatibility between their “state structures” and “national formations”. In this vein, it is a fact that countries where borders had been formed artificially by colonial ambitions rather than natural formation suffer much more than others in order to cement disintegrated parts in a unity. Policies such as assimilation, exclusion, marginalization or forced migration are/were utilized by states to reach the ideal adjustment balancing state nature with national structure, however, direly consequences of such policies flamed revival of cultural consciousness in minority groups. Therefore, multiculturalist and pluralist approaches along with recognition towards minorities or state configurations like federalism, autonomy or confederalism become new formulations for state and its nation.

Sudan has also not been far from unity-fragmentation dilemma since its independence in 1956 from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium; fears of fragmentation have dominated political psychology of Sudan’s northern political elites due to long unresolved regional conflicts that had rooted deeply at the historical background of the country. Usually the worst-case scenarios expressed by politicians, elites and academicians have hint possibility of new civil wars or more fragmentation that would deteriorate Sudan’s fragile condition. Concepts such as Balkanization or Somalization of Sudanese land throughout ethno-nationalist armed movements that emerged at the peripheries of the country have been often utilized to define fragile relation of Khartoum with war-torn, marginalized and poverty-ridden peripheral regions. On the other hand, however, there have been always fresh peace and unity initiatives aiming to lower the tension between the center and peripheries in order to bring peace and preserve territorial unity of Sudan.

Reviewing idiosyncratic political history of Sudan points out that Sudan need also new formulations to accommodate diverse nature of its peripheries. Root causes of Sudan’s regional conflicts actually goes back to colonial times, especially the Southern Question. After the independence, two civil wars and many other armed conflicts in the peripheries of the country caused death and migration for millions of people. Although Sudan has never been classified as a failed-state it appeared very fragile and fragmented in terms of unity. Sudan’s political history after independence could be divided three short-lived parliamentary periods along with three long-lasting authoritarian military periods. Nevertheless, unity of the country has been at stake throughout all these periods. For that, one might read political history of Sudan from the angle of unity and fragmentation because Khartoum’s agenda usually leaned between two edges: either war with rebels or negotiation with them for a peace deal.

Khartoum made peace deals with the southern elites in 1972 and 2005 at the end of the first and the second civil wars, nevertheless, it could not avoid secession of South Sudan in 2011 after a public referendum. Moreover, new regional conflicts defined as “the new south question” have emerged in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. Additionally, Sudan’s economic condition deteriorated due to loss of oil revenues. Street protests taken place in major cities of Sudan between December 2018 and April 2019 led to ouster of former President Omar al-Bashir. Even though regional movements gave support to street protestors in order to accelerate bankruptcy of al-Bashir regime, there have been huge uncertainties about how the new transitional administration body would deal with regional issues.

The Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan is a comprehensive national peace initiative signed on the 3rd October 2020 by political and armed elites of Darfur, the Two Areas (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), Eastern, Northern, Central Sudan and the Third Front-Tamajuz. Once again, there is a fresh hope ahead of Sudan to gain marginalized, poverty-ridden, war-affected peripheral regions by providing political and economic integration along with guarantying peaceful co-existence in a diverse communal atmosphere.

The Juba Peace Agreement promulgated federalization, secularization and democratization for Sudanese state and guaranteed status of autonomy for southern regions Blue Nile and South Kordofan while it pledged several new funding and monitoring mechanisms for the regional affairs. The complex nature of the agreement that complied with national and regional chapters addresses actually a civic approach to Sudan’s peripheral problems. However, the implementation and funding seems crucial for its final success.

For conflict resolution, peace and unity, Sudan’s past experiences in 70s and 2000s give us eminent indicators to understand Sudan’s fragile state-nation condition and it seems that peace deals are important turning points bringing either failure or peace for Sudan. Thus, this article examines Sudan’s peace initiatives and regional politics from the perspective of fragmentation and unity concepts by using national integration approach because, for us, it seems that peace deals addressing national and regional issues presents a national integration model on one way or another.

### **Introduction**

Shortly after its independence in 1956, Sudan fell into a civil war devastating the country until 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, which was signed by government of Sudan and the southern rebels known as Anya-Nya militias united under the umbrella of Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM). This first peace marked ending Sudan’s first civil war and brought a new regional administrative arrangements for Sudan. Thanks to the Addis Ababa Agreement the South obtained regional autonomy from Khartoum for the first time in Sudan history. Moreover, this decentralization attempt was a retreat from nation-building process known as Sudanization that had started at the end of colonial period in order to achieve a unitary centralized state. In this regard, Sudanization had been considered as a process of Arabization and never had really accepted by non-Arab and non-Muslim cultural groups, especially in the southern parts.

The peace was a great opportunity to integrate Sudan within a well-designed political and economic system with pluralist approach. Additionally, it might re-adjust loose connection between Khartoum and southern ethnic and religious communities on constitutional base. However, the first peace of Sudan has proceeded for only 10 years. In 1982, the second civil war was already began in the southern regions of the country under the new leadership of John Garang de Mabior with fresh slogans and new supporters. Unlike from the First Civil War (1955-1972), the new civil war led by the organization of Sudan People’s

Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was more complex and unity of the country was far from haven. Thus, the more southerners united under the flag of SPLM/A the more Sudan fragmented.

22-year-long the Second Civil War (1983-2005) ended up with another peace deal which was signed in Kenya's city Naivasha. 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was agreed by Omar al-Bashir regime and John Garang's SPLM/A at the end of 10 year-long negotiation process. CPA promised encouraging unity of Sudan as main priority and declared autonomy for South Sudan and guaranteed right of self-determination referendum for the southerners for the first time. North-South unity under CPA has lasted only 6 years due to weak implementation and South Sudan obtained independent status following a public referendum in 2011. After the official declaration of South Sudan's secession, Sudan, known as giant of Africa in terms of its land size, has lost one-third of its territory, home to 10 million southerners, and rich oil deposits. However, the secession of South Sudan did not bring Sudan's long-awaited peace and unity. Along with old Darfur conflict, Blue Nile and South Kordofan conflicts have emerged as Sudan's new regional problems.

Several armed rebel groups with ethno-nationalist motivations have constantly opposed to Khartoum in Sudan's peripheral regions. Regional threats to Sudan's national unity have remained waiting urgent resolution although Sudan has suffered from economic setback felt after the country lost important oil revenues as a result of Southern secession in 2011. This economic hardship brought a big challenge to 30-year-long Omar al-Bashir regime. Beginning from December 2018 onwards street protests begun as a reaction to bread and gasoline shortages, that eventually turned into a revolutionary mood on society level especially after the support of secular leftists, nationalist groups, professional associations, trade unions and regional armed movements. In April 2019 a military intervention finally overthrown President Omar al-Bashir who ruled the county since 1989. Thus, military-civilian led transitional period began after the ouster of al-Bashir with many uncertainties including national and regional affairs.

Throughout series of sessions, transitional government body and regional armed groups compromised on an agreement signed finally in South Sudan's capital Juba on the 3rd October 2020. The Juba Peace Agreement at the initial stage brought political integration of regional armed movements into transitional government body and further pledged power and wealth sharing together with recognition and respect to cultural diversity of Sudan on the bases of equality. The agreement projected also making a new secular constitution abiding by separation of religion from state institutions. Moreover, the signatories compromised on integrating armed rebels into security architecture of the country as well as allocating development funds for neglected and war-affected, poverty-ridden regions with positive discrimination approach.

We like to pose following question for the research: Is this a lasting peace that could eventually provide unity and integration for Sudan on the basis of civic nation or is it just another *deja vu* of 1972 and 2005? For better understanding, it is the main scope of the article to explore political history of Sudan and identity politics in the country from the angle of unity and fragmentation concepts because, as mentioned above, Sudan had implemented two comprehensive peace deals prior to the Juba Agreement. It seems that Sudan's peace processes might be considered as integration processes addressing political, economic and social issues either on national or regional levels. In this regard, the Juba peace process might also be seen as an integration process addressing political, economic and social issues on national and regional levels. According to our analysis, conflict and peace along with fragmentation and unity for Sudan are concepts highly related to Sudan's uncompleted national integration, so, the regional issues might be framed under

the lens of integration. For that, this article analysis national unity of Sudan from the perspective of national integration approach.

From the methodological perspective, in order to compare past experiences with the current expectations derived from the Juba deal the article will look at theoretical approaches to nation, unity and national integration concepts by utilizing related literature and examine previous peace processes of Sudan and how they defined Sudanese nation. At the final stage the article aims to discuss whether the Juba deal might pave the way to accommodate Sudan's cultural diversity appropriately and provide territorial unity of the country once and for all or it might just return another attempt targeting to lower regional tensions by touching root causes of regionals disputes of Sudan superficially.

### **1.Approaches to Unity and Dimensions of Integration**

Unity within given borders is amongst the most-wanted national condition for modern states. The term implies basically territorial integrity and peaceful national cohesion within a state. However, few countries enjoy unity while considerable number of countries face risks of fragmentation because of incompatibility between their state structures and national formations. Especially those countries where borders had been formed artificially by colonial ambitions rather than natural formation suffer much more than others in order to cement disintegrated parts in a unity. In this vein, it has been seen that considerable number of African countries following the end colonialism have faced serious disorders that usually emerged due to maladjustment between their "state forms" and "nations". As Ali Bob (1990: 201) mentioned it is a fact that former colonies like Sudan attained independence before the nation itself was formed.

When we look at the first evolution of modern borders, nations and state structure in Western Europe it is possible to say that very intensive modernization and mobilization processes along with secularization and revival of local languages after the 16th century widely transformed political and communal structure in Europe (Hayes, 2010: 45); during this transformation designated certain borders and people sharing important degree of communalities with each other became unavoidable matching parts for modern states. As intensive mobilization focused in cities and modernization caused evaporation over primordial ethnic and religious identities, the development ended up with emerging nation-state model at the political stage.

German thinkers J.G. Herder and J.G. Fichte described nation as a common cultural formation having language community while French thinkers J.J. Rousseau and Ernest Renan mentioned the eminent roles of social contract and general will at the formation of nations (Özkırmı, 2016). Benedict Anderson (2014) pointed out that nations as a socially constructed imagined communities are a modern concept that emerged in the shadow of capitalism and printing technology. According to Ernest Gellner (2013) nation concept could only be emerged after Industrial Revolution in the direction of modern needs of industrialization.

A review of related literature suggest that "states" and its accompanying part "nations" are defined either as a cultural unity or as a political unity. So, this duality created "nation-state" and "state-nation" definitions in the literature. Friedrich Meinecke described that commonalities such as language, customs, and historical roots play major role cementing and forming the nation in the cultural form (kulturnation) while political nations (staatnation) rely on constitution and common political history (Dieckhoff, 2010: 83-84). In this vein, for example, Anthony Birch (2003) defines England as a cultural nation although he considers the United Kingdom (including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) as a political nation. However, after the 80s "civic nation" and "ethnic nation" classifications became more often in the literature

(Dieckhoff, 2010: 87). In this regard, while ethnic model depends on membership of a specific ethnic group, civic nation model requires nationhood tied with constitutional equal citizenship approach rather than a cultural or language communality.

Hans Khon (1982: 29-30) conceptualized nations as “western” and “eastern” because after the French Revolution, western style of nation-state model has become widely accepted form for rest of the world. Powerful appearance and military achievements of Europe made the model attractive and being desired by non-Europeans widely. Rest of the Europe and later Middle East, Asia and Africa followed the path to reach ideal formula of “nation and state” combination. For European experience with modernization, secularization, intense interaction via mobilization, nation-state model might be the best fitting structural form, however, redesigning rest of the world according to nation-state formula is far from reality because the model rely on highly centralized mono-cultural entity which not comply with the cultural diversity of world.

At the end of colonial period, the global political atmosphere changed with the birth of new states. All of a sudden nation-building for a state became an important matter in the political arena. Those states which obtained independent status copied Western model of political structures under the influence of Westernized elites and implement fast track nation-building policies. However, cultural and religious diversity within their artificially drawn territories remained posing one of the important challenges for the states which sought creating a sense of nationhood within their borders. This experience showed that to create a mono-cultural political bloc matching with state expectations despite the cultural diversity means assimilation, exclusion, ethnic cleansing or committing genocide as Walker Connor (1972) referred it as “nation-destroying” rather than “nation-building”.

Designing a nation from a perspective of a unique culture (religious or ethnic) and its historical experience created counter-nationalist imaginary front as this scenario has been seen usually after 60s in the African continent. With ethnic and religious revival, national issues as well as identity, integration and unity remained amongst the major questions for the new independent African states. Centralization of power, wealth and a cultural form created center-periphery conflict and secessionist movements fired by ethnic-nationalities.

### **Unity and National Integration**

Centralized or decentralized, unitary or federal, states require a national body represented and administered within a certain territory via state institutions and law. For the national body, state policies regarding official language(s), national identity, flag, anthem, constitution, national security, currency, days-holidays and even national heroes and national image are all regarded eminent matters. In related studies, the term “national integration” indicates integrating various different cultural communities into a communal entity to construct a nation body in which people imagine themselves having commonalities throughout language, culture and traditions (Weiner, 1965: 53-54). British Academic Anthony Birch (2003: 51) defines national integration as a process which combines political, economic and social layers in a country. According to Birch’s analysis full integration combining these three layers is almost impossible whereas political integration is the minimum requirement for national integration.

Political integration seems essential for a modern state for its territorial unity. In this regard, regionalism poses an important threat to political unity of a state. Throughout political integration, it is expected to integrate diverse groups into political decision-making process on national level on the bases

of equal civil rights, citizenship and democratic participation (Ibid: 50). On the contrary, exclusion and marginalization of certain groups from political scene and holding state power for the favor of a certain group escalate disintegration.

Besides political marginalization, economic marginalization is also one of the most common root causes of regional conflicts. Regional armed groups fostering ethnic or religious nationalism might seek getting economic power along with political ambitions. Thus, economic integration is also very essential for unity of states in order to avoid regional armed conflicts and disputes. Well-balanced distribution of resources and development project on the principle of justice seem inevitable necessity for a state to avoid unevenly wealth distribution. Therefore, creating job opportunities evenly and integrating economic activities within different regions strengthen economic integration of center with its peripheries (Ibid: 50-51).

States also require social integration more or less. Since social integration deals with norms, values and customs it might pose important challenges. Despite it aims building up a collective consciousness and sense of togetherness it is usually interpreted as homogenization of social community by reducing differences. Therefore, it is observed that regional identity politics might flare up against social integration policies. Birch (2003: 36-37) suggests that social integration does not only rely on only state policies but it also follows natural patterns. Media, mobilization, education, and communal interactions might play important role in shaping social integration. However, the degree of social integration is vital for centralized unitary states rather than decentralized federal states.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, assimilation was seen as the normal procedure of national integration. In this method, minorities and communities not sharing common historical experiences, languages, values and customs were all invited to change their cultural codes either by force or voluntarily. Similarly, exclusion, forced displacement or ethnic cleansing were all imposed over minority groups. Terrible consequences of assimilation and exclusion policies towards different cultural blocs resulted revival sense of resistance. However, cultural revival and new cultural studies suggested new alignment and pluralist approaches to form multi-cultural nations respecting cultural diversity and other forms of cultural existence is also possible on the basis “unity in diversity”.

## **2. Political Spectrum of Sudan between Unity and Fragmentation**

Current borders and administrative centers of modern Sudan were all emerged following the Ottoman-Egyptian conquests during the 19th century. Military annexation of Turco-Egyptian armies towards Funj State, centering in Sennar, integrated east and central Sudan with Darfur sultanate, Kordofan sultanate and later tribal confederations in the further south into a one single territory (Mohamed, 2007: 490). In addition, Khartoum from a small fishing village emerged as the new administration center for Sudan. At the same time, southern parts of Sudan were opened to international trade but immediately became source of slave trade until the ban on slave trade by a convention signed in 1877.

Short-lived Mahdi state that was established in 1881 following a revolt against the Ottoman-Egyptian rule inherited the same territories and administrative body. During the Mahdi state, Sudan became an independent political entity since the Turco-Egyptian government body retreated from Sudan soil. However, under the Mahdi rule, Sudan was re-constructed as a sufi-oriented Islamic state and later became subjected to British embargo until the Anglo-British military expedition exterminated the Mahdi state in 1899. Thus, the British-Egyptian Condominium rule was established in Sudan.

Under the British colonial influence integration and mobilization between different regions in Sudan has been blocked by colonial policies of the Passports and Licenses Act (1922) and later the Closed Districts Ordinance (1929). Therefore, access of northerners were restricted into the areas subjected to restrains. As Ronen (1976: 581) pointed out these policies were invented by the British under the influence of missionaries, willing to block spreading influences of Islam and Arabs into peripheral areas. But, instead of uniting it certainly cut the natural integration of Sudan. According to Francis Deng (1995: 87), the isolation caused re-interpretation of traditional beliefs and identities in southern Sudan under the strong influence of Christianity and Westernization. Moreover, while the Close District policy crystalized separate cultures for South and North, English has emerged as a lingua franca for the southerners.

The north and south duality was already emerged in 1930s as a result of colonial policies. Although there had been desires seeking unity of the Nile Valley by Unionist (al-Ashiqqa Party), the British colonialists relying on “divide and rule” principle projected Egypt, Sudan and South Sudan as three different political entities. Thus, saving Sudan’s territorial unity became an important argument for Sudanese political elites who opposed the British colonial ambitions.

Territorial unity of Sudan was on the table in Juba Conference that taken place in 1947 with participation of northern and southern elites along with British officials. The conference suggested unity between northern and southern parts of Sudan was a turning point for Sudan’s history (Ronen, 1976: 582). It is possible to say that the conference saved Sudan from an early Southern secession. However, after the conference southern dilemma escalated rather than diminishing. Experts like Mahmood Mamdani (2011: 57) often blamed Sudanization policy applied from the mid-1940s onwards as a big mistake exacerbating territorial unity of Sudan because Sudanization of civic services in the Southern parts of the country was generally conceptualized by northern Arabs equal to Arabization of south. Therefore, at the dawn of liberation Arab-Islamic culture was centralized for state-building and nation-building processes. This eventually triggered a munity in the South in 1955 and later turned into a civil war.

Sudan became sovereign independent state in 1956 under the shadow of colonial legacy. Thus, the dream of uniting the Nile Valley in a single political entity including Egypt and Sudan came to an end. The first constitution defined Sudan secular, unitary, parliamentarian democracy despite the existence of southern federalists who sought federal structure rather than a unitary nation-state. Ismail al-Azhari, the first Prime Minister of Sudan, and later Ibrahim Abboud, who came to power by military coup in 1958, suppressed constantly federalist inquiries raising from the peripheries. Sudan remained under the influence of pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism in 50s and 60s and the Southern Dilemma turned into a civil war slightly.

### **The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, 1972**

Khartoum appealed pluralist approach towards the South first time when President Nimeiry, who came to power by a military coup in 1969, reached an agreement with the southern armed rebels in 1972 by signing the Addis Ababa Peace Accord. It was a moment celebrated and praised by people in all Africa. If we refer to the praising words of pan-Africanist liberation leader Amilcar Cabral the agreement was the gift presented by Sudan to African unity (Ahmad, 2010: 8). A new regional self-government has been accepted for the southern Sudan and autonomous status were given to it. However, governors for southern region were still needed approval from Khartoum. But it was obvious that with 1972 agreement Sudan was slightly turning from centralized state structure to a decentralized state system.



1973 permanent constitution incorporated with the agreement defined Sudan unitary, democratic and socialist sovereign republic and part of Arab and African entities (Article 1) although it accepted Islamic Law and Islamic custom as the main source of legislation and non-Muslims to be governed by their own laws (Article 9). In the constitution Arabic defined as the official language of the country (Article 10). Moreover, the constitution guaranteed protection of all the beliefs and religions (Article 16) and provided equal rights and duties regardless of origin, race, locality, sex, language and religion (Article 38).

During the 10 year peace, north and south territorial integrity remained peaceful until President Nimeiry introduced new regional adjustment and Sharia Law for Sudan. Implementation of Sharia Law in 1983 was a controversial issue even though Southern part of the country were exempted from it. Soon after, new constitutional amendment in 1984 introduced Sudan unitary and sovereign Islamic Republic and more importantly autonomy of the southern Sudan were totally dropped (Bob, 1990: 208). This was the starting point of the second civil war in Sudan which lasted 22 years deepening the fragmentation between North and South.

### **The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2005**

In terms of intensity of armed conflict and the consequences, the Second Civil War of Sudan was more complex than the first one. Taken place in the late phase of the Cold War, intense foreign influence was also one of the determinants of the escalating north-south tension. SPLM/A's initial socialist motto targeting to form a democratic secular state for all Sudanese faded by the time and search for self-determination of the South became in effect.

The new era that emerged after 1989 bloodless coup d'état created more complexity for Sudan since the new regime emerged under the influence of Islamist ideology. Sudan has been taken as an Islamic political entity according to Islamic political thought formulated by Hasan al-Turabi during the 90s. Foreign affairs, constitution, national issues, security, domestic affairs as well as economic activities were all re-designed as suiting Islamic perspective. While this unique experiment carried Sudan into a unique place in the Sunni Islamic world, the country faced isolation and blockage from the West.

Sudan adopted federalized state system and a new Islamic constitution in 90s (El-Gaili, 2004: 507). Nevertheless, Islamic state and its ummah formulation derived from the Madina Model had never been accepted by westernized elites of the south. The southern question entered into a new level seeking more than political and economic power sharing. Mohamed al-Amin Khalifa's (2003) notes regarding the negotiations taken place between Khartoum and Juba along the 90s clearly indicate that secularization of state structure, democratization and equal civic rights were amongst the topics discussed again and again by the parties along with issues concerning power and wealth sharing. Sudan's regional disputes ironically increased rather than diminishing in the so-called Islamist era. Whereas Khartoum entered negotiations with the southern elites for conflict resolution in the 90s throughout mediation of IGAD, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Nigeria, an ethnic motivated armed insurgency in Darfur region were emerging. Later in 2000s, Darfur crisis got inflamed more by the manipulations of Chad and Libya.

Following Machakos Protocol signed by al-Bashir regime and SPLM/A in 2002, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that was concluded in the town of Naivasha in Kenya after a series of negotiations promulgated cultural and religious diversity of Sudan. In the CPA, Sudan has been defined first time multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual country. Arabic as well as English were accepted as official languages for Sudan and all the other languages spoken in Sudan were categorized

as national language to be protected and respected (Abdelhay et al, 2011: 492). Moreover, the CPA provided right of self-determination for the southerners for the first time throughout a public referendum.

6 years after the CPA came into force, South Sudan declared its independency from Sudan as a result of referendum. But after secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan's regional disputes gained momentum in three different locations: Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Although there had been various peace attempts to solve the abovementioned conflicts, they remained unsolved until the last peace agreement signed in Juba by Khartoum and armed rebel groups in October 2020.

### **3.Cultural Diversity in Sudan and Regional Marginalization**

Islamic-Arab ethno-religious culture has dominated Sudan for centuries although cultural composition of Sudan has always been quite diverse. As mentioned above in the CPA and later in the Interim Constitution of 2005, Sudan was defined as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual country (Article 1). However, majority of Sudanese accepted Arab-Islamic culture in their daily life. Thus, the cultural form and Arabic as a lingua franca have been utilized as core elements of state-building and nation-building processes after the independence in favor of satisfaction of majority. But, this approach brought disintegration and marginalization for periphery people in Sudan.

To understand the diverse nature of Sudan better, one may look at 1956 Ethnic Census which mapped Sudan according to ethnic and linguistic lines. The census mapped within Sudan's pre-2011 borders 597 tribes and 56 ethnic groups along with 400 spoken languages along with Arabic (Hamid, 1986). Sudanese academic Mohamed Omer Beshir (1979: 22) described 8 different major cultural areas for Sudan by considering various factors such as physical features, history, economic activities, language, religion, dance, music and art:

- 1) The Nile dwellers (North & Central Sudan)
- 2) The Savana dwellers (Central Sudan)
- 3) The Beja culture (Eastern Sudan)
- 4) The Fur culture (Western Sudan)
- 5) The Mabam Ingassana culture (South east Sudan)
- 6) The Nuba culture (Western Sudan)
- 7) The Nilotic culture (Southern Sudan)
- 8) The Zande Sudanic culture (Southern Sudan)

With a bit different approach Ann Mosely Lesch (1998: 17) grouped people of Sudan with 3 major categories and several sub-categories:

#### **1)Arabized People of Sudan (Northern Sudan)**

Sub-categories: Ja'aliyin Arabs, Juhayna Arabs, Gezira Arabs, Hawawir Arab (Berber stock), Mixed Arab-Nubian, Christian Arabs

#### **2)Non-Arabized People (Northern Sudan)**

Sub-categories: Beja, Darfur, Nuba, Nubian, West African (fallata)

### **3)Southern People (South Sudan)**

Sub-categories: Nilotic linguistic groups, Nilo-Hamitic linguistic groups, Sudanic linguistic groups

When considering the Southern secession, today, Beshir's classification should be reduced from 8 to 6 cultural areas since the Nilotic and the Zande cultural groups are present in South Sudan and Lesch's groups should be reduced from 3 to 2 major groups. However, even though Sudan's diversity was trimmed after the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan still looks multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual thanks to existence of non-Arab and non-Muslim cultural groups.

Reality of diverse landscape of Sudan actually requires decentralization rather than centralization. Although Islam is the religion of majority, Sudan is not a homogenous country as seen from abovementioned classification, categorization and the census; on the country, the country has different minority cultural groups. Therefore, state policies, economic activities and communal interactions should support this diverse nature. Otherwise, intercultural, interreligious or interethnic conflicts will never end in the country until the country face new major fragmentations.

After confirming cultural diversity of Sudan, it is better now to examine political and economic relation of these different cultural entities with Khartoum because non-Arabized groups of Lesch (second group) and Beshir's cultural areas 3-4-5-6 overlaps over Sudan's regional disputes and they are subjected to the latest Juba peace deal. Interestingly the same categories overlaps over the less developed and poverty-ridden regions of Sudan. A field research done by African Development Bank (AfDB, 2018: 3) indicate that although inequalities in Sudan decreased dramatically during the period 2009-2015, annual per capita consumption in the states of North, South and West Kordofan, Blue and White Nile states, Red Sea, East, West, South and Central Darfur states remain lower than Sudan's average.

### **4.The Juba Peace Deal and Integrating Sudan in the Transition**

Sudan has been in a vicious circle since its independence on the issues related to its state structure. The country faced similar challenges in different regimes shaped by different ideologies: Arabism, Socialism and Islamism. Building the state structure unitary or federal; adopting constitution secular or theocratic; on the national identity defining Sudan Arab, Afro-Arab or non-Arab appeared continuously as major systemic problems in Sudan. Nevertheless, these key issues are highly related to cultural diversity of Sudan as well. We witness, today, that the transitional government body in Sudan also face similar challenges waiting to be rightly answered.

After South Sudan's secession from Sudan in 2011, disintegrated and fragmented appearance of Sudan have maintained throughout regional disputes in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan. In addition, there are several disputes worsening the unity of the country in eastern and northern and even central parts of the country. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to describe Sudan's current state of being far from unity. However, the new peace agreement that was signed in the transitional period, that was formed after Omar al-Bashir's era ended by a bloodless military coup d'état, brought fresh hope for Sudan's unity once again.

The Juba peace deal is a collection of agreements signed by the transitional government and various regional groups on the 3rd October 2020. The Sudanese Alliance, Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces, Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)-Minni Minawi, SLM-Transitional Council, SLM-Ahmed Ibrahim

Kazisky, Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) SRF, United Popular Front for Liberation and Justice, Opposition Beja Conference, Sudanese Kush Liberation Movement, Kayan al-Shamal (The Northern Entity), Opposition Democratic Union Party/Revolutionary Front and The Third Front/Tamazuj are all amongst the signatories of the Juba peace deal. However, two important regional armed groups SPLM-N al-Hilu and SLM al-Nur fractions refused to sign the deal by enduring different reasons.

The agreement is a long complex text referring national issues, transitional issues, constitutional issues, development, amnesty and judicial issues, truth and reconciliation and security issues. It addresses national and regional issues with separate chapters and legally it refers to the 2019 Constitutional Charter (al-Ali, 2021: 9). Importantly, it promulgated to construct a decentralized, federal, pluralistic and democratic system for Sudan on bases of social contract and civil approach (Title 1, 1.3).

On the national level, the agreement confirms equitable wealth and power sharing is vital for Sudan's unity and stability. In this regard, the peace deal projected political integration of regional armed groups into Sovereign Council by 3 members and on the Council of Ministers by 5 ministers and on the Transitional Legislative Council by 25%. Fair allocation of economic resources between Khartoum and region is also agreed by signatories. The agreement promise also integrating armed rebels into the national security architect consisting of the national army (SAF), Rapid Support Forces, police service and intelligence service (Title 1, 4.1 & 5.1 & 6.1).

The Juba Peace Agreement pledges a state-building based on equal citizenship for all Sudanese (Title 1, 1.9 & 1.17). Secularization of state system is also one of the important controversial issues taken place in the agreement. It promises complete separation of religious institutions from state institutions for the sake of equal standing towards all religions and beliefs (Title 1, 1.7). Related to this decision, a new constitution which is going to replace 2005 Interim Constitution will be written after consultation throughout national constitutional conferences (Title 1, 9). Furthermore, it grants autonomy to the Two Areas, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, (Title 3, Chapter 3, 8).

On the cultural matters, diversity is considered as a richness for Sudan and the peace agreement acknowledges recognition and respect to all identities derived from ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Sudan. In this regard, it agrees that all languages in the country should be equally respected and developed (Title 1, 1.11 & 1.25). Besides, it agrees protecting religious diversity with establishing a National Commission for Religious Freedoms and to integrate societal culture in the way respecting human dignity and equality and combat against any kind of discrimination and racism (Title 1, 14.3 & 18).

### **The Darfur Track**

From the political point of view, it is possible to say that integration of Darfur into Sudan began in the 19th century with the Ottoman-Egyptian military annexations. Independent sultanate of Darfur existed from 16th century till 19th century ended and Darfur territory joined into Sudanese land. This turning point marked beginning of some communalities for Khartoum and Darfur. During the Mahdi era and later in the colonial era people of Darfur remained within Sudan borders. However, the economic and politic marginalization of Darfur became a serious problem after the independence and it remained unsolved until today.

The Darfur region of Sudan looks quite disintegrated to Khartoum because of its political and economic marginalization. However, ironically, the region is strongly integrated to Sudan in terms of its cultural communalities. Although it has ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, Darfur is usually known with its strong Islamic identity and Arabic is also widely spoken language in the region as lingua franca along with other languages. As stated by Flint & de Waal (2009: 9) all the people in Darfur region are Muslim and the majority of them follow either Tijaniyya Sufi sect or the Ansar of the Mahdi.

Lack of development in Darfur reflecting bad road conditions, transportation tools and infrastructure of big cities such as al-Fashir, Nyala and al-Genina shows the big economical gap between Sudan's center and this west periphery. Armed conflict and insecurity challenges also brought more marginalization for the people in Darfur. AfDB field report (2018, 5) on poverty in Sudan claims that 65% of West and Central Darfur people and 50% of East and South Darfur people and 42% of North Darfur people live in poverty line. Some development projects implemented by Khartoum after the Doha Process became useless due to lack of trust between government authorities and local people. During various field trips to Darfur, I have seen some deserted empty new buildings and water wells sabotaged by residents. In some cases, Arabic alphabet and Sudanese flag on the name plates were all erased or sprayed.

Darfur region has been in conflict since 90s, however, at the mid of 2000s the region got global attention due to major humanitarian catastrophe. Besides deteriorating environmental conditions causing tribal disputes in the region which has historical roots, the narratives of the conflict generally leaned on marginalization of non-Arab ethnic groups in Darfur. Ethnic groups such as Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit usually appeared on the front-line confronting state security apparatus in the region. For that, hypothesis explaining the conflict dynamics in the region often referred racism, exploitation and exclusion as the root causes for conflicts in Darfur.

Khartoum's state security policy is usually blamed favoring the Arabs in the region and arming them against the non-Arab residents of Darfur. Serious accusations including rape, forced displacement and ethnic cleansing committed by Arab Janjaweed militias resulted a lawsuit at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Certain names from previous regime including former President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir were found guilty for the death of more than 300 thousand people and millions of displacements. Peace initiatives so far mediated by Nigeria and Qatar in 2006 and 2011 were not able to provide lasting peace for Darfur.

Several armed rebel groups have been present in Darfur for two decades. And always another brand-new fraction emerge from the splitting of old ones. Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), SLM-Mini Minawi, Sudanese Liberation Forces Alliance and SLM-Transitional Council are amongst the signatories of the Darfur Track while SLM al-Nur fraction preferred staying away since presence of military elements in the transitional body. SLM leader Abdelwahid al-Nur declared willingness to sign a peace with a totally civilian body (al-Ali, 2021: 12).

The Darfur Track (Title 2, Chapter 1-8) bounded by the Juba Peace Agreement guarantees participation of all Darfur people at all government institutions and civic services on the basis of equitable power-sharing principle and to re-store regional-federal system for Darfur. To improve education sector and to fill the gaps, the Darfur Track provides allocation of fund for education institutions in the region and exemption of tuition fee for 10 years for all men and women studying public universities in and outside Darfur on the basis of positive discrimination. Along with funding new development projects for Darfur, it

also allocates reconstructing schools, hospitals, health centers, water sources and other institutions that have been destroyed by the conflicts. Providing access to drinking water and access to electricity for residents, building reservoirs and dams for agricultural activities, rehabilitate transportation network, to establish a new development bank for Darfur, investing in mining and creation job for Darfur people are also amongst the priorities of the Darfur Track. Additionally, it seems that one of the important provision taken place in the Darfur Track is to establish a peace fund called the Darfur Peace Support and Sustainable Development Fund with the budget 750 million dollars yearly for the next 10 years.

One of the main priorities attached to the track is supporting social solidarity and co-existence in Darfur throughout truth and reconciliation process. The objective of the process to address real root causes of the conflicts in Darfur and eradicate tribal polarization in the region, investing human rights violations and bring apologies to victims and forgiveness for the criminals via Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) composed of 11 members. Moreover, the track pledges full cooperation with International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding the people for whom arrest warrants have been issued and give free travel and investigation opportunities for ICC prosecutors.

The Darfur Track provides honoring war victims by establishing public memorial projects throughout public ceremonies, museums, documentation centers and monuments and to give right to all victims to seek compensation for their losses and sufferings. In this regard establishing the Compensation and Reparation Fund is also agreed. The agreement provides right to return for the IDPs and refugees who left their homes and lands during the conflicts. For monitoring the returns, IDP and Refugees Commission is to be established as a new mechanism.

### **The Two Areas Track (South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile)**

Political and economic disintegration of the two areas (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) do not differ from the condition of Darfur, however, communal division between Khartoum and the two areas is deeper since people in Blue Nile and South Kordofan practice traditional African beliefs along with Christianity and Islam. Therefore, cultural diversity in the two areas is more complex for Muslim-majority Sudan.

In the mid-90s, Jihad along with Dawa movement targeting South Kordofan, Nuba Mountains, Kadugli and Blue Nile was state policy to suppress the rebellion came to in effect after SPLM/A's expansion strategy towards the north (de Waal & Salam, 2004). However, current conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile emerged in 2011 under the shadow of South Sudanese independence referendum and since then they have been defined as "the new south question" of Sudan. Rebels known to be affiliated of SPLM/A have emerged under the name Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) and later in 2017 they separated as two fractions: Malik Agar and al-Hilu. Similar to South Sudan and Darfur cases, escalated armed conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile between Sudan security forces and SPLM/A-N fractions has paved the way for displacement for millions of people and many casualties by creating a huge humanitarian disaster in the southern parts.

SPLM/A-N fractions generally utilize ethnic and religious identities of the region and oppose Khartoum. In addition, they typically follow the footsteps and discourses of SPLM/A in order to obtain legitimacy from the public. In 2011, SPLM/A-N and Darfuri rebel groups JEM, SLM-Minawi and SLM-al Nur entered into a strategic partnership in order to unite against Omar al-Bashir regime. Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF), an umbrella body for the armed rebels, came out from the alliance. SRF rebel

forces has been actively operational in Blue Nile, North Darfur, North Kordofan, South Darfur, South Kordofan and West Darfur.

The Two Areas Track (Title 3, Chapter 1-4) bounded with the Juba peace deal was signed by SPLM/A-N SRF fraction while SPLM/A-N al-Hilu fraction preferred making a separate deal with Khartoum in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. The agreement refers the Two Areas: Blue Nile state and South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains State but according to the explanation taken place in the Agreement two areas also include West Kordofan until it will be clear that whether South and West Kordofan regions merge as a one or stay separated.

Importantly, the Two Areas Track promulgates autonomy for the two states. It seems very crucial because the status of autonomy give rights of legislation for state/regional constitution. Legally, this article refers to 1973 Constitution and its amendment in 1974. The national government in Khartoum will assume power on executive and legislative affairs on the national affairs such as defense, security, foreign affairs, nationality, citizenship, national flag, anthem, economic planning, aviation, and postal services. And 60% of regional government's budget will be provided by the national government for a period of 10 years.

For economic recovery and eradicate economic marginality of the southern states, the agreement promises reconstruction of the region's economic activities via agricultural and industrial projects although these projects were not explained in details. Eliminate poverty in the region and improving infrastructure by connecting rural and urban centers are also agreed by the parties. Building irrigation schemes thanks to dams and reservoirs, providing access to electricity, eradicate environmental damage, rehabilitate hospitals and health care centers in the region and training health personnel are amongst the other provisions taken place in the agreement.

The agreement supports a new education policy caring ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the region. Rehabilitation of school buildings and establishing new education institutions and vocational training centers in the region are amongst the priorities. Besides, promoting development of local media institution broadcasting/printing in local languages, to establish and rehabilitate institutes teaching local languages, culture and folklore are all pledged new policies embedded in the agreement. The agreement give the two areas people right to re-write Sudan history by recognizing different contributors and to name facilities and institutions in order to promote region's historic heritage in a way that promotes national unity and eradicate bad effects of discrimination and racism, including the era of slave trade.

Similar to the Darfur Track, the Two Areas Track also bring below mentioned new mechanism in order to manage effective monitoring and implementation processes: Commission for the voluntary return of IDPs and Refugees, Land Commission, Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission, The National Commission for Religious Freedoms, The Commission for the Development of the Nomad, Herders, and Farmers Sector, The Ministry of Peace and Human Rights, The Development and Reconstruction Fund.

## **5. Conclusion**

As indicated in related literature by Anthony Birch (2003), integration of a nation combines three important layers: political field, economic field and society level. In this vein, it seems that the Juba peace deal also pledges new adjustments in all these 3 layers. By introducing new institutions and mechanisms, it aims to unite Sudan and provide peaceful co-existence nationally. In this regard, political integration of

armed groups into political process, economic integration of the regions via development projects and social integration of neglected cultural communities on the basis of recognition and respect are important steps to support Sudan's national integration.

The Juba Peace Agreement is presenting a fresh hope to integrate in peaceful and harmonious way Sudan's center and peripheral regions as one entity. For the sake of unity, the agreement is promising reconstruct Sudan with new national and regional adjustments. However, the Juba Peace Agreement compiling the agreement on national issues, the Darfur Track, the Two Areas Track, the Eastern Sudan Track, the Northern Track, the Central Track and the Third Front-Tamazuj is a complex strategic text pledging to shape Sudan as a federal, secular and democratic state. As stated by Zaid al-Ali (2021: 9) the agreement has a very complex nature and one may discover more about it after reading and rereading. This is also relevant for signatories as well.

According to Dame Rosalind Marsden's (2020) analysis from Chatham House, the agreement addressing fundamental problems of the country is a major first step creating a "New Sudan" based on peace, equal citizenship and social justice if it is implemented properly. However, this does not mean that there are not any limitations and challenges ahead of the peace process. Although it sounds idealistic, implementation seems key for its success. When we consider 1972 and 2005 peace deals of Sudan, it is understood that peace periods in Sudan is short. Like a vicious circle, Sudan arrives same crossroads again and again.

The clearest thing about the agreement is that implementation of it requires considerable amount of funding. Therefore, success of the Juba Peace Deal is not only depend on political stability of Sudan but also it depends on economic recovery. For instance funding the new mechanisms and rebels integration into the security sector requires important funding. In accordance with Marsden (2020) Sudan needs regional and partners to find the required resources to implement the agreement since cash-strapped government is far beyond to achieve it. Similarly, the Crisis Group (2021) considers international assistance vital in the implementation process and calls the EU, the US, the UK, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and the UN agencies to provide Sudan finance and technical support in the implementation process.

To eradicate center-periphery dilemma, the transitional government body should strengthen ties between Khartoum and the regions on the basis of equal power-sharing, wealth-sharing and peaceful co-existence. In the 50s and 60s, Arabism ideology shaped Sudanese state and its nation with causing a devastating civil war. During Nimeiry era, socialist ideology redesigned Sudan by bringing peace and later the Second Civil War. In the 90s Islamist ideology interpreted Sudanese national affairs in the shadow of Islamic state and brought a peace and later Southern secession. Throughout all these experiments, it is understood that uniting Sudan peaceful and integration marginalized war-affected regions peacefully via ideological perspectives have all failed. Therefore, bringing lasting-peace for Sudan is not an easy task. It requires mutual understanding, respect, recognition, sacrifices and joint efforts in solving controversial issues.

In short, the Juba agreement promises constructing a civic nation by utilizing civic approach to complex problems of Sudan. However, presence of military elements in the transitional government body pose important challenges to arrive the target. Here in this conjunction, civic values and strong institutions for implementation processes gains importance. It becomes obvious throughout reviewing the agreement



that democratization, respect to human rights, rule of law, equal civic rights and mutual understanding seem vital concepts for Sudan's peace and unity.

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