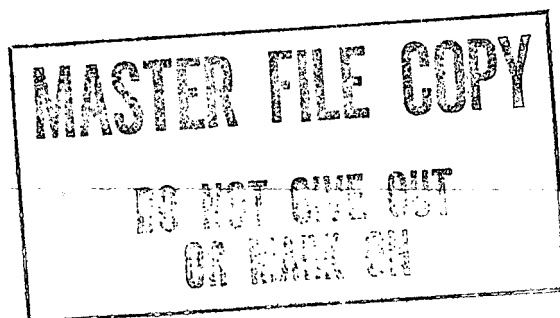




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Sudan's South: Dilemmas for Nimeiri

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An Intelligence Assessment

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*NESA 82-10545
October 1982*

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Sudan's South: Dilemmas for Nimeiri

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An Intelligence Assessment

This assessment was prepared by [redacted]
Office of Near East-South Asia Analysis. Comments
and queries are welcome and may be directed to
the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [redacted]

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This paper has been coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations and the National
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Sudan's South: Dilemmas for Nimeiri

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 16 August 1982
was used in this report.*

The deteriorating situation in Sudan's isolated and severely underdeveloped Southern Region has potentially ominous implications for the stability of President Nimeiri's moderate, pro-Western regime. A combination of social, economic, political, and security difficulties plagues the South, and Nimeiri appears to have few options available to resolve the Region's pressing problems. Continued unrest, which undermines Nimeiri's position and further emboldens his Libyan and Ethiopian adversaries, is probable. Nimeiri's hold on power depends on the loyalty of the military, moreover, and its allegiance could be weakened by any increase in southern discontent that would require prolonged, large-scale intervention by the armed forces.

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Conflicts have long existed between the Muslim-dominated central government and the southerners, who are mostly black and either Christian or animist. Southern resentment over northern exploitation and neglect is widespread. Nimeiri gained considerable prestige by negotiating an end to the southern rebellion that raged from 1955 to 1972, but in recent years he has lost some of the respect he once enjoyed in the South.

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Prospects for rapid economic improvement in the South are remote. Development has stagnated, the standard of living may have declined in the past decade, and the funds needed for basic investment are not available. Recently discovered oil reserves may lead more to political tension than to economic development, as southerners perceive that their resources are being exploited by the government in the North.

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Infighting among southern politicians, which is rooted in tribal and factional animosities, aggravates the dismal economic situation, and there is little doubt that political conflict will continue. The newly elected government of the Southern Region is based on a shaky coalition whose opponents will probably seek to undermine its stability whenever possible.

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Adding to the Region's problems is an armed insurgency that Libya and Ethiopia are actively supporting in an effort to subvert the Nimeiri regime. Libyan-trained southern dissidents are being infiltrated into Sudan from camps in Ethiopia, and they have launched sporadic attacks in the South. Discontent among southerners could swell dissident ranks, a development that probably would precipitate a Sudanese request for increased Egyptian and perhaps US military assistance.

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Sudan's South: Dilemmas for Nimeiri

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Geographical, cultural, and economic factors have made the Southern Region of Sudan a distinct and isolated area of the country. The predominantly black, non-Muslim southerners have long felt neglected by the central government in Khartoum and have viewed the country's Muslim leaders with mistrust. Current conditions in the South, most notably political instability and Libyan-Ethiopian-backed subversion efforts, are combining with this bitter historical legacy to produce serious challenges for Sudanese President Gaafar Nimeiri. A further deterioration in the situation will undermine Nimeiri's position and provide his foreign enemies with a more vulnerable target for subversion.

Mistrust and Resentment Toward the North

Southern resentment toward the North dates from at least 1820, when a Turko-Egyptian regime conquered Sudan. Punitive expeditions, which were mounted against tribes that refused to accept the new administration, disrupted traditional life and deeply embittered southerners. A profitable slave trade was developed by European traders and their Arab cohorts in Khartoum, and the violence and cruelty that it fostered have not been forgotten in the South. After Anglo-Egyptian armies took control of Sudan in 1898, Christian missionaries kept the slavery issue alive by telling southerners that northern Muslims were responsible.

British economic policy in Sudan also served to widen the gap between the North and South. British officials based in Khartoum argued vigorously against putting northern resources directly into southern development, and consequently little money was allocated for the region.

Sudan became independent in 1956, with the South included in a federal structure, but the region was only barely integrated into the new state. The long-festering discontent subsequently exploded into a secessionist rebellion that many southerners supported; others remained loyal to a united Sudan but favored southern autonomy. By 1963 widespread resistance to the central government had developed.



President Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri

Africa Report ©

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For several years the southern rebels, known as the Anya Nya, tended to live in the bush in relatively autonomous bands, unwilling to accept an overall command structure. The situation changed between 1969 and 1971, however, when the Anya Nya united under Joseph Lagu, a talented young officer who had defected from the Sudanese armed forces in 1964. Under Lagu's leadership, the guerrilla insurgency became increasingly effective. Large amounts of military equipment were supplied by Israel, which contended that the rebellion was tying down the army of then-radical President Nimeiri, who had assumed power in a coup in May 1969. In January 1971, Lagu formed the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement as the political wing of the Anya Nya.

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Geographic and Ethnic Factors

The six southern provinces—Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes, and Jonglei—cover 250,000 square miles, or about one-fourth of the area of Sudan. The approximately 7 million southerners represent a third of Sudan's population. There are about 200 tribes and subtribes in the South that make up the basic social structure. Anthropologists have classified these tribes into three main groups: the Nilotic, the Nilo-Hamitic, and the Sudanic. One Nilotic tribe, the Dinka, has over 1 million members and constitutes the largest single tribe in the region. Intertribal animosity is a fact of life there. Disputes over grazing and water rights are common, and droughts that compel tribal migrations create tension and conflict.

With the prospect of a costly military stalemate facing his government, Nimeiri began secret negotiations with the southerners, offering them regional autonomy, separate administrative services, a legislature, and local elections. Nimeiri's opponents in the North attacked the negotiations as a "sellout," but in February 1972 he outflanked them by declaring an early cease-fire, announcing the terms of a settlement in a public rally, and publishing the agreement as law even though it had not been ratified by the two sides. The President's gamble paid off in March 1972, when Lagu flew to Addis Ababa to ratify the agreement on behalf of the South. He then accepted a position as major general in the Sudanese armed forces and was charged with overseeing the integration of former rebels into the Army.

The Addis Ababa agreement granted the South "autonomous" status within a unified Sudan. Legislative power in the South was to be exercised by an elected People's Regional Assembly, which in turn selected the president of the regional government. The regional president serves as chairman of the South's High

Executive Council (HEC) and is answerable to the regional assembly and the national president. Abel Alier, a member of the Dinka tribe and Sudan's Second Vice President at the time, was appointed provisional head of the southern government immediately after the Addis Ababa agreement and was subsequently elected as the first HEC president 18 months later.

Lack of Economic Development

Peace brought a greater degree of stability to the South but so far has failed to generate improved economic conditions. US AID officials believe that development is stagnant, and the standard of living in the South may actually be declining. Shortages and a flourishing black market have developed. In January 1982 the head of the provisional southern regional government spoke of "the stagnation in material services and the miserable deterioration in the condition of our people" that had occurred in the decade since the Addis Ababa accord.

Industrial development in the South is almost nonexistent. A basic problem is the lack of infrastructure, particularly of transportation (see table). Although several projects were planned for the South in the early 1970s, almost all of them remain on paper. Projects that exist suffer from shortages that severely hamper their operations. The large industrial complex of the Nzara Agricultural Production Corporation near Yambio, for example, operated only 120 days between April 1981 and April 1982 because of the lack of fuel, spare parts, and raw materials. Employment opportunities are limited.

The agricultural sector produces little beyond subsistence needs in most of the South.¹ Severe climatic conditions, such as floods and droughts, create periodic food shortages, and the lack of adequate transportation prevents relief from reaching famine-stricken citizens during poor harvest seasons and produce from getting to market during good crop years. Veterinary service is sporadic at best, and among cattle-raising

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**Social and Economic Indicators:
Sudan and the Southern Region**

	Sudan	Southern Region
Area	2.5 million km ²	650,000 km ²
Population	19,860,000	7,000,000 (approx.)
Religion	73 percent Muslim; 23 percent animist; 4 percent Christian	Elites are Christian; majority animist
Per capita GNP	\$300 (US)	\$80 (US)
Paved roads	1,800 km	5 to 10 km
Railroads	5,516 km	250 km
Principal airfields	16	3
Existing electric power plants	21	3
Planned electric power plants	39	6
Population per physician	10,880	116,667
Population per hospital bed	960	3,500
Primary school enrollment (percent)	34	20
Secondary school enrollment (percent)	14	1

tribes, diseases sometimes devastate herds. Traditions impede improvements in agriculture and cattle-raising. For example, the prestige of tribesmen may depend on the number of cows owned; to sell half of a herd reduces one's status accordingly.

Southern resentment has been deepened by the controversy over the central government's decision in 1981 to build a small refinery at the city of Kosti in the North rather than at Bentiu in the South, which is closer to newly discovered oilfields. Southerners were not convinced by the economic and technical reasons behind the decision and saw the choice of Kosti as a deliberate northern effort to deprive the South of its natural resources. When the southern regional government dispatched "Enlightenment Committees" to explain the decision, several were shouted down, and serious disturbances occurred in southern towns. Although the central government and the Chevron Oil

Company agreed to increase investment in the South, provide training in the oil industry to southerners, and improve the distribution of oil products in the region, most southerners remained skeptical. Ironically, the US Embassy reported in late August 1982 that Nimeiri had decided to drop the idea of a refinery altogether and build instead an export pipeline from Kosti to Port Sudan. The President sacrificed a great deal of political capital in the South on a decision that has since been annulled.

As Chevron continues its investment—the company has spent over \$300 million in Sudan since 1975—and Sudan moves closer to becoming a modest oil exporter later in the decade, southern resentment could escalate. Charges that the North is draining away oil that rightfully belongs to the South are likely to intensify. If significant reserves of oil are found in the South, the idea of an independent southern Sudan might reemerge because of its economic feasibility. Such a situation could create an even greater challenge for Nimeiri than he has faced in the past.

Inadequate Social Services

Basic social services, such as education and health care, face enormous difficulties. Because qualified teachers and textbooks are in short supply, students who graduate do so with a "half baked" education, in the words of the regional Minister of Education. He believes that the government's stated goal of universal literacy in the Region by 1990 should be scaled down to 45 percent. Beds and essential medicines are unavailable for hospitals because of a lack of funds, and there are only 60 doctors for the South's population of 7 million. The judicial system is in disarray because northern judges who had been serving in the South either transferred out of the Region or resigned because of poor living conditions. Consequently, the only courts of law are located in the regional capital of Juba and the cities of Malakal and Wau, and prisons are filled with those awaiting trial.

Political Instability

Political intrigue and infighting in the South have been endemic since autonomy was granted in 1972. Concern that government ineffectiveness was intensifying North-South divisions prompted President Nimeiri to shuffle the southern leadership several times

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Former Vice President Abel Alier

Camera Press ©



Second Vice President Joseph Lagu

Arabia ©

over the past decade. Tribal and political rivalries, including the persistent competition between the Region's two most prominent political figures, Abel Alier and Joseph Lagu, have added to political turmoil in the Region. [REDACTED]

The Addis Ababa agreement created a system with overlapping powers for the central and regional governments that has promoted discord. According to open source studies, southerners have viewed some of these arrangements as encroachments by the central government on their autonomy. The regional government has been particularly sensitive to charges that it is controlled by Khartoum, an allegation frequently leveled by southern politicians who are out of power. [REDACTED]

While structural problems are serious, complex political rivalries among southern groups and politicians are at least equally damaging to political stability and governmental effectiveness. Soon after the Addis

Ababa agreement, the split between southerners who had remained loyal to the Khartoum government during the southern rebellion and those who had fought for secession took on a new shape. The former group, associated with the Nilotic tribes, included Alier as one of its leading spokesmen and was divided into two major political factions—the Southern Front and the Sudan African National Union (SANU). [REDACTED]

The ex-rebels, of whom Lagu was the most prominent, created the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and had demonstrated their willingness to fight against northern domination. In addition to this split in southern solidarity, tribal identity has become a central factor in southern politics. Issues have increasingly been viewed in "Dinka" versus "non-Dinka" terms. Alier is a Dinka, Lagu a member of the Madi tribe from Eastern Equatoria. [REDACTED]

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The rivalry between Alier and Lagu grew during the 1970s as the two vied for the southern presidency and control of the regional assembly. Throughout the 1970s the rival groups hurled accusations of incompetence and corruption at each other, while North-South tensions boiled over on a variety of issues, especially those concerning "Arabization" or "Islamization" of the South. US Embassy and other reporting indicated that southerners were especially upset by Khartoum's advocacy of Arabic as the teaching language in Sudan's schools, and over the possibility that *sharia* or Islamic law might be implemented throughout the country. Emotional issues such as these produced periodic turmoil that forced Nimeiri to intervene. He dissolved the southern assemblies, called for new elections, and pushed alternately for Alier or Lagu as HEC president. [REDACTED]

Lagu's Redivision Plan: More Political Conflict

In early 1981 Lagu, who had lost the southern presidency to Alier a year earlier, proposed changing the southern governmental structure by replacing the six provinces with three regions. Although he claimed this alteration would improve governmental efficiency, we believe Lagu's real objective in proposing the redivision plan was to weaken Alier and his Dinka supporters, who have traditionally dominated the South. Nimeiri endorsed Lagu's proposal, probably because he shared Lagu's concern that Dinka dominance in the South was adding to the region's problems. In spite of Nimeiri's support, the plan provoked a political uproar in the South. Relations between Dinkas and non-Dinka tribes became increasingly strained. [REDACTED]

Faced with widespread strife over an issue that he had hoped would produce a calmer atmosphere, Nimeiri abruptly issued a decree in October dissolving Alier's southern regional government and the southern regional assembly. He appointed Gasmallah Rassas, an army general, to head a six-month interim government that was to prepare for new elections and a referendum to decide the redivision issue. [REDACTED]

Because of continued southern opposition to redivision, however, Nimeiri reversed his position in a speech on 22 February and called for a compromise to

Southern Political Scene

Major Factions^a

Southern Front	<i>Associated with Abel Alier and the Dinka tribe</i>
Sudan African National Union	<i>Associated with non-Dinka Nilotics</i>
Joseph Lagu Faction	<i>Associated with the old Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and Equatorian tribes</i>

Chronology

1956	<i>Sudan gains independence</i>
1963	<i>Southern rebellion intensifies</i>
1971	<i>Joseph Lagu forms the SSLM</i>
1972	<i>Addis Ababa agreement ends southern rebellion</i>
1973	<i>Abel Alier becomes southern regional president</i>
1978	<i>Lagu elected southern president</i>
1980	<i>Alier regains presidency</i>
January 1981	<i>Lagu proposes redivision plan; supported by Nimeiri</i>
October 1981	<i>Provisional military government appointed</i>
February 1982	<i>Nimeiri reverses position on redivision issue</i>
June 1982	<i>Joseph Tambura elected southern president; Lagu replaces Alier as national Second Vice President</i>

^a These factions are technically merged in the Sudanese Socialist Union, the only legal political party in Sudan, but loyalty to them has never disappeared.

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increase local authority within the framework of a single, undivided southern region. A committee to explore "greater autonomy" was to be formed, and elections for the new southern assembly were scheduled. Militant prodvisionists staged demonstrations in Eastern and Western Equatoria Provinces to protest the reversal, but Nimeiri stood firm. []

Campaigning for the assembly elections proceeded vigorously as various factions and politicians maneuvered under the cloud of the redivision issue. In early June results were announced that paralleled pre-1972 political splits in the South. Three major groups garnered seats: the Southern Front won 50; SANU, 25; and the Equatorians led by Lagu, 35. As the election for southern president approached, several candidates emerged from the three groups, but none appeared to have a decisive edge. []

Tambura and Lagu: Equatorians Riding High

On 23 June, Lagu supporter Joseph Tambura, a member of the Azande tribe, the largest in Western Equatoria, was elected president of the southern High Executive Council. According to US Embassy reporting, non-Dinka Nilotics had united with Equatorians to elect Tambura. Dinka candidates associated with the Southern Front faction, including Alier, were dealt a stunning blow. []

In another dramatic move, Nimeiri dismissed Alier from his position as Sudanese Second Vice President and named Lagu to succeed him. []

[] the combination of Tambura's victory and Lagu's appointment convinced many that Nimeiri had decided to press ahead with the redivision issue. "Unity" proponents appeared weak and in disarray. []

The US Embassy believes that Nimeiri now realizes that the greatest immediate threat to stability in the South would be heavy central government pressure to implement Lagu's plan. Tambura's government, therefore, is likely to pursue decentralization policies cautiously, such as by giving increased authority to provincial and local committees, as is sanctioned by Sudan's local government act of 1981. []

The Threat of Subversion

Over the past several months the Sudanese Government has become increasingly concerned about the security situation in the South. [] Dissident southerners, including many who have received Libyan-supplied training and weaponry in camps located in Ethiopia, have infiltrated Sudanese territory and mounted a series of attacks against towns, army garrisons, and police stations. Despite the hit-and-run nature of these attacks, the Nimeiri government fears that Libyan and Ethiopian efforts to exploit southern grievances will continue and could create a serious security threat in the South. []

The Sudanese armed forces have responded fairly effectively to dissident activity thus far, although they are hampered by severe maintenance, logistic, and supply difficulties. Nimeiri told the US Ambassador in mid-August that with the aid of helicopters, including two Soviet-built MI-8s that were supplied by the Egyptian military in July, the armed forces had the situation in hand. []

Specific information about the composition and strength of the dissident forces in the South is difficult to obtain because of the Region's isolation. []

[] a total of 700 armed dissidents were active in the South. Most, or some 500, are thought to be members of the so-called New Anya Nya (NAN). About a third of NAN personnel are former members of the Sudanese Army who mutinied in 1974 and either fled to Ethiopia or went into hiding in southern Sudan. Recent NAN recruits are believed to be former Sudanese policemen and soldiers dismissed from duty at the beginning of this year. []

Potential targets for dissident attacks include agricultural and development projects, Chevron's oil exploration facilities, and river traffic between Juba and Kosti. Several serious incidents have occurred during this summer's rainy season, when it was difficult for the armed forces to respond quickly to the widely scattered attacks. A particularly successful dissident

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operation was the capture in late June of the town of Adok, which is over 200 kilometers inside Sudanese territory. The occupation lasted only two days, and the 200 attackers withdrew under sporadic assaults by Sudanese units [redacted]

High-level Sudanese officials believe that Libyan leader Qadhafi, who has long plotted to overthrow the Sudanese regime, regards the South as a prime area for subversion. Chairman Mengistu of Ethiopia, while not sharing Qadhafi's intense personal antipathy for Nimeiri, resents Sudan's harboring and active support of Ethiopian rebels. We believe he perceives this as part of a US effort to undermine his regime. He has attempted to intimidate Khartoum by providing training areas and facilities for Libyan-supported Sudanese dissidents. Both northern and southern Sudanese receive training by Libyans in these camps. [redacted]

This subversive activity has yet to attract widespread support in the South. [redacted]

southerners who join the dissidents are motivated more by boredom than by ideology and that the population will not support the dissidents if it can be demonstrated that Libya and Ethiopia are behind the rebels' activity. The Sudanese Government has been attempting to make that connection and on 8 August announced that a "Libyan-led plot in collusion with an African country" had been discovered in the South. [redacted]

Nonetheless, there is an awareness among Sudanese officials of the South's vulnerability to subversion. [redacted]

[redacted] Political rivalries among the southerners are certainly exploitable by outside forces. Also, the isolation and increased lawlessness in the South have produced a heavy illicit arms traffic, which has led to violence and official corruption. Finally, the generally dismal economic and social conditions of the Region are a constant irritant to southerners. [redacted]

Serious problems plague Sudan's major military unit in the South, the 1st Division. US Embassy reporting indicates that Southerners, who constitute more than half of the force, believe that they are discriminated against because of the tendency to promote along regional lines and especially by the use of Arabic at the Armed Forces Command and Staff College. The use of Arabic in entry examinations virtually excludes the predominantly English-speaking southern officer corps from the staff officer course, a requirement for promotion to colonel. [redacted]

[redacted] northern military commanders, who apparently have little confidence in the 1st Division, are aggravating the situation by sending northern units into the South to conduct antidissident operations. The southern officials fear that northern troops will not take sufficient care to distinguish between dissidents and innocent villagers. Southerners are also nervous about rumors that Egyptian troops will be asked to deploy to the South if the situation deteriorates. Old fears of Egyptian and Arab penetration would be reawakened if Nimeiri took such a step, and popular hostility might be transformed into further resistance to the central government. [redacted]

Outlook

Nimeiri's moderate regime in Sudan, a country of political and strategic importance to the United States, will continue to face a number of serious problems, including the difficult and potentially dangerous situation in the South. A renewal of the 17-year-long civil war that ended in 1972 appears unlikely in the near term. Any significant increase in southern dissidence, however, could force Nimeiri to deploy additional military forces to the area. Prolonged involvement in an antisubversive campaign could damage military morale and eventually weaken the loyalty of the armed forces, Nimeiri's principal power base. [redacted]

The volatile combination of social and economic underdevelopment, political ferment, and a Libyan-Ethiopian-backed insurgency almost certainly will produce continuing instability in the South during the next year. Without the resources to provide effective

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solutions for the Region's many problems, and facing widespread resentment from the southern population, the central government has few options and must hope that the situation will not become dangerous. Nimeiri has proved adept at handling southern difficulties in the past, but [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] his popularity and prestige have eroded in recent months. [REDACTED]

The South desperately needs political stability in order to address pressing social and economic problems, but it is too early to judge whether the newly elected southern regional government can provide such a climate. Issues of redivision and decentralization remain extremely volatile, and disputes could easily erupt, once more plunging the south into political disarray. [REDACTED]

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