Sudan: Case-Study for a Better Understanding of Large-Scale Conflict

Abigail S. Carlisle
Messiah College

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Sudan: Case-Study for a Better Understanding of Large-Scale Conflict

By
Abigail S. Carlisle

May 11, 2004
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Dr. Steve Cobb
Messiah College
Sudan: Case-Study for a Better Understanding of Large-Scale Conflict

Abstract:

Actors in large-scale conflict are too often dismissed as being irrational. This only exacerbates the conflict and contributes to further instability and suffering. In order to demonstrate an understanding of conflict that can provide a foundation for conflict resolution, this paper examines the long history of and current conflict in the country of Sudan. This sociological-historical analysis is accomplished by focusing on themes of rational action, power, culture, capital, access to resources, domination and exploitation.

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Sudan: Case-Study for a Better Understanding of Large-Scale Conflict

Introduction

Thesis

This paper is a study of conflict that is large-scale and extended and that involves violence, death and destruction. Examples of this type of conflict include nations at war with each other, civil war within a nation, a group within a nation fighting for independence, and other situations of similar magnitude and intent. The thesis of this paper is to show that people involved in conflict are rational actors. This is important to prove because: people engaged in conflicts of this type most often view those they are in conflict with as irrational; and those not who are not involved in the conflict similarly view the perpetrators of conflict as irrational. In the first case, people involved in conflict consider (whether consciously or unconsciously) their opponents to be holding to mindsets that are not rational. To verify this premise, it is assumed that parties in a conflict that attempt to reach their desired outcome (whether the outcome is clearly or unclearly defined) by means of violence and force are, most often, responding to a situation. For the most part, if this acting party were to believe its opponents to be rational actors, then it would respond to the way that people think. But instead, attempts to change a situation by force represent an invalidation of the mindset of the opponent. These types of responses imply that the opponent’s mindset is not worth taking into account, not worth considering, not important – not rational; if it were rational, people, not situations, would be responded to – with words, not force.

Because force involves destruction, killing, suffering and instability, it is valuable to offer a way to understand actors in conflict to be rational. In this way, deadly force
that leads to suffering and often exacerbates conflicts without offering a resolution can be replaced with ways of understanding the mindsets of opponents. Then, opponents can be viewed as rational actors. Then it can be more likely for conflict to be dealt with in a way that does not produce violence, death and destruction. In this paper, the history of and current conflict in the country of Sudan is used as a case-study for understanding conflict and its actors to be rational.

Sudan

The country of Sudan, or the Republic of Sudan as it is officially called, became an independent nation on January 1, 1956. For centuries this area of north-eastern Africa that is now the continent’s largest country was a region called the Sudan, or Bilad al-Sudan: the land of the Blacks. Medieval Muslim geographers gave this name because of the region’s dark-skinned inhabitants. In addition to it being the country of largest landmass in Africa, the longest-running war is currently occurring within its borders. For hundreds of years, even thousands, the region of the Sudan has largely been characterized by seizures and falls of power. Kingdoms, people groups and nations entered, encroached on, arose within and left this land, conquering, taking power and obtaining resources. Transfers of power were often deadly and not soon forgotten. But since independence from the last foreign power (the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium) in 1956, there have been less than 10 total years without war. Since major conflict resumed in 1983, an estimated two million people have died and four million people been displaced. This long history of conflict, killing and destruction, though certainly not the only type of events that occurred, are representative of the type of conflict that this paper intends to
explore. Histories such as this are often dismissed without explanation: “That’s just what people have always done, killed each other over land and resources.” In order to gain a perspective of conflict that can be more helpful in resolving conflict, the first section of this paper is a reading of the Sudan’s history that provides a deeper understanding of the emergence and progression of conflict.

The second section is a reading of the current conflict. In simplest terms, the government army in the north, which is primarily made of Muslims of Arab descent, is fighting with the rebel army in the south, who are mainly Black animists and Christians. It is a civil war, many southerners wanting to gain independence but most northerners not wanting to give it. In addition to these political, ethnic and religious factors that complicate the conflict, issues of economics (oil, natural resources and the source of the Nile River waters in the south) and culture exacerbate the hostilities. Some examples include the northern government’s imposition of Sharia (Muslim law) on the whole country in 1983, deadly and forced removal of southerners from homes located on oil fields and the taking of Black southerners for slaves and forced marriage to Muslim men. Agreements and peaceful resolutions to the conflict have been attempted in the past, and - Machakos, Kenya is the location of current peace processes. But a new conflict arose in 2003 in the western Darfur region of Sudan, and the Machakos accords have not managed to stop the violence.

The prolonged violence and killing that have taken place in recent decades seem to be an irresolvable situation. Especially in light of a history that can largely be defined by conflicting groups almost constantly at war and rises, falls and seizures of power to mark nearly every century for the last few millennia, it could be said that conflict will
never end. While the actions of the people involved may seem irrational or unexplainable, they *are* rational to the actors involved. Neither obvious nor simple is an understanding of the conflict, much less a solution that will satisfy all parties or bring an end to the violence. Peace will not come to this region outside of a deep understanding of the history, the current situation and the motivations and goals of those involved in the conflict today.

This paper begins with an examination of the ancient and recent history of this land. As the means to understanding how conflict emerges, is prolonged, leads to violence, as well as how the current conflict in Sudan can be understood, this historical telling is framed within the themes of conflict, consensus, power, domination, exploitation, imposition and force.
"The conflict ostensibly pits the largely Christian, African south against the Islamic, Arab north, but analysts have said the war is as much about a struggle for resources and power between the SPLM/A and the Khartoum government based in the north as it is about religion and culture" (Sudanese peace talks 2004).

"Sudan has two distinct major cultures--Arab and black African--with hundreds of ethnic and tribal divisions and language groups, which makes effective collaboration among them a major problem"  
(Background Note: Sudan).

Background

*Ancient Historical Setting: the Land and People of the Sudan*

Historically, the Sudan had four regions (Mahdi 1965: 3). The *Eastern/Red Sea region* area was familiar to Arabs who traded and settled there long before Islamic migrations. The *Western region*, consisting of Kordofan and Darfur, was known to Egyptians for its gum, cattle and hides. The *Nile Valley region* and its adjoining area was historically the "most important" region of the Sudan. It was most suitable to easy living because of the fertile terrain, and it was in close contact with civilizations in the north, mainly, the Egyptians. And, "from Egypt the different civilizations of the North entered the Sudan" (Mahdi 1965: 4). The *Southern region* includes the areas of Equatoria, Bahr el-Ghazal and the Upper Nile.

Over time, the people of northern Sudan came to be characterized primarily as a mix of Hamites, Negroes and Arabs, and the people of southern Sudan as a mix of Sudani Negro Nilotic tribes (ancestors of Shilluk and Dinka) (Mahdi 1965: 6). But these people groups did not remain separate or isolated. Encounters with other people groups were initiated by foreigners who came to the Sudan, often for economic reasons. Foreign traders tended to be peaceable toward the Sudanese, but group after group was enticed to
establish power and control over the region in order to exploit the natural and human resources. This exploitation was a form of domination, forceful and violent in nature. Because of the geographic location of the Sudan, it happened in a north-over-south manner (empires and kingdoms originated in Egypt and other regions outside of Africa and thus entered the continent by way of the Nile River, which runs right through Sudan). Further, the northern region of the Sudan developed along very different lines than the south. This created additional categories of difference to contribute to conflict, especially in the present.

Writing in 1965, the author Mahdi states that little was known of the history of the southern region, due to its remoteness from the ancient civilizations of the north and its “wildness” (P. 3-4). But what was “certain” about the Southern region was that it was a “rich source of ivory, hides and timber” (P. 4). Significant to Mahdi’s description of the south as such is that it gives clues as to what type of meaning northerners (Egyptians and northern Sudanese) attached to their involvement with people of Southern Sudan. The relationship was primordially economic. And as ties between southern Sudanese people and their northern neighbors grew, the northerners’ goals and motivations continued to be economic.

Aside from relations with some early foreign traders who had modest goals for wealth accumulation, it was not long before the nature of economic investment in the Sudan became anything but reciprocal exchange. The exchange came to be characterized by power. Economic advancement did not occur equally. Southerners themselves were largely excluded in the obtaining of wealth. Often, they were exploited for the northerners’ benefits, times at the hands of southerners. Historical tellings of the Sudan
imperialism (whether religious, political, ethnic or other) has been a major expression of power and source of conflict as well.

An historical analysis of Sudan along these themes of culture, power, domination, exploitation and conflict, as well as instances of consensus, provides an analysis of conflict that resists simplistic understandings that do not provide an understanding for why people act as they do. Instead of simply viewing the history of Sudan as the rise and falls of power, without asking how conflict emerges, escalates and leads to death and destruction, and while labeling the violence and conflict as “irrational,” the use of social theories can provide a deeper understanding. Then, a rejuxtaposition of people’s desire to live in peace and security can be made without the assuming that conflict and war is inherent to human action, that it is “just what people do.” Additionally, because the current situation in Sudan is still characterized by groups competing for control and autonomy, the sociological analysis that follows helps explain how the sharp division between north and south Sudan as described in the above quotes came to exist. Provided are ways of understanding how these actors in the long, deadly current conflict are rational actors.

Theoretical Background

How is it that human beings are willing to exploit and dominate others? What enables this oppression to occur on such a massive scale? The abovementioned themes of north-over-south domination and north-south division and difference help frame a sociological understanding of the historical and present conflict. Additionally, actions must be understood as rational, the result of people’s conscious processes. Social theorist
Max Weber coined the phrase “people are rational actors” (Ritzer 2003), a theory that helps answer these questions. Karl Marx’s theory on competition over resources also greatly helps answer these questions. Conflict often arises as expressions of and attempts of gaining power in order to gain or control access to resources. Those who are in power are able to control access to resources; not having access to resources motivates those not in power to gain power.

By definition, power is the ability to exert one’s will over another. Pierre Bourdieu, a social theorist active in French political discourse throughout the twentieth century, wrote about the interplay of culture and power. He believed power to be at the heart of all social life and that in order for it to be exercised, it must be legitimized (Swartz 1997: 6). In other words, those who have power expressed over them must either acquiesce or be unable to resist in order for the power to be exerted over them. Historically, power has allowed groups to dominate and exploit the people of the Sudan, controlling access to and the use of resources. Today, power maintains the violent destructive war of conflict.

Bourdieu’s theories of culture and power, framed also within Weber’s and Marx’s theories, contribute to the overall understanding of conflict, explaining how it emerges and how people can engage in large-scale war and violence for such an extended period of time. Groups competing to obtaining resources was one of the original catalysts for conflict, with expressions of power determining who obtained the resources. In the context of Sudan, conflict has arisen when that power is resisted. Dominant groups that imposed economic and cultural relationships in the Sudan were exerting power, and when that power was resisted, conflict ensued.
Bourdieu elucidates the progression of events that can lead to domination and exploitation. In order for power to be expressed, that is, exerted on another, it requires some type of capital. One type is economic capital. This includes resources like a police force, a military or control of distribution of basic human needs like food and water. So for example, when a kingdom entered the Sudan with intentions of expanding trade routes and obtaining slaves and natural resources, if that kingdom had adequate resources to hire soldiers to conquer the inhabitants and extract the resources and take people as slaves, this kingdom’s power would be stronger than the resistance offered by people of the Sudan. The result would be power exerted in the Sudan and the people and their land exploited.

In addition to economic capital, Bourdieu discussed another type, which he called symbolic capital. Symbolic capital functions to legitimize power by non-economic means, though it is no less powerful than economic capital. Bourdieu likens symbolic capital to be “interchangeable with economic capital” (Swartz 1996). While economic capital forces its owners’ will on another, symbolic capital persuades the other to receive its will. This means that the holder of power finds a way of making its will on the other a legitimate entity. Economic capital enabled the Turco-Egyptian kingdom to threaten the less powerful Sudanese cities with military action to force them to pay annual tributes of slaves and a specified amount of gold and ivory. But symbolic capital would enable a kingdom to accomplish the same, to obtain the same resources, by convincing citizens of a Nubian kingdom to convert to its religion and feel obligated to pay tribute to the religious homeland as part of their religious duty. By means of either type of capital, the kingdom’s exertion of power would result in the foreign kingdom’s acquisition of natural
and human resources at the expense of the inhabitants.

Economic capital is a successful means to exerting power insofar as its holder possesses it in a greater quantity than those over whom the power is intended to be exerted. A ruler that wishes to exercise power over a people group by taking the resources from its land will only succeed if those inhabitants do not possess more economic power than the ruler. Imperialist powers and colonists who entered the Sudan in search of wealth and slaves succeeded as often as their military manpower and technology outweighed that of the inhabitants. Similarly, symbolic capital can achieve the practice of power as long as those who are subjected to the power accept it as legitimate. A ruler may attempt to motivate his city’s inhabitants to fight off the colonists with the reason that the colonists’ control of land resources is an imposition on their lives that should be expelled. This proposed motivation to action is a type of symbolic capital. But it may not succeed in convincing the people to exercise power and fight off the colonists if there is a stronger argument that motivates them to accept the colonial power. Perhaps the colonial power that is exploiting resources may have brought new agricultural technology that the people want to learn to incorporate into their lives. Thus, they are willing to accept the exploitation; they find the expression of power legitimate.

If, over time, the symbolic capital (new foreign technology) no longer legitimizes the expression of power (exploitation of their land and resources), resistance to the power will occur. Or, in the case of economic capital buying power, if the colonized group is able to obtain its own military power, the colonists will no longer be able to legitimize their expression of power. The colonized group will then act to resist the power.

Both economic and symbolic forms of capital give their holders a means of
expressing power. But when capital is no longer able to “buy” power, those subjected to the power resist it and conflict emerges. Karl Marx recognized conflict as existing in societies. A scarce amount of resources and a limited number of people controlling access to those resources cause conflict. Marx discussed access to resources like wealth as creating potential for conflict. In a similar fashion, Bourdieu described cultural, religious and other types of capital as having the potential to become “objects of struggle as valued resources” (Swartz 1996). Just as resources are valued for the needs and wants they provide, symbolic capital is a resource because it can “buy” resources. Thus, struggles are not only over access to necessities like food, water and natural resources, but also for symbolic capital, such as religious authority or the respect and following of a large group of people.

The nature of conflict ensuing over resources depends on the type of capital that had been legitimizing the power. Conflict emerging as a rejection of symbolic capital may be in the form of symbolic force, such as the creation of a committee that submits a referendum of defiance to the ones expressing power. Conflict in this type of situation can be minimal and has more of a potential to be resolved nonviolently. However, resistance to symbolic capital is not always in the form of symbolic force. When conflict emerges as resistance to symbolic power and is not successful in ridding the power by means of symbolic force, those involved in the conflict resort to actual (non-symbolic) force in order to accomplish their ends. Conflict of this type is characterized by death and destruction. As will be seen in the recent history section of the paper, this is the type of conflict that characterizes the present conflict in Sudan.

This higher level conflict is often the first choice of action in cases of resistance to
power that has been legitimized by economic capital. If the exertion of power was firstly a type of economic capital such as a military force, the initial resistance force would likely be in the form of a military as well.

One person, a pharaoh of Egypt for example, aspired for the exertion of military power over the Sudan in order to increase his economic wealth. He not only had to have more power than inhabitants of the Sudan (symbolic or economic capital), but also the manpower necessary to exercise the power. Successfully getting people to carry out exploitation of the people and natural resources of the Sudan requires legitimization. The people must have a reason to carry out the conquests of cities in the Sudan and the slave raids. Motivation of this sort requires capital as well. For example, the pharaoh used the economic capital of paying men to be soldiers on expedition to the Sudan. In a different time period, Arab Muslim rulers used the symbolic capital of religion to motivate followers to travel to the Sudan and exploit its resources and people as part of a campaign to spread Islam.

Similarly, the exertion of resistance to power requires capital. A dominated group may consciously find the power exerted over them to be illegitimate, but if that power is maintained by economic capital which they cannot match, then resistance will not occur on a level that is capable of overthrowing the power.

All this elaboration on the roles and enablers of power illustrates how power is legitimized and expressed, as well as how conflict emerges in its different forms. Second, it offers a thematic framework for an historical analysis of the conflict under investigation: in the Sudan. Also, the aforementioned themes of exploitation coming in a north-over-south direction and separate cultural developments between the north and
south are intrinsically linked to the theme of power. Attempting to explain conflict outside of these understandings omits elements of analysis that are crucial for working laying a groundwork for conflict resolution.

Analysis: Ancient History

The history of the Sudan can largely be characterized by groups obtaining economic and symbolic capital in order to exert power over the inhabitants, procure natural resources, extend trade route and capture slaves. In the Sudan, the government or group in control (which was always located in the north), no matter if it was the Arabs, Turks, Egyptians, Mahdists or Brits, had been exploiting the resources in the south for years, particularly human resources taken as slaves. The north could do this because, collectively, it held much more capital than the south.

Egyptians

Domination of the people of the Sudan began with Egyptians imperialism. Egyptians entered the Sudan from the north, establishing military expeditions against northern Sudan “in order to pacify the country, and thus ensure a greater flow of trade” (Mahdi 1965: 6). The motivational factor (symbolic capital) was support of the current Pharaohs’ pyramid-building.

Over time, Egyptian pharaohs ventured farther and farther south, exercising power over their southern neighbors in increasingly greater quantities in order to fulfill their economic desires. Before the end of the period of the great pharaohs of the Ancient Kingdom, Egyptians had subjugated the region of the Nile’s First Cataract and the land
directly to the south (Mahdi 1965: 7) (see Appendix A for maps). During Egypt’s period of expansion and conquest, economic endeavors led to military subjugation. By Egypt’s Middle Kingdom time period (2000 BCE) northern Sudan was under Egyptian occupation. Pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty “continually sent military expeditions against the Sudan and eventually succeeded in effecting a military occupation of all the regions between the First Cataract and Karma” (Mahdi 1965: 8), an area along the Nile River approximately 450 miles from north to south.

During this time, Egyptian economic capital enabled the power to manifest in a number of areas. The Egyptian imperialists exploited northern Sudan’s resources, established military posts with thick mud brick walls, and controlled the area, prohibiting Sudanese from crossing into the north without permission (Mahdi 1965: 8).

The nature of the Egyptian presence in the Sudan was not characterized by reciprocal exchange, cooperation or compromise. Egyptians traveled to the Sudan out of their own interests, accomplishing economic endeavors by means of force. To accompany the economic, political and military influence on the people of the Sudan was cultural imposition. Mahdi reports that northern Sudan became egyptionized in life, belief, customs and culture. His conclusion is that “the Sudanese benefited from Egyptian civilization in general” (P. 10). However, the actions of the Sudanese people themselves demonstrate that this “culture change” was not as welcomed (beneficial) as Mahdi divulges. He states that when Egyptian control of the Sudan weakened toward the end of the Middle Kingdom, the “natives… attacked and burnt the fortresses” (P. 9).

Mahdi does state that because Egyptian presence in the Sudan was a military occupation, “peaceful contact [was not allowed] to flourish” (P. 9). Because the
Egyptian-Sudanese relation was established by a military, an imbalance of power was at the heart of contact from the beginning. The group with the greater amount of economic capital, the Egyptians, was able to control access to the land’s resources. The people of the Sudan were forced to submit, being in a position of dominance until the time that Egyptian capital decreased and they could overthrow the occupiers.

Sudanese Kingdoms

Around 1000 BCE, Egyptian rule of Sudan ended, after having lasted almost 2000 years (Mahdi 1965, 10). 750 BCE to 300 BCE was northern Sudan’s Napata Period, or the Ethiopian Period, as the Greeks and Romans called it. This was a time of independence, with Napata as the capital city. This kingdom extended from Aswan to the Blue Nile region (see Appendix B for Blue Nile region). Interaction with Egypt was reestablished. King Kashta of the Napata Kingdom was known as “King of the Two Lands,” that is of Egypt and Sudan. His son, Piankhi conquered all of Egypt, becoming known as far as Syria and Palestine and even reviving the centuries-lost tradition of pyramid-building (P. 12).

The Napata Kingdom ruled over Sudan and Egypt until 661 BCE when the Assyrians conquered the region. After this time, the Napata Kingdom was nonetheless identical to Egypt in culture and civilization. As Assyrian control over Egypt increased, Egyptian influence on Sudan slowly declined. Meroe became the new political capital in the Sudan, extending from the First Cataract to the Upper Nile (Mahdi 1965: 14-16) (see Appendix B). The Meroitic Kingdom remained autonomous and unegyptianized, developing a Meroitic writing system, building pyramids, temples, palaces and reservoirs.
and inventing iron smelting (Mahdi 1965: 16-17). But the kingdom eventually broke down into small kingdoms (P. 20).

**Christians**

Christianity was a foreign culture that reached the Sudan in two ways. Christians went there to escape persecution under the pre-Constantinian Roman Empire, and Christian Egyptian merchants who traded with Sudan also traveled to the region. Before the close of the fifth century CE, Christianity had spread to all three Nubian kingdoms - Nubia, Makuria and Alwa (see Appendix C). In the sixth century, they converted temples to churches and built many new churches and monasteries (P. 22-23). Close ties were established with Alexandria (the seat of the Christian Patriarch in Egypt) and Abyssinia (which became Christian before Sudan did) (P. 24). Despite the great amount of Christianity exported to the Sudan, only people from the ruling class and urban dwellers truly adopted it as their religion.

**Arabs**

In 641 Muslim Arabs seized Egypt from the weakened Byzantine Empire, then continued, conquering North Africa and much of the Mediterranean (Eyewitness 1998). This led to a massive migration of Arabs into Egypt. Concomitantly, Arabs began efforts to subjugate the northern Christian kingdom in the Sudan: Nubia (Mahdi 1965: 27-28) (see Appendix C). Arab economic capital was in abundance, and they progressed into the Sudan, conquering the people. But once the Arab army went as far south as Old Dongola, they encountered heavy resistance. The result was a famous peace treaty that
lasted for 600 years. During this time, relations between the Nubians and the Arab rulers in Egypt were "peaceful and friendly." The treaty guaranteed Nubians "the peace of God and His Prophet" and allowed Nubians to enter the Arabs' land as travelers but not settlers. In return the Nubians would return slaves to the Muslims that had fled to Nubia, would allow a mosque to be built and protected on the outskirts of Old Dongola and would pay a yearly tribute of 360 slaves. Also, the Arabs would be allowed to travel, but not settle, in Nubia. The Arabs kept this component of the treaty only for a short time before settling in northern Nubia. During these six centuries, the instances of unrest were due to Nubia not paying tribute (P. 28-29).

The author Mahdi calls the 600 years of ruling Nubia under the Arab treaty a peaceful time. However, when the Nubians did not pay the annual tribute of 360 slaves, unrest ensued (Mahdi 1965: 28-29). Peaceful relations were shaken around the year 856 when Arab Muslim rulers were replaced by non-Arabs. Arabs were encouraged to migrate to the rich pastures and open land in Nubia. By the tenth century, a large section of Nubia had been converted to Islam, with Arabs settling near Wadi Halfa and the Beja country (P. 30). Later, when the Christian king in the Makuria Kingdom refused to pay tribute, it fell to the Arabs and Egyptians and Arab Muslims soon flooded this newly annexed territory (P. 30-31). By the thirteenth century, the Arab Muslims, coming through Egypt, had taken control of and settled in an area that covers a large portion of present-day Sudan - everything but the most northwest region (Northern and Northern Darfur Provinces) and the southern region (Bahr-Al-Ghazal, Upper Nile, and Equatoria Provinces) (compare Appendixes A and B; for demarcation of Southern Sudan see Appendix D).
Writing in 1974, Mohamed Omer Beshir described the North-South division similarly. The general description is that Sudan is divided into two broad regions, the north and the south. While the south is characterized more heterogeneously, the north is described as having Islam and Arabic as unifying factors. The Darfur region, though, is excluded. Beshir further describes the north as a “centre of state-breeding and nation-making” since ancient times and states that its “history has always been bound up with that of Egypt, its neighbor to the north” (1974: 2).

Thus, up to this time in history, people of the Sudan had been subjected to Egyptian military and culture, the introduction of Christianity, and then Arab Islam. Christianity died out when Arabs took control of Egypt, breaking Sudanese Christians’ ties with Christians in Egypt (Mahdi 1965: 26). And while Arabs had traveled to eastern regions of the Sudan to trade, leaving behind little trace of their culture or religion, after the rise of Islam, the influence of Arab Muslims “pervaded the cultural, social and political outlook of the Sudan and connected it intimately with the rest of the Islamic World” (P. 27). Kings of the Nubian kingdoms officially adopted Islam.

Into the sixteenth century, two large divisions of Arabs spread throughout all regions of Sudan except the south. Both groups intermarried with the inhabitants, resulting in tribal and ethnic groups that have remained to the present time: all tribes in the north “represent different scales of mixtures of Negroid, Arab, Beja and Nubian elements” (Mahdi 1965: 32). However, because Islam was the religion of the Arab tribes, it became favorable for people in the Sudan to claim Arab origin. Socially, tribes were reordered following the Arab model. Linguistically, even though the tribes indigenous to these areas spoke their own languages, Arabic became the official language
for all.

While Arab influence pervaded the north of Sudan from east to west, because of the tsetse fly in southern Sudan that is harmful to livestock, the Arabs did not settle in the south or mix with tribes there. These tribes of Southern Sudan are divided into two major groups. The Sudani Negro, who were influenced by Hamitic blood after reaching Africa from Arabia, today live in the upper basins of Bahr el-Ghazal. The second group is comprised of Nilotic tribes, who received Hamitic influence during entry into Africa before reaching the Nile Basin. The main tribes in this group are the Shilluk, the Anuak, the Dinka and the Nuer (P. 32, 34).

These events occurred in the northern regions of what is present-day Sudan. The imperial and colonial powers did not extend into the south. So from nearly 2,000 years in the past, the people of north and south Sudan were developing along very different paths: religiously, politically, culturally and ethically.

**Funj**

Around 1505 a population of uncertain origins called the Funj joined Arab tribes in the Sudan to form a kingdom called the Black Sultanate (also called the Funj Kingdom). They formed an alliance in order to defeat the Christian state of Alwa. After doing so, further military expeditions were carried out with the result of subjugating tribes in the Sixth Cataract areas and expanding into the remaining parts of the Sudan. “The natives were completely absorbed, both culturally and racially, into the Arabs” (Mahdi 1965, 37).

The most expansive boundaries of the Funj kingdom included all of Sudan except:
"the Sudan north of Dongola, part of the Southern Sudan and the Beja land" (Mahdi 1965: 50) (see Appendix E for a map of the Funj Kingdom of Sennar). Politically, the supreme king and leaders operating in the new capital of Sennar carried out the tasks of obtaining peace and security throughout the kingdom, collecting tribute, commanding the armies and administering the territories.

What was the nature of the north-over-south rule in this kingdom? One ruler was called *The Just* because of his administrative policies, another was known for his justice and piety. The king was "respected in the land and in his council and he was given a special salutation" (Mahdi 1965, 40). However, power was concentrated in the hands of Funj sultans, Abdullab sheikhs and the council, who could dethrone the king and condemn him to death. Funj rulers used economic capital to maintain dominance over the people. When the kingdoms and sheikhdoms refused to pay tribute, armies were sent against them (P. 41).

Religious development in this time period had historical significance. The spread of Islam in the Sudan was aided in part by the founding of *khalwas* (schools of religious instruction). Also, Sudanese who did the pilgrimage to Mecca and remained there for a time to study Islam, brought this knowledge back to the Sudan. Sudanese who attended al-Azhar University in Cairo for religious studies also contributed to the growth of Islam in the Sudan. Muslims had begun entering the Sudan in the ninth century, but Islam did not wholly spread and the Bedouin Muslims did not truly acquire knowledge of their religion until these developments during the time of the Funj kingdom. The Funj kingdom marked the end of the Christian era; the Islamic Maliki code from North Africa became the religion of the people of Sudan. Mahdi recognizes the growth of Islam in
these Sudanese regions as helping relations between Sudan and its Muslim neighbors (Mahdi 1965: 44-47).

_Fur_

The Fur kingdom was the next group that had enough economic capital to seize control in the Sudan. This group obtained Kordofan from the Funj and ruled it until the 1821 Turkro-Egyptian conquest (Mahdi 1965: 50-54). The Fur kingdom, like the Funj, contributed to the spread of Islam, building mosques and schools for learning Islam and the Koran. Students continued attending al-Azhar University in Cairo. And the Fur sultans paid tribute to Mecca and Medina by sending goods to be sold in Egypt and the profits taken to the Holy Land as an offering. The Fur kingdom also engaged in trade with Kordofan, Bahr el-Ghazal, Wadai and Egypt. Slaves, ivory, feathers, gum arabic, copper, natron and honey were exported from Darfur (P. 60).

The expansionist policies of the Fur, like their Egyptian, Arab Muslim, Funj, and Christian missionary predecessors, converted the northern regions of the Sudan first from autonomous tribes, to three Christian kingdoms, to an Arabic-speaking region Islamic in religion and culture. The interplay of culture and power within these historical events is certain. Groups such as the Egyptians and Arab Muslims were able to impose their will on the people of the Sudan because of the power that they possessed. In this expression of power, the dominant group’s culture cannot be separated from its will. Thus, when a kingdom or nation imposes its will on another, a group in domination that resists the foreign power is not only resisting that will (general imposition on their lives), but the specific foreign culture that is wholly part of the domination. True, at times some or
many aspects of foreign culture is adopted as the time of domination prolongs. However, the foreign culture that is part of the exercise of power often creates additional reasons for conflict to arise. The inhabitants not only resist the exercise of power over their lives, but they are fighting to resist a cultural imposition on their lives. It is a fight not only for autonomy, but identity as well.

It should also be noted that change in culture (religiously and otherwise) among dominated groups in the Sudan cannot be entirely attributed to power. A powerful group can impose its culture on another, forcing the people to adopt it (or letting their presence over time persuade them to adopt it). But whether or not the dominated group resists cultural imposition, people do make conscious, rational decisions to take on aspects of a foreign culture in their midst. For example, the Islamic religion brought by Arabs was symbolic capital for the purpose of conquering the Sudan, but it also offered religious attributes that the people of the Sudan adopted with some degree of willingness.

Turco-Egyptian

In 1820, a new powerful nation entered the Sudan with intentions analogous to the previous groups. The initiator and leader of this movement was Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Ottoman Turkish ruler (viceroy) of Egypt. This Turco-Egyptian ruler obtained the capital necessary to successfully exercise power over the people of the Sudan. In terms of economic capital, a large military was established. Muhammad Ali Pasha’s army consisted of Egyptians, North Africans, Albanians and Arab Bedouins, who were armed with muskets, pistols, cannons and sailing boats. The motivation for subjugating the Sudan was Muhammad Ali Pasha’s desire to advance his government in Egypt
economically, industrially and culturally. He knew Sudan had gold mines, minerals, animal wealth and brave men for soldiers (Mahdi 1965: 61). The people of the Sudan, who were under the Funj Kingdom at this time, resisted this foreign power. But a combination of a decentralized government, weak and disorganized states and warriors inferiorly armed with swords, spears and some primitive firearms, led to Turco-Egyptian control of the Sudan (P. 62-64).

To fulfill Muhammad Ali Pasha’s plans, his sons, Ismail and Ibrahim, readily began the task of obtaining men and money to send to Egypt. They carried out raids against the Dinka in the White Nile and along the Blue Nile. They captured about 500 slaves, a number that disappointed their father (P. 64). In terms of raising money, the collection of taxes was not very successful either. The Sudanese either refused to pay the taxes or fled from their villages.

Economic endeavors for the benefit of Muhammad Ali Pasha’s home nation were accompanied by efforts to, what he considered, better the situation of the people of the Sudan. Muhammad Ali Pasha planned to control the regions of the Sudan as a colony, to bring “development” to the people there. His method of doing so included reconstruction efforts, the appointment of rulers, increased security for people, encouraging those who had fled to return to their homes, revising taxes, and funding agricultural development. The natives were taught Egyptian styles of agriculture, the use of water-wheels, basin-building, introduced new crops and breeds of sheep. He also established and personally oversaw gold mining. Additionally, native rulers were allowed to continue governing their areas (Mahdi 1965: 68).

But the power to “develop” was accompanied by the power to exploit. Corrupt
administrators, civil servants and soldiers were still employed, and the administration of the country on a commercial and utilitarian basis, to meet Muhammad Ali’s “need for men and money, enabled them to get rich at the expense of the government and to oppress and cheat the inhabitants” (Mahdi 1965: 67-68). Additionally, slave raids were being conducted as far south as the Sobat River. To summarize these developments, the author Mahdi credits Muhammad Ali as bringing peace and order to the Sudan (P. 68-70). However, a deeper analysis depicts the situation differently.

The “development” of the Sudan, while introducing technology that arguably bettered the lives of Sudanese, was facilitated by symbolic and actual capital and violence, depending on the circumstance. Military and expeditionary capital such as weapons and transportation allowed Egyptians to begin entrance into the Sudan. These actions were legitimized by Egypt’s leaders. Muhammad Ali Pasha had the symbolic capital necessary to convince Egyptians to: advance the government economically, industrially and culturally; and take advantage of the gold mines, minerals, animal wealth and brave men (for soldiers) (Mahdi 1965: 61). Having both actual and symbolic capital, Muhammad Ali was able to exercise power over the land and people in the Sudan. Mahdi may summarize these developments as “development,” but it was enabled by power that was expressed as domination.

Corruption and exploitation (“development”) in the Sudan under the power of the Turco-Egyptian empire, though resisted, resulted in Egyptian culture being impressed upon the people of the Sudan. At the end of Muhammad Ali’s reign, the Christian missionaries went to the Sudan. Roman Catholics had a short-term mission in Khartoum (the new capital) in 1842; Jesuits opened a more long-term mission in 1848 (Mahdi 1965:
Future rulers continued the cultural imperialism, opening the door for consulates, missionaries and merchants to enter the Sudan and increasing the slave trade (P. 71-72). Sudan and Egypt became connected by telegraph and rail (P. 77). Provinces were rearranged. Construction was undertaken in the capital: a lithograph printing-press, a pharmacy and the law courts and offices (P. 72).

**Slavery**

Turco-Egyptian expansion and imperialism introduced and imposed new ideologies and lifestyles to the people of the Sudan. While much of this was adopted, an imposition that was forceful and devastating was the slave trade. Slavery had existed in the Sudan for centuries to do farm work, care for cattle and perform other menial duties. Pharoanic Egypt captured Nubians to be slave and soldiers, as did the Arab Muslims (Sikainga 2000). But under Muhammad Ali Pasha, the slave trade increased dramatically as one of his main ambitions was to get black men for his army. This military slavery led to the forced migration of thousands of people from southern and western Sudan to Egypt and northern Sudan. These people “came to identify themselves with the government that employed them and became its main instruments of repression” (Sikainga 2000: 24).

The government and natives alike participated in slave hunts, using the firearm technology introduced from Turco-Egyptians. Al-Zubayr Wad Rahma was one of the biggest native slave traders in Bahr el-Ghazal (Mahdi 1965: 79-80). The anti-slavery movement reached the Sudan through Europe. Tourists and explorers visiting the Sudan communicated their disdain for the slavery they observed when visiting the Sudan. Muhammad Ali Pasha put a stop to some practices of slavery, but because he needed
slaves for his army, he did not discontinue slavery in that arena. A majority of the slaves came from regions south of Muhammad Ali Pasha’s state in the Sudan (P. 79).

Muhammad Ali Pasha’s son, Ismail Pasha, also strove to abolish the slave trade. As khedive, along with ordering conquests to expand his kingdom (Bahr el-Ghazal and Darfur), he ordered sailing ships to be watched for slave trafficking, and he expanded his area of trade in order to have control of new areas and prevent slave trade from developing there. When he felt that Turkish- and Egyptian-appointed rulers were dishonest, he would hire foreigners (British, Europeans and Americans) (Mahdi 1965: 80-81).

Samuel Baker was an explorer appointed by the Turco-Egyptian empire to expand the empire in Equatoria and fight the slave trade. He was not very successful in establishing posts, and thus not very successful in fighting the slave trade. But his successor, Gordon, established rapport with natives, improved communication and helped establish new laws that would put an end to slavery (Mahdi 1965: 82-83). But this did not last. As Gordon became more distrustful of Egyptians and Sudanese, he appointed more and more foreigners (people from England, Austria and Italy) as governors of the provinces. By the time Gordon resigned from his post, Egyptians, Sudanese, slave-dealers and slave-owners considered the government an enemy. With Gordon’s weak successor, Muhammad Rauf Pasha, the slave trade increased considerably (P. 85).

Turco-Egyptian control in the Sudan was inaugurated by the military commander who was set on advancing his own country. Even though subsequent Turco-Egyptian rulers attempted to couple their own economic development this with good intentions for the people of the Sudan, including efforts to end the slave trade, “development” and high
taxes tipped the scales and led to a revolt (Mahdi 1965: 94-95).

Analysis: Pre-Independence

At the same time that Turco-Egyptian power in the Sudan was becoming increasingly resented, its power was declining in Egypt due to the ‘Urabi revolution and the rise of English power. Also, a Mahdist movement was growing across Sudan (Mahdi 1965: 96-97). These concomitant developments moved Sudanese towards the desire for independence and created the momentum and opportunity to begin fighting for it. Thus, symbolic capital (the Mahdist movement and an independence movement) and economic capital (due to Egypt’s decline) were developing. These developments created power for the people of the Sudan, the necessary factor for necessitating their will.

Mahdists

The symbolic capital of Mahdism had its origins in the life of the Mahdi of Allah. The Mahdi was born Muhammad Ahmad in 1843, during the rule of Muhammad Rauf Pasha. He dedicated himself to studying Islam and the Koran, prayer, contemplation, reflection and fasting. Upon receiving revelations he came to believe he was the Mahdi, one sent by Allah (God) to purify the religion of Islam. He acquired many followers, but the rulers in the capital denied his Mahdism and requested that he come to Khartoum. The Mahdi rejected this skepticism of his Mahdism and did not go to the capital. Once having openly challenged the government in this manner, the Mahdi decided he had no option but to prepare for jihad, the war in defense of Islam (Mahdi 1965: 86-87).

The Mahdist revolution was both religious and political. The Mahdi was one
expected to come at the end of creation to bring justice to the injustice in the world (Mahdi 1965: 94-96). He declared “jihad against the infidel Turk, with the object of purifying the world from wantonness and corruption” (qtd. in Beshir 1974: 15). For Sudanese who had become very discontented with the Turkish regime, a religious figure who called for the overthrow of a corrupt power was very followable. The author Mahdi cites the numerous good intentions that the Turko-Egyptian rulers in the Sudan had attempted to couple with the goals of procuring economic wealth in the Sudan. These goals included the introduction of modern European government, geographic boundaries, punishment of rulers who were corrupt or cruel to natives, the abolition of slavery (in certain realms), a primary school in Khartoum, plans for Sudanese to participate in administration of their country. But the prevalence of high taxes, bribery, corruption, a monopoly on the ivory trade and its attempts to abolish slavery could not outweigh these good intentions (Mahdi 1965, 94-95). “The Mahdist call widened into a politico-religious movement which aimed at the ending of a decaying and unjust regime and the heralding in of a new and enlightened religious era” (P. 96).

August 12, 1881 was the Mahdists’ first victory against the Turco-Egyptian regime, marking the beginning of the end of Turco-Egyptian rule in the Sudan (P. 90). While British forces were conquering Egypt, the Mahdists conquered parts of the Sudan. British forces entered the Sudan but failed to quell the powerful Mahdists. January 26, 1885, 41 months after the Mahdist revolution had begun, the Mahdists had taken control of western, central and eastern Sudan as well as Khartoum, the capital (P. 98-101) (see Appendix F for map of the Mahdist State).

In accordance with the culture-power interplay, the rise of power of the Mahdists
was followed by the imposition of its culture on the people of the region it conquered.
Spaulding and Beswick describe the Mahdist insurgency as an “Islamic fundamentalist movement” (2000, xv). By “fundamentalist,” the nature the group’s religious goals were likely to be accomplished politically, without compromise. Pure obedience to Islam was the Mahdist goal for a new government. This included following Islam, obeying the Koran and traditions of the prophets, an Islamic constitution, the Mahdi of Allah as head of the government with caliphs and emirs as administrators, revenue by way of the zaka (tax on grain and cattle) and ushur (tithe), an Islamic-law judiciary and an army made of whoever could muster arms. Additionally, religious divisions were shunned, the Mahdi’s book of prayers was to be used, and Sufism was encouraged (Mahdi 1965: 97).

Members of the Mahdist state, believing Mahdism to be supported worldwide and the cause just, continued military expeditions beyond its borders. The Mahdi sent messages to Egypt, England, Turkey, Hijaz, North Africa and Abyssinia, calling for them to follow Mahdism. The extent of symbolic capital within the Mahdist movement was utilized to marshal armies to attack Abyssinia and Egypt when they did not respond to his call to follow Mahdism in 1889 and 1896, respectively (Mahdi 1965: 106). But the British and Egyptian forces were prepared. The Mahdist army of 4,000 fighters and 7,000 women and children was defeated.

After the Mahdi died, and as time passed, discontent arose. The new ruler, Khalifa Abdullahi, showed bias toward his people in the west, causing the Ashraf (Mahdist followers collectively) to feel neglected and begin to undermine the new regime (Mahdi 1965: 104). Additionally, the Khalifa crushed external and internal uprisings in various parts of the state, creating fear all over the country. The author Mahdi justifies
the Khalifa’s ruthless approach as necessary in the time and circumstance in order to “spread peace and rule [in] the country effectively” (P. 105). This example of force being used to impose a way of life serves as another example of its failure to produce stability.

A significant development during this time was an 1877 agreement signed between Great Britain and Egypt prohibiting “all public traffic in slaves” (Spaulding & Beswick 2000, xiv), in Egypt in 1884 and Sudan in 1889. This termination of the slave trade further incited the Mahdist to fight.

The Mahdist movement gained symbolic capital as it persuaded many southerners (Nilotic Dinka in particular) to assist in fighting for independence from the Turco-Egyptian colonialists. However, after ridding the Sudan of the Egyptians, the southerners discovered the Mahdist’s tryue objectives: “[f]ull-scale slavery not only returned but intensified” (Spaulding & Beswick 2000, xv). This, combined with the people’s fear of the Mahdist ruler, and the absence of farmers and herdsmen (who had been busy as soldiers), contributed to an impending economic crisis. Collectively, these factors marked the beginning of the end of the Mahdist state (Mahdi 1965: 106-108).

Movements such as Mahdism are a common theme in the history of Sudan, though Mahdism stands out as the most far-reaching. Successive imperial and forceful powers have met resistance from those who have been exploited and excluded. Charismatic leaders, such as the Mahdi, attract followers and start a movement to fight off the group in power that is perceived to be illegitimate. Symbolic capital is the momentum for these movements, and when economic capital is obtained along with it, such movements can be very powerful.
The symbolic capital of purging the region of disliked rulers gave momentum to the Mahdist movement. But the power of this movement lasted only as long as the source of symbolic capital was supported by the followers and economic capital was available to maintain it. The loss of support for the Mahdist movement by the southerners after discovering the Mahdists' true intentions and the strength of Anglo-Egyptian economic capital power introduced resistance. Conflict emerged as all these groups aimed for control and autonomy within regions of the Sudan.

*Anglo-Egyptians*

By 1891, the Mahdists lost the eastern region of Sudan to the Anglo-Egyptians. Collectively, the decline in Mahdist power, famine due to rural migration to Omdurman, drought, locusts and the Ashraf revolt, created a situation of civil war (Mahdi 1965: 109). Britain set out to occupy the Sudan once again and restore stability to the region (P. 116). Commander-in-chief Kitchener Pasha led Anglo-Egyptian takeover. The Khalifa in Omdurman declared jihad in all parts of the Sudan, mobilizing men and defending the capital. But they lost, and within 18 months, Kitchener had subdued all of the Sudan except Darfur, Bahr el-Ghazal and Equatoria. In 1899 the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium regime had begun; it lasted until 1956 (Spaulding & Beswick 2000).

The Condominium Agreement was the shared system of governance between the Egyptians and English. It became the constitution of the Sudan. Formally, both nations held sovereignty of the Sudan, but in practice the Agreement guaranteed full control to Britain (Mahdi 1965: 121). By 1916, British colonists had established provinces throughout all of the Sudan: Dongola, Berber, Kassala, Sennar, Fashoda, Khartoum,
Kordofan, Bahr el-Ghazal, three southern provinces and Darfur (P. 123-124). Significant to the author Mahdi’s telling of these developments is that he does not even name these three southern provinces. For many authors “the history of the Sudan” excludes the southern region. The north and south developed along very different lines, intensifying the geographic and cultural separation that marks the conflict of today, so much so that the south is not always even considered part of the Sudan.

The nature of Anglo-Egyptian rule was different than the previous colonial and imperial powers in the Sudan. It was still a foreign power exerting control over the region, but a number of developments provided evidence that the Condominium strove not only to advance itself economically, but to provide opportunities for the people of the Sudan to have better lives as well. Provincial administrators were to “try their utmost to win the confidence of the people, to acquaint themselves with the nobility of the country, to leave people … to practise freely their religion, beliefs and traditions and to be the best representatives of a kind and just government. … They were to encourage agriculture, local industries and trade” (Mahdi 1965: 124). Over time, civilians replaced military officers, and tribal chiefs played a governmental role in their villages.

Under the new rule, departments of Agriculture, Education, Communications, Telegraph, Public Works and Health were established. Foreign trade entered the country. Electricity came in 1903. Schools in the north were established to teach Sudanese the skills of land surveying, irrigation, law, economics, teaching, the construction of the Sennar dam (Mahdi 1965, 128-129). In the south, Christian missionaries took the responsibility for establishing institutions of education. Omdurman had an estimated 400,000 population, with people representing most of the tribes of the Sudan, and had a
slave market (P. 112). During this time, Muslim laws were used in personal cases, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. But criminal cases were tried on the basis of Indian law (P. 125).

It was not until 1944 that attempts were first made to enable Sudanese to participate in the central government. A policy of devolution of powers was established under Governor-General Sir John Maffey in 1927. Native administration increased; small tribes integrated into larger tribes; provinces were combined. In this way, “tribal prestige was revived and invigorated and the nazirs and sheikhs recovered their lost ground” (P. 132). The 1937 Local Government Ordinance made way for local government in the Sudan to be formed along the same lines as was done in Britain at the time, giving local authorities wide legislative and executive powers, with special staff budgets (P. 132).

Other important developments under Condominium Rule included the opening of the Sennar dam in 1925; the Kassala railway; roads in the south; the amalgamation of Kordofan and Nuba Mountains Provinces, and Dongola and Berber into the Northern Province; civilian air transport in 1928; and schools of higher education in 1938 (P. 135-135).

At this point in his discussion of the emergence of Condominium Rule, the author Mahdi gives two pieces of information on the southern provinces: one on education and the other on politics. Until 1946, the only schools in the south were created by missionaries (and subsidized by the government), which reached at least 50 in number. During this time, the government held conferences to “cope with the educational problems of the south resulting from the numerous languages used there” (P. 135).
Politically, Mahdi comments that some tribes in the south engaged in civil disobedience, "[rejecting] any form of authority from any kind of government. [In this and other cases of uprisings], the government nipped the risings in the bud" (P. 136).

*Slavery*

The exploitation of human resources was one expression of power in the Sudan, a particularly dehumanizing one. The 1877 agreement between Great Britain and Egypt to end the slave trade did not end the long history of slavery in the region. The Anglo-Egyptian capital, Omdurman, even had a slave market (Mahdi 1965: 112). Over the centuries, powerful foreign kingdoms greatly expanded the slave trade that had already existed to some degree within the Sudan. The Fur kingdom extended the slave trade by actually exporting slaves from Darfur to Kordofan, Bahr el-Ghazal, Wadai and Egypt (P. 60). Later, Muhammad Ali and subsequent rulers of the Turco-Egyptian empire carried out raids against the Dinka in the White Nile and along the Blue Nile and as far south as the Sobat river. The Dinka captured by the Turco-Egyptians were forced into military slavery (Sikainga 2000).

After British victory in the Sudan, the British inherited slave soldiers from the previous regime. Additionally, the new regime forcibly drafted people into the army. Non-Arab soldiers, such as people from the Nuba, Dinka and Shilluk tribes were preferred because of their supposed superior military abilities (Sikainga 2000). Runaway and liberated slaves were also drafted into the Anglo-Egyptian army. Thus, "the Anglo-Egyptian army served as an abolitionist as well as an enslaving institution" (Sikainga 2000, 27).
The power that was expressed in the history of the slave trade contributed to the north-south conflict. For one, a majority of the slaves came from regions in the south (Mahdi 1965: 79). In addition, the policy of segregation exercised under Condominium rule created an image which pictured the northerner in the south as a slave-dealer and a swindler (Mahdi 1965: 150).

In the years leading up to independence ex-slaves attempted to establish political organizations to represent interests of ex-slaves and discharged soldiers, as well as all non-Arab groups in the Sudan. The Black Block, founded in 1948 by Muhammad Adam Adham, the son of an army officer, was the first known political organization. The group began by addressing social and economic concerns of southern Sudanese living in the cities of Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman. Later, it became politically active. Northern Sudanese political parties dismissed it as a racist organization, and the (colonial) government refused to recognize it as a political party. By 1954 it became an underground organization (Sikainga 2000).

Most of these ex-slaves had become Muslims and spoke Arabic; additionally, their acculturation to northern Sudanese norms gave them higher status than southern Sudanese and other non-Arab groups who were viewed as inferior due to their ethnicity and culture. These factors created tension with southern Sudanese, who believed members of the Black Block to have lost their identity, to have assimilated into northern Sudan norms and to be holding to pro-Egyptian views (Sikainga 2000). This situation represents the interplay of culture and power that Pierre Bourdieu described. The power exercised over southern Sudanese, forcing them into slavery, was intertwined with cultural domination as well. Even when the power of slavery was relinquished, the
cultural domination remained; these people had become Muslims who sympathized with Egyptian rule. This created conflict between southern Sudanese who had not been captured as slaves and still held to traditional beliefs and were not acculturated along Egyptian norms. This situation was just one aspect of the many dynamics occurring during the stages leading up to Sudanese independence.

Towards Independence

At the same time that Egypt was demanding termination of the British protectorate, restoration of Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan and the discontinuation of the Condominium agreement, the people of the Sudan were developing a national consciousness and the desire for freedom from foreign domination. There formed secret societies of people from the educated class, some wanting complete Sudanese independence, others wanting some type of unity with Egypt. But the government responded harshly, killing and imprisoning the leaders. The movement of national consciousness was quelled until 1931 (Mahdi 1965: 137). In 1936 it reached its peak when Egypt and Britain signed a treaty concerning their rights over the Sudan without consulting the Sudanese. It was the Sudan Graduates’ Club, which formed the Graduates’ General Congress in 1938, that began to plan a revolutionary response. It began under the guise of a philanthropic organization but soon made public its demands for Sudanese self-determination (P. 140).

The Condominium government completely rebuffed this memorandum. However, the Civil Secretary at the time, Douglas Newbold, communicated “good intentions” of accepting the demands. Thus formed factions in the Congress, some
believing the Sudan government would act with good intentions, others insisting on nothing less than a formal written reply from the government accepting the demands (P. 140). Some would argue that this was an intentional act of “divide and conquer.” Using Pierre Bourdieu’s theories, this strategy can be viewed as the dominant group acting to limit its opponent’s symbolic capital. Sudanese desiring independence were no longer united under a single symbolic capital; instead, they were pulled in different directions.

In one direction was the political party called the Ashiqqa (Blood brothers). Its goal was to establish a democratic Sudanese government, in union with Egypt. The other party was the Umma party (the People’s Party), whose goal was “Sudan for the Sudanese” – complete independence while preserving friendly relations with Britain and Egypt. This was all occurring around 1945 (Mahdi 1965: 140-141).

These political parties were not representative of the entire region of the Sudan. While the struggle was for autonomy and independence, not all groups were equally included in the process. The south, in particular, was largely excluded. The struggle for Sudanese independence had potential to be a unifying effect on the region, but because, southerners were never given real representation, but instead continued to be exploited by northerners, this opportunity was missed.

Instead of drawing southerners into its efforts for independence, the north continued to maintain its position of dominance. This was accomplished not only by the north already possessing much more economic capital than the south and using the south’s resources to maintain this dominance. Additionally, the north exercised power over the south with promises of representation that turned out to be empty. For a time, the north possessed enough symbolic capital to keep the south in a subordinate position.
Southerners were made to believe they would be given representation. Many southerners were not aware of how unequally they were being treated in relation to northerners. “Activities and resources gain in symbolic power, or legitimacy, to the extent that they become separated from underlying material interests and hence go misrecognized as representing disinterested forms of activities and resources” (Swartz 1996). But this legitimacy did not last. Similar to Marx’s idea of class consciousness, southerners began realizing that they were being exploited and mistreated. Akol speaks of how the southerners, more so than northerners, were poor and uneducated. Southerners, particularly the educated, began to realize this “inequality” (2004). In Bourdieu’s words, southerners began realizing that the power the north was exercising over them was not “legitimate.” They were not being given the representation they had requested and been promised. Thus, they did not want to accept the power of northerners over them, and the north could no longer “buy” (exercise) power over the south with means of symbolic capital.

During the last decade or so before independence, the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was slowly turning control over to the people of Sudan. The southerners that were struggling to be included in this process were largely disregarded. Thus, even though the Anglo-Egyptian turnover of sovereignty to Sudanese was largely characterized by verbal settlements, rather than war and killing as in previous regime changes, uprisings from southerners occurred.

The author Mahdi records that the newly-elected Sudanese government set to work “with a deep sense of responsibility and awareness and were therefore able to pursue their course with a high degree of success” (P. 148). Its tasks included
sudanization of the army, police and civil service; and appointment of new ministers. These unification efforts did not take into account southern identity. Southerners were well aware of this, and acted to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the north. Before the official flag-raising day of independence, two episodes of violence occurred. On March 1, 1954, for the opening of the first Sudanese parliament, riots by ansar were directed at General Neguib of Egypt to demonstrate dissatisfaction with Egyptian activities in the Sudan. Thirty-four people, mostly police, were killed (P. 148).

Then, on August 18, 1955, Equatorial Corps mutinied in Equatoria Province, in Torit. They looted military storehouses, arbitrarily killing in Torit. In no time, massacres and lawlessness by both soldiers and civilians was occurring in all of Equatoria Province and parts of Bahr el-Ghazal. Hundreds were killed. Mutineers’ expected British forces in Uganda to come to their side; when they did not, and when more troops came from Khartoum to quell the uprising, the mutineers fled (P. 148-150).

Mahdi states that there were numerous causes of the mutiny, briefly describing a few:

The causes of the mutiny were many and diverse. In fact the stage for the trouble was being set during the years of Condominium. The policy of segregation exercised under Condominium created an image which pictured the northerner in the south as a slave-dealer and a swindler. Education was completely entrusted to the Christian church, and for evangelization purposes the Southern Provinces were divided into spheres of influence for the various Christian denominations: Islam had no place in the religious sphere in the south. These were some of the underlying causes. Added to this were the wild electioneering promises by northern politicians. A forged telegram, exhorting the administrators to harshness and purporting to be from Azhari provided the tragic spark (P. 150).

In spite of these two uprisings, the final steps toward independence were taken. In November of 1955, British and Egyptian forces evacuated the Sudan. In December, both houses of Parliament passed a resolution declaring independence. A transitional constitution was adopted. The Governor-General’s powers were transferred to a Supreme
Commission of five Sudanese. On January 1, 1956, independence was officially declared. Flag raisings occurred in the palace of the Republican and in all the headquarters of provinces and districts in the Sudan (Mahdi 1965: 150-151).

The dissident events of 1955 are significant particularly because they were the first of their type, a type that has continued since then, into the present: for nearly 50 years. While the conflict between the north and the south that is occurring and attempting to be resolved today does not completely follow from the 1955 events, this is where it began. Understanding these events is crucial to understanding the present-day events, especially if peace processes ever hope to be successful.

The dissident events were carried out by southerners who had found the north’s symbolic capital of domination to not be legitimate. Over the following few decades, leading up to the present, this delegitimization was held by more and more southerners. But at this point, dissent was still in smaller numbers. Their collective reason for introducing conflict to the independence movement was based on an understanding that the north’s, and not really the south’s, aspirations were be incorporated into the formation of a new nation. Largely due to the fact that ethnic, religious, political, economic and linguistic differences evolved dissimilarly in the north and in the south, it logically follows that, in general, northerners and southerners would have different aspirations. So when the north continued its practice of domination over the south and did not actively include southerners in the shaping of the independence movement, conflict arose.

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the last group that held control in Sudan before independence, was the group whose policies most directly formed the situation out of which this conflict arose. Britain’s primary interest in the Sudan was to establish order
after the years of "disruption, corruption and disintegration under the Turko-Egyptian and the Mahdist regimes" (Deng 1984: 141). Considering the north-south conflict that arose and exploded as the Anglo-Egyptian powers were departing from the Sudan, it is not surprising that this colonial power contributed to the regional polarization. Under British colonial power, all the people of southern Sudan were more or less considered one single group (Deng 1984: 142). In addition, the policy Britain exercised over the south was very different than its policy for the north. While the British was intentional in showing concern for Muslim opinion, it feared "fanatical' Islam" as a "threat to government control" (Holt 1988: 124-125). A policy of preventing Islam from spreading to the south of Sudan was thus instituted: the Southern Policy.

The goal of the Southern Policy was for development of the indigenous populations to happen along indigenous lines, not Arab Muslim, lines (Deng 1984: 138). Strategies for its implementation included encouragement of Christian proselytizing and teaching of English in the south and discouragement of Arabic and Arab dress. Governor-general Sir Reginald Wingate was largely responsible for the creation and accomplishment of this policy (Holt 1988: 125).

Holt finds evidence as early as 1919 of Britain's policy for the south of Sudan to be independent from the north. While early division of the north and south was uncoordinated, a combination of the Southern Policy, the closed district system, Indirect Rule and the education policy soon "encouraged and increased the differentiation of north from south which had already existed" (Holt 1988: 139).

In 1946, the Anglo-Egyptian government announced its plan to establish a free and independent Sudan. The following year, in the midst of British developments to lead
the north and south toward distinct courses of independence, the policies of separation were abandoned. The committee (which was comprised of British, Egyptian and Sudanese members) that had been created to implement the sudanization of the government had called for the establishment of a legislative assembly representative of the whole country (Holt 1988: 151).

The British had not considered the possibility that the South could desire unity with the North (Britain had figured on affiliation with Uganda or Southern independence, but not unity with the north). Seeing that its interest in the Sudan was declining, an integrative policy was adopted with the hopes that “accelerated development along Arab lines would [enable] the Southerner to hold his ground should he find himself united with the Arab in an independent Sudan” (Deng 1994: 138). Different authors highlight the effects of this differently. Holt states that “integration was in fact adopted too hastily as government policy, [as] it was far too late for a period of thoughtful transition” (P. 152). Deng emphasizes the unity that arose from the British change of policy: “The Southerner came closer to the Northerner in their common struggle to rid their country of colonial domination. The average Dinka could go into the city and become more exposed to Arab influence; prior to that, going into Arabland brought great shame on a Dinka and invited insult songs” (P. 138).

This apparent contradiction can be resolved. Many individuals believe that in Sudan’s emerging years as an independent nation, the possibility existed for peaceful unification of the north and the south. Akol and Mach, Sudanese living in the United States, both expressed the opinion unification could have been achieved (Akol: 2004; Mach: 2004). Akol points to poor leadership in the north as a cause for the failure
Mach commented that if southerners would have taken leadership in 1956, Sudan could have been united (2004). Mach also indicated the lack of democracy in the north’s Islamic government a reason for failure of unification (2004).

Past grievances between the north and the south also account for the breakdown of a unified Sudan. The British did what they could to minimize and assuage conflicts, and over the years, the memories of slave trades and other abuses faded (Deng 1984: 142). But discussions among British, Egyptian, northern Sudanese and southern Sudanese at an administrative conference in 1947 revealed “that memories of [the slave trade] had been fostered and retained, and contributed to the suspicion with which the north was viewed” (Holt 1988: 153). Additionally, the abrupt manner in which the British put the new integrative policy into practice “under the heavy hand of the military [caused it to be viewed as] suppressing an emerging though still unclearly articulated southern identity” (Holt 1988: 179).

In spite of negative feedback in terms of the new integrative policy (observable both vocally and in the two uprisings), on January 1, 1956, the British left and Sudan became independent under a unitary system. An invisible line was drawn in northeastern Africa that enclosed two very different groups in a single governmental system. While the north had a higher degree of internal communication than the south, and a political structure and situation that had included knowledge of and policy toward the south, the south did not. The south was more politically independent within, with less communication with its parts, and not in a situation of becoming knowledgeable of the north. Further, the south had largely been excluded from the independence movement, the treaties, the negotiations and the committees, as well as its own governance.
Analysis: Independence and Civil War

Writing in 1984, Francis Mading Deng stated: “Southerners welcomed independence on the Northern promise that the Southerners’ call for federation would be given due consideration. That consideration has not yet produced much” (P. 138). From the beginning of independence, there was both civil war and southerners working in the system “calling for a federal status within the unified Sudan” (P. 138). Hope and non-violence from the Dinka and others in the south existed in the beginning stages after independence. But as the North’s processes of sudanization, arabization and islamization overshadowed the voice of Southerners and any signs of democracy, more Southerners “joined the language of violence” (P. 139). Any symbolic capital the north had used to pacify southerners, such as implying that they would have representation and autonomy, was loosing its legitimacy. The Anyanya was formed: an army of southerners (commonly called “rebels”) revolting against northern control.

To use the phrase Beshir employs throughout his book, the “southern Sudan problem” was no closer to being resolved in 1964 than it was in 1955 when rebellion in the south began one year before independence (1974: 202). During those nine years, there were three different governments in Sudan. From 1955-1958, party governments worked through the parliamentary institutions; a military junta ruled until 1964 when that was overthrown and replaced by party governments which again worked through parliamentary institutions. The source of power struggle in the north during this time was religious, the two major sects being the Ansar and the Khatmiya. This political conflict, which was rooted in religious conflict, precluded any real development throughout the new nation. What it did was breed more conflict and instability. Each of these quickly
succeeding governments was more concerned with maintaining its power than solving political and economic problems (P. 203); thus, the problems worsened. Nonetheless, Beshir does report significant changes in agriculture and some in education (P. 202).

The 1958 elections for a new constitution were no less convoluted by party politics. None of the four major parties could get a majority, so alliances were formed between them. But because the nature of the alliances was more to gain an upper hand than actually compromise with others, power struggles preempted any real progress in addressing the north-south conflict.

In 1964 and 1965, the “southern problem” became the most important issue to the government (Beshir 1974: 220). Prime Minister at the time, Sir el Khatim el Khalifa issued a statement appealing for peace and negotiation with the south. He initiated the March 1965 Round Table Conference, which was attended by many parties who expressed a desire for a peaceful solution. A definite solution was not reached, but “there was general agreement on a regional type of government for the south [whose] details would be worked out later” (P. 223). But, as in previous decades, the newly-elected cabinet the following year was faced with divisions that put focus on power struggle rather than solving the country’s economic and political problems.

The parliamentary regimes of 1965 and 1969 were thus characterized by chaos, intrigue and lack of purpose. The successive governments representing the traditional parties and groups failed to carry out what they set out to do. Crisis followed crisis and their impotence became obvious (Beshir 1974: 226).

It wasn’t until 1969 that a significant change in the political atmosphere was seen. Initiated by the Free Officers Movement, a revolution defeated the neo-Mahdists and turned over political power to “a group of young officers and radical progressive civilians” (Beshir 1974: ix). The strength of this new power was appreciated in 1971
when the July 19, 1971 coup d'etat was defeated in a matter of days. Beshir describes this ruling group: “The old regime has been shattered. New alliances are being made and consolidated. A new set-up with new values is in the making. The Sudan has traveled a long way from the days of 1956 or 1958, or even 1964” (1974: ix).

So while the north of Sudan was busy with internal politics, as time passed, a number of factors had been contributing to north-south relations and differences. Of great importance was Northern Sudan’s relationship to Egypt. In 1952, Egypt had its own revolution. Many Sudanese attended school in and adopted ideologies from Egypt. Ideas of Arab nationalism and Socialism was not only widespread in Egypt, but among Northern Sudanese as well (Beshir 1974: x). Sudan’s Free Officers Movement itself was inspired by the movement of the same name in Egypt, and the May 1969 revolution was inspired by the policies and ideas of Gamal Abdel Nasser (P. xi).

In relation to Southern Sudan, writing the preface in 1971, Beshir did see a dialectical relationship with the north, the politics in the north effected the south, and the south itself influencing the politics as well (P. xi). But, he took Egypt influence to be the major determiner of the destiny not only of Sudan, but other neighboring regions as well.

With the people in the north of Sudan having been raised with Egyptian influence, Egyptian education and ideals even, they welcomed to a large degree Egyptian influence. But the lives of the millions of people in southern Sudan had not been shaped by this Egyptian ideology. So the author Beshir’s comment that continued Egyptian influence (Egyptianization) would be certain - the expected norm - in shaping the future of a potential united Sudan (even if he seems to allow room for the south to influence the overall politics of its own country) points to the potential for long, continued conflict.
This is representative of a common occurrence that has exacerbated the conflict: the Arab-Muslim north imposing its way of life on the mainly non-Arab, non-Muslim south.

In contrast to the 15 years of independence described above, an agreement was reached in 1972 that led to 10 years without war and a level of self-rule. This was the Addis Ababa Agreement. Southerners were given “wide regional autonomy on internal matters” (Background Note 2004). The Prime Minister during this time was Col. Gaafar Muhammad Nimeiri, who was the coup leader that gained power in 1969. In 1977 he met with a party that had a bloody but unsuccessful coup attempt the previous year, the Ansars, and made reconciliation (Background Note 2004).

A potentially good offshoot of the conditions created by the Addis Ababa Agreement occurred in 1982. The North announced autonomy for the South and established the Ministry of Southern Affairs, with a Southern minister to coordinate (more so than to initiate) programs and activities relating to the south. The government called for Southern involvement in shaping the theory of autonomy and participating in its implementation. Nationwide Socialism was presented as the mode of autonomy. Some refugees returned. The government even voiced its intention to proceed with development in the south in the midst of destruction incurred by the rebels. These initiatives were welcomed hopefully by southerners. But as the years passed without evidence of significant change in the area of southern autonomy, violence between the northern government and the rebels returned and intensified (Deng 1984).

Deng criticizes most of the Ministry of Southern Affairs officials for “not [knowing] precisely what [autonomy] means” as an obstacle to implementation of autonomy (P. 141). Additionally, the duality of “the Government’s demand for peace
before development and the rebels’ demand for a political settlement before they will halt the insurrection” (P. 141) made matters worse.

Then, in 1983, Prime Minister Nimeiri made a series of decisions that inflamed conflict in Sudan like never before. He incorporated traditional Islamic punishments taken from Shari’a (Islamic Law) into the penal code, which includes sanctions such as amputation for theft and public lashings for alcohol possession (Background Note 2004). Criticized even by some Muslims, this law was a serious imposition on the lives of the mainly non-Muslim southerners. The result was a reemergence of the civil war that had been in remission since the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement. Also under Shari’a, only Muslims (including those “willing” to convert to Islam) could hold significant positions of leadership and have a role in controlling wealth in their own land (Spaulding & Beswick 2000). This was a violation of the Addis Ababa Agreement.

The concomitance of these events with the discovery of oil in southern pastoral Nuer and Dinka territories the same year (Spaulding & Beswick 2000) cannot be ignored, especially when read in light of other events during this time. While slavery had been officially abolished in the Sudan in 1924, it was revived in the 1980s by the Prime Minister as a means of quelling revolts in the south. Militias were funded, who participated in “raiding parties [that] seized civilian men, women, and children and kept them in servitude” (Connell 2000).

Since 1983, the government of Sudan has followed a policy of “istaamil al-abid anyaqtalu al-abid” (use the [Southern Sudanese] slaves to kill the slaves” (Spaulding & Beswick 2000, xviii). Additionally, famine was used as a tool for genocide. Southern Sudanese who had fled their homes to escape raids at the hands of the northern
government and its militias were often in precarious situations.

These events quickly led to people of southern Sudan finding all expressions of northern power delegitimize. The primary manifestation of the south’s de-legitimization of northern power was the development of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), founded by a Dinka man named John Garang. This movement had the symbolic capital to begin responding to the illegitimate expression of power: a large gathering of followers dedicated to the cause of expelling northern governance. Southerners, who were largely poor and living in rural areas, were realizing that they were being “treated differently, unequally” (Akol 2004). This symbolic capital was accompanied by economic capital: the SPLM’s corollary, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). Garang had an agreement with Ethiopian leader Magestu Ali Miriam that allowed him to store a mounting weapons stockpile there. Many went to Ethiopia to train for the SPLA (Akol 2004).

How do these competing military capitals – the northern government-funded military and the southern SPLA – weigh against each other? Today, the northern government’s Sudan People’s Armed Forces consists of 100,000 people, a small air force and navy. The U.S. Department of State reports that the Sudanese Government is able to carry out its war aims against the SPLA

without employing former rebel and Arab militias to fight in support of regular troops. … Oil revenues have allowed the government to purchase modern weapons systems, including Hind helicopter gun ships, natov medium bombers, MiG23 fighter aircraft, mobile artillery pieces, and light assault weapons (Background Note 2004).

So for much of the armed conflict between the northern (mainly Arab Muslim) government and the southern (mainly Black Christian and animist) SPLA the north had the advantage in terms of economic capital. In addition to the northern government
needing the economic capital of military stockpiles in order to exercise power, the accomplishment of this actual violence (such as military raids) requires symbolic capital. Soldiers had to find this exercise of violence legitimate. Army officers and government policy-makers (such as President Beshir) had to convince people to engage in violence. One type of symbolic capital used to accomplish this has been religious capital. It has been successful in motivating people to express power over others by “connecting religious beliefs and practices to the interest of those who produce and administer them” (Swartz 1996). For the Islamic northern government, religion has been a powerful source of capital. With Islam being the religion of the state and a majority of the citizens being Muslims, when those in positions of power in the government promulgate action as part of religion, it helps to legitimize action that the people might otherwise find unacceptable. Simple phrases that can generalize sources of symbolic capital of this sort would be: we need the resources of the south; they need to be Muslims; we need to quell the rebellion. From here, violence is viewed as legitimate.

In addition to religion, race has also been used as symbolic capital. At times, race has even superposed religion. Northerners who viewed southerners as being a different race than themselves, even if both were Muslims, found the use of violence and exploitation over them legitimate. During the civil war, non-Arab people groups have been continually exploited by northerners, regardless of religion. For example, from 1989-1991, government forces and their allied militias burned villages of Black Nubians Muslims, killing thousands. From 1992 onward, they destroyed fields, livestock and food resources in order to inflict famine to wage genocide. As the Nubians were driven away, the government began large-scale mechanized agriculture on their land (Spaulding &
Beswick 2000). Here, the government’s use of religious, racial and military capital enabled them to expel the Nubians from their land and be able to obtain the resources.

The SPLA and the Khartoum government fought for strongholds in southern towns and cities, engaging in all out war. By 1985 the humanitarian situation in Sudan was desperate: fuel and food shortages, drought, famine, refugees’ difficulties and growing insurgency (Background Note 2004). Under the Criminal Act of 1991 Shari’a was expanded, instituting harsher punishments, such as stoning. The creation of Public Order Police allowed this act to be applied to non-Muslims in the north and the south (Background Note 2004).

A short vignette is necessary at this point to illustrate the lethality and horror of this war:

The raiders (actually pro-government militias) still plague the [southern] region – charging in on horseback just before dawn armed with Kalashnikovs, killing the men, stealing the women and children. People live here in a state of permanent red alert – poised to run off into the bush at the sound of [horses'] hooves or the drone of a plane. … John Wijial used his walking stick to imitate the rockets being fired at his house, killing two of his children. The government, he explained, had found oil in the ground beneath his village. “They want the oil,” he said. “But they don’t want us.” He hitched up his tattered clothes to show… where the shrapnel had cut into his thigh. He [had] limped through the bush for five days to bring his family to safety (Harding 2001).

Occurrences like this are not isolated cases. The northern Sudan government has been accused of civilian bombing, slave raids, bans on relief flights and genocide (Hentoff 2002). Official documents, though, put blame on both sides of the conflict for the horrible situations of, for example, famine:

the United Nations estimated that as of July there were 2.6 million people at risk of starvation in Sudan, out of a total population of about 27 million. This famine was caused and is now being perpetuated by human rights abuses by all parties to the civil war... (Rone 1999: 1).
Up to the present, agreements have been attempted, political factions have complicated matters on both sides, making the conflict ever more multi-faceted (Background Note 2004). In 1988, the SPLA in the south and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in the north agreed to a cease-fire; but it was repudiated the following year by the military government that took over. Another cease-fire in 1989 also broke down. Peace initiatives by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 1994 failed because important aspects of reaching peace were not addressed (such as “the relationship between religion and the state, powersharing, wealthsharing, and the right of self-determination for the south”) (Background Note 2004).

Perhaps it is because the latest agreement was reached just two years ago, but the United States Department of the State calls the July 2002 Machakos Protocol “a historic agreement on the role of state and religion and the right of southern Sudan to self-determination” (Background Note 2004). A formal protocol has not yet been signed, but both sides signed a memorandum of understanding that called for “a cessation of hostilities and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas of the country... which both parties largely have respected” (Background Note 2004). A complication to this potential resolution of conflict is the mid-2003 emergence of major conflict in the western Darfur region.

The history of the Sudan is complex and extensive. Being situated thousands of years after the region’s first conflicts, the dilemma that faces Sudanese and non-Sudanese alike is how to resolve the present conflict. How could the struggle have escalated to the point of such long-term running death and destruction? It seems irrational. But whether
or not people’s actions are perceived as rational, they are rational to those who perform them. Perspectives on culture, power and capital within the social world and what guides people’s seemingly irrational actions are helpful in understanding the events of the conflict.

Although it is somewhat of a simplification, it is possible to divide the multiple interpretations of “where to go now” into two categories: the war to continue or the war to stop. If the war were to stop, there would be a cessation of death, destruction and expenditure of war resources for those involved on both sides. But for either side to lay down arms, each has demands to which the other must first consent. Southerners will not stop fighting unless they are guaranteed that they will be given what they have requested, demanded and now been fighting for since Sudan’s independence. This includes equality, a government within which they have representation and the freedom to live, religiously or otherwise, as they desire. The north will not stop fighting unless there is a guarantee that all economic investment in the south will not be lost. Sudan has 631.5 million bbl in oil reserves, many of which are in the south (CIA 2003). Considerable quantities of oil and natural gas reserves are believed to exist in southern Sudan (Background Note: Sudan 2004).

Willingness to concede involves reasonable guarantee that what one sacrifices (the cost of conceding) will be outweighed by what is gained (the profit). In the case of this conflict, no one side will concede (pay a cost) unless it is known that a net of benefit will be had in the end (profit) (Ritzer 2003: 165). In this way, the actors are engaging in social exchange as they choose which action to take. George Homans called this type of strategizing Exchange Theory (Ritzer 2003: 160-166). Individuals attempt to maximize
their outcomes. To avoid or reduce conflict, a compromise is necessary. In a compromise, the net of one side is less than if there were no compromise and only one side benefited. However, total benefit, the net of each side, is greater. In order for such a settlement to materialize, all involved parties must concede.

What has history shown in regard to the likelihood of such a consensus occurring? In 1988, an agreement was reached between John Garang (leader of the SPLA/M) and Muhammad Uthman al Mirghani (head of the Democratic Unionist Party and spiritual leader of the Khatmiyyah religious order). Mirghani was willing to compromise on the issue of Sharia, and many northern groups supported the agreement. But it was opposed by the National Islamic Front (NIF), who led a coup the following year and took control of the government, preventing any productive outcome of the agreement (Southern Sudan 1991: 2).

The Garang-Mirghani agreement, the Addis Ababa agreement and the others show that parties involved in the conflict have been willing to make concessions and consensuses. But the conflict is still happening today; the result of “peace agreements” has not been enduring peace. This is a simple deduction, one of which every person in Sudan is aware. The continued conflict in spite of agreements is a part of their lives and a fact that shapes the way that they act. People involved in the conflict have reason to be suspect of any agreement or peace accord. Thus, decisions to “continue the war” are rational as well. Further, the means actors choose to reach their aims (whether it is quelling the rebellion in the south so that security and control can be achieved, or achieving freedom and independence) by continuing the war is rational. These actors would consider their actions to be practical, that is, the most expedient way of reaching
the desired goal.

In addition to understanding the decision of “continue fighting” as being a rational and practical means to achieving a goal, the actions of these “fighters” should be understood as based on the meaning the actors have assigned to the situation of failed peace accords. The reality may or may not be that peace accords have been guided by intentions of peace. But because the result has never been lasting peace, phrases such as “peace accord” have come to mean something else. Rather than meaning “peace,” it has come to mean “a lie,” “a trick” or “an attempt to make us give up.” Less important is the intention of any peace agreement; what matters in reality is how actors perceive the agreement. If a person involved in the conflict defines the situation of a peace accord recently being signed as “just another attempt to get us to back down so that they can get the upper hand,” then it is this definition that he or she will act on. Dorothy S. and W.I. Thomas’ theory of Definition of the Situation explains that “if people define situations as real, then those definitions are real in their consequences” (Ritzer 2003: 60).

Actors in the conflict responding to the signing of a peace accord in a “non-peaceful” manner may seem irrational. The simplistic reading of such events would be that the actors did not want peace, did not want the death and suffering to end, or even, that they kill just to kill. Perhaps such an explanation accounts for the motivations of a minority of those involved. But a better assessment of this event would consider how the actors have defined the situation of a cease-fire recently being signed. If, for these people, “cease-fire” has meant “tricking us into laying down our weapons so that our families are vulnerable and get attacked,” then the attack must not (primarily) be explained as “we’re choosing to violate the cease-fire because we do not want the war to
stop” but (at least to some degree) as “we will not let our people be killed again on account of a lie.” According to Max Weber, actions must be understood as rational: the result of people’s conscious processes (Ritzer 2003, 45-47).

Before hopes to resolve conflict can even be expressed, the actions of those involved must be viewed as rational. This paper has used theories of power, capital and resource attainment to elucidate these actions in a manner that is helpful in understanding the general entity of conflict. Additionally, this paper has utilized Exchange Theory and Definition of the Situation to demonstrate how more specific actions of people involved in conflict can be understood as rational. These joint endeavors show that actors in conflict cannot be dismissed as irrational. All actors should be addressed as reasoning persons possessing mindsets worth considering as conflict is attempted to be resolved.
Appendix A: Ancient Sudan

3: THE EGYPTIAN SUDAN

Holt 1988: 240

Mahdi 1965: 2
Appendix B: Modern Sudan

5: THE MODERN SUDAN

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Holt 1988: 242
Appendix C: Christian Kingdoms of Nubia

Christian Kingdoms of Nubia

Mahdi 1965: 22
Appendix D: North-South Demarcation


Minear 1991: 1
Appendix E: The Funj kingdom

THE FUNJ KINGDOM OF SENNAR
Names of places, mountains, tribes, etc., mentioned in the text.

Mahdi 1965: 38
Appendix F: The Mahdist State

Mahdi 1965: 103
References

Books


Electronic Sources


**Article**


**Interviews**


**Other**