# Peace Without Unity: The Dilemma of Reconciling Divergent Perspectives in Post-Conflict Sudan

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# Contents

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## 1. Introduction

Maintaining and promoting conflict-ridden Sudan as a unified entity has emerged as a central plank in the agenda of most, if not all, parties to the ongoing political conflict since the 1950s. Indeed, each of the major parties to the conflict perceives its perspective as the only one laying the foundation of reconciliation and unity and accuses other parties of sowing the seeds of disintegration and disunity.

Looked at closely, the issue is more complex than it seems, i.e. not just a dichotomous, black and white characterisation: with unity or against unity. The emerging realignment of forces following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) not only gives a clue to a derailed peace process, but also shows a complex interplay of ethnic-national, social, political, cultural and ideological factors/dimensions in post-CPA Sudan. For example, apparently bitter political foes in the North (sections of the northern hegemonic class, NCP, Umma, DUP, PCP) have underlying ideological affinity when it comes to the question of unity; on the other hand, the CPA-informed alliance between NCP, SPLM and others is threatened by a deep ideological rift on the question of unity and reconciliation.

In these circumstances, it is of ultimate importance to have a clear understanding of what these different groups mean by unity and what they refer to when they point to the dangers of disintegration. The need to examine the different concepts of unity/disunity advocated by the conflicting parties is all the more important since, in the context of Sudan (and Africa in general), concepts of integration and unity are premised on recognising the diversity(ies) of the country. In their manifestos and charters, parties to the conflict generally begin by asserting and emphasising the diversity of Sudan before they proceed to give their account of how to deal with the question of unity. Hence, concepts of unity thereby advanced necessarily refer to relations binding various elements and parts together within a single whole. We shall consider below how some of these concepts endeavour to construct "unity within diversity" or "unity in differentiation". Certainly, it would be most useful to attempt to unravel the theoretical assumptions underlying the competing concepts, whose function is to construct unity (in differentiation) of a complex social formation. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to define and elucidate the major competing concepts of unity and disunity in Sudan.

It is not the intention here to identify the actual historical tendencies behind the emergence of these concepts. Equally, little attention will be paid to the social forces and movements at work that are capable of consummating/realising these concepts of unity. However, some suggestions will be made in passing as to the nature of these social forces and how each of the competing concepts would deal with the realities of diversity in Sudan.

In its present form, this paper consists of different sections. Section two defines the context of the debate between different approaches to the issue of unity/disunity. In the following sections we will confine our analysis to two concepts only. In section three, we consider one of the two major concepts, "unity in conformity", and how it deals with unity in differentiation and the difficulties encountered in tackling the issue of unity from this perspective. An alternative competing concept, "unity in diversity," is considered in section four, with a suggestion that this alternative is believed to be more adequate than those which have thus far been dominant. The last section gives a general conclusion.

Central to the debate on national integration in Sudan is the fundamental concern whether Sudan can succeed in building (composing) a single united polity (central or federal) or might disintegrate into many smaller entities. This concern has informed and dominated a large body of literature on national integration ever since the outbreak of civil strife in 1955. Most attempts dealing with this issue would firstly give an account of the hurdles in the way of integration. Both in the past and at the present no one could afford to gloss over the exceptionally complex nature of Sudanese society, a complexity often summed up in terms of multiplicity, diversity and multiple marginality. Sudan is said to be a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-religious society.[1]

## 2.1 Elements of Sudanese diversity

An overview of Sudan's diversity is in order if we are to appreciate the debate on national integration. This begins by recognising the ethnic-national element of this diversity. According to the much referred to census of 1955/56, the main ethnic groups are Arabs (39%), Southerners (30%), West Darfur (9%), Beja (6%), West Africans (6%), Nuba (6%), Nubia (3%) and Funj (1.7 %).[2] Other accounts of the ethnic composition of Sudan classify these groups in terms of 19 main nationalities (Majmoua'a Gawmiyya) and 597 ethnic groups (Majmouaa Airgiyya).[3] Yet, socio-economic changes since 1956, together with natural and man-made disasters (desertification, famine and civil war), must have resulted one way or another in some significant changes in the numerical and demographic weight of these ethnic-national groups. On this, the population censuses of 1973 and 1983 remain silent. Yet no one can claim that these changes have obliterated ethnic-national diversities. In peripheral social formations, ethnic-national diversities seem to have staying power and post-colonial developments have actually had the effect of maintaining them.

Ethnic-national diversities have further been sustained by cultural, linguistic, religious, social and political differences. It is reported that there are 115 dialects with 26 of them active spoken languages, each spoken by more than 100,000 people.[4] About 52% of the population are Arabic-speaking while 48% speak other languages.[5] Diversity also expresses itself sharply in religion, with Islam, Christianity and "other religions" professed by different sections of the population. Both

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[1] The designation of the complexity of Sudanese society in multiplicity-diversity terms has steadily gained dominance over accounting for the complexity in the dichotomy of the Arab-Muslim North versus the African-Christian South. See for example Beshir, M.O., & Mohammed Salih, M.A.R., (eds.), The Sudan: Ethnicity and National Cohesion, African Studies Series (Bayreuth, 1984)

[2] According to the 1955/56 census, ethnic groups are described as follows: the Arabs (39%), referring to the mixture of Semitic immigrants and indigenous Hamitic and Negroids; the Southerners (30%), as Nilotic-Nile-Hamitic and Sudanic negroids; West Darfurian (9%), referring to indigenous negroids with some Hamitic and Semitic elements; Beja (6%), indigenous Hamitic; West African (6%); Nuba (6%); indigenous Negroids-Nuba (3%), Negroid mixture with Hamitic and Semitic elements; and Fung (1.7%), as indigenous negroes. See Republic of Sudan, Department of Statistics, First Population Census 1955/56 Final Report 3, Khartoum, 1962, Table 6.8.

[3] Beshir, M.O., On the Unitary State Optimum in Sudan, Proceedings of Arkawit Eleventh Conference on Nation Building In Sudan, Institute of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Khartoum, November 1988.

[4] Ahmed., A. M., Gadaya lil Nigash: fi itar ifregiyat al Sduan was oroubatih. (Issues for Debate within Sudan Afro-Arab Context), Khartoum, University Press, Khartoum, 1988, pp. 17-18.

[5] Al-Ayyam, 24/1/1989.

Christianity and other religions claim the support of significant sections of the population. Religious heterogeneity is further sustained by the prevalence of sectarian cleavages within Islam, the religion of the majority.

An important aspect of the complexity of Sudanese society is the diversity marking familial connections, social structures, cultural outlooks, value systems and gender statuses. These diversities not only affect existing possibilities for social mobility and integration, but have equally direct bearing on moral norms, legal status and notions of identity.[6] Furthermore, there is a diversity of political structures. Historical and anthropological studies have considered aspects relating to the different political structures that historically evolved in different parts of the country. Some groups were known for their local (tribal mekship) authorities while others developed a quasiterritorial and centralised form of rule (sultanates). The highly centralised authoritarian structures of the colonial and postcolonial states added more to the already existing forms of rule.

An element of the complexity of Sudanese society which has often been underrated, if not left out, is that of economic diversity. Whether approached in terms of the nature of its sectors (traditional or modern) or of the nature of activities (subsistence or market-oriented), Sudan's economy is marked by a high degree of heterogeneity. It encompasses different modes and forms of production, different sectors, different activities and different interests relating to different social categories and classes.[7] It is our contention here that an account of the main elements of the diversities of Sudanese society is not adequate without considering the distribution of the population into various occupational categories. This raises important issues requiring further research and close examination,[8] but for the time being it will probably suffice to assert that elements of diversity intersect/interconnect and are articulated at various levels of Sudanese society, with serious implications for the questions of unity and disunity.

In a situation like that of Sudan (as in many African countries), where the process of nation formation has yet to mature, these elements of diversity work much more towards disintegration than integration. In such a context, then, it is only natural to ask what begets unity in a situation of diversity? Indeed, an observer might ask: how come that Sudan, given its diversities and prevalent hostilities, is still holding together?[9] Could it be the economic structure (mode of production) which imposes unity on society? Or is it the efficacy of the political system (the state or political community), and the monopoly of power by one group commanding unity and suppressing dissent? Or is it the existence of an accommodatory and integrative value system at the centre which makes for the sustenance of unity?

## 2.2 Framework for analysis

These questions and other related issues have generally shaped the debate on national integration in Sudan. Taking part in this debate, one historian writing about Sudan during 1898-1956 conceived of the country as literally:

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[6] An-Na'im, A. A., "National Identity and the Diversity of Identities", in Deng, F. & Gifford, P. (eds.), The Search for Peace and Identity in the Sudan, The Wilson Centre Press, Washington, 1987, pp. 71-77.

[7] Like Sudan, many African countries are characterised by ethnic, religious, linguistic, social and economic diversities. Among these are Uganda, Ethiopia, Senegal, South Africa and Nigeria, to mention but a few.

[8] The National Population Censuses of 1973 and 1983 dropped the category of ethnic (tribal) designation, probably in the belief that national integration in post-independence Sudan had rendered this categorisation redundant. However, a number of studies have attempted to challenge this contention. For example, see: Umbadda, S., "Education and the Mismanagement of Sudanese Economy and Society 1954-1989", discussion paper No. 88, Khartoum, October 1990.

[9] The issue of the governability and survivability of Sudan as a state was raised on many occasions. Woodward, P., Staff Seminar, Department of Political Science, University of Khartoum, March 1988.

> ....balkanized world of arrogant and warlike little nations, strutting about belligerently or crouching in surly defensiveness behind some tropical magnet line[10].....

It was the colonial state, then, through its centralised and bureaucratic structures, which kept peace and ensured unity. Though such a conception might have served an ideological purpose for colonial powers, it has some historical and empirical relevance, a relevance which can be attested to in the postcolonial period as well.

Other observers argue that what has bestowed unity on the country and prevented it from falling apart is not the state but the efficacy of the political system at large.[11] Yet, some still do believe that it is the capacity of the dominant culture of the dominant group which is the source of unity and its maintenance in Sudan. What concerns us most here is that in this balkanised plural perspective the emphasis is on groups and political centres.

Later, a new generation of scholars initiated a shift in studies concerned with the unity/disunity debate, a shift of their primary focus from the "real" or "alleged" centres of various communities (groups) to the very boundaries that were presumed to divide them. Consequently, the historical balkanised perspective:

> .... was replaced by one of a complex network of interactions among people in which all manners of economic, political and cultural influences made themselves felt in an intricate web of reciprocal relationships.[12]

From then onwards, the study of Sudanese society and explorations of what unites and divides the people of Sudan gradually moved from preoccupation with <u>groups</u> (regions, centres) to an examination of social processes.[13] Expressed in other terms and with some qualification, it is a shift from focusing on agents to probing into the <u>structures</u> that underlie the activities of these <u>agents</u> (groups or centres).

Given this, a rough classification scheme for studies of the debate on unity/disunity in Sudanese society is provided. With warranted simplifications, one can think of a continuum with one pole for studies focusing on groups, centres and agents, and employing various categories of sociological analysis (such as ethnicity, religion and culture). The other pole of the continuum represents studies on social processes and structures of underdevelopment, peripheral capitalism and state formation, and using political-economic categories of analysis. In between the poles of this continuum, a number of studies have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to synthesise the perspectives of the two poles, employing various categories of analysis, i.e. class, ethnicity and state.[14]

It is not our intention here to elaborate further on this schema of classification; rather, our limited objective is to use it as a broad framework of analysis within which the competing concepts of unity and disunity can be situated. The analytical utility of this framework remains to be established.

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[10] Spaulding, J., "The Hazards of History" in Deng. F. & Figgord (eds.), op. cit., pp. 3-4.
[11] Woodwards. P., op. cit.
[12] Spaulding. J., op. cit., p. 4.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibrahim, A. A., Regional Inequality and Underdevelopment in Western Sudan, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sussex, 1985; El Battahani, A., National Building Between Democracy and Dictatorship, Paper Presented to Erkawit 11th Conference, Nov. 1988 (in Arabic); Shaddad, M., Sudan and the Governing Crisis, Dar Ennassaq, Khartoum, 1988; Mansour Khalid, The Government they Deserve: the Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution, Kegan Paul, 1990; Umbadda, S., Education and the Mismanagement of Sudanese Economy and Society 1954-1989, DSRC Seminar, Discussion Paper No. 88, October 1990.

However, it is certain that a sizeable body of literature on integration weighs heavily towards the group/agents pole of the above continuum. A note on this pluralist literature is in order as it serves as a prelude to a consideration of the two competing concepts on unity-disunity in Sudanese society.

## 2.3  Pluralism revisited

Many Sudanese studies have generally adopted an implicit or explicit pluralist line of analysis in dealing with the issue of unity in diversity in Sudan.[15] The following is a brief consideration of an example of this analysis. To begin with, a distinction should be made between at least two meanings of the term pluralism: the ideological and the analytical. The former emphasises the normative nature of the term, as a political ideology in its own right, while the latter stresses the descriptive quality of the term in dealing with societies with a multiplicity of political and cultural interests. Needless to say, there are other differences in meaning and connotation of the term pluralism.

A useful distinction of immediate interest to us here is the one between "pluralism" and "plural society". Pluralism denotes an extensive consensus and social cohesion, adaptation and accommodation between the different groups and the emergence of integrative central value system. "Plural society", on the other hand, implies differentiation and separateness of parallel but not overlapping entities or formations.

Institutions assume the role conflict between segments.[16] In a plural society, order and cohesion is maintained by the monopoly of political power of one of the segments and its superimposition over all other segments by the exercise of control and coercion. This is similar to what Smith has referred to as a plural society, a society in which unity in diversity "… is associated with the rule of a dominant minority through the medium of the state system ...".[17] Sudanese studies written from a broad pluralist perspective oscillate between stressing the imperative of a central value system protected by a dominant segment (in control of the state), on one hand, and emphasising a tolerant, peaceful coexistence between various segments, allowing for a loose integrative value system to provide a framework for unity, on the other hand.[18] Without underrating the differences between the variants of these studies, they nonetheless share the pluralist methodological standpoint, by deploying sociological categories of analysis relating to cultural values, and patterns of behaviour of contending groups (agents), and by considering the ensuing patterns of interaction as determinants for attaining unity or fermenting disunity.

In connection with this, the dominant patterns of inter-group relations are lucidly expressed and summarised by Abdel Salam in accommodation, separation and radicalism.[19] Each of the three patterns is said to be significantly influenced by the cultural framework of ethnicity and the availability of political institutions to express ethnic claims on the polity. Thus:

> Squalor, beset by every known kind of social pathology.[20] Hence, the conceivable
> reaction from these groups in the South (and other regions as well) to various forms

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[15] For example, Ahmed, R. H., "Regionalism, Ethnic and Socio-Cultural Pluralism: The Case of the Southern Sudan" in Beshir, M. O. (ed.) Southern Sudan: Regionalism and Religion, Graduate College Publication, University of Khartoum, 1984, pp. 6-59.

[16] Hall, S., "Pluralism, Race and Class in Carbbean Society", in UNESCO, Race and Class and Post-Colonial Society, Paris, 1978, pp. 152-153.

[17] Quoted in Jenkings, R., "Social Anthropological Methods of Inter-Ethnic Relations", in John, R., and Mason, D., (eds.), Theories or Race and Ethnic Relations, Cambridge University Press, London, 1986, pp. 170-186.

[18] Beshir, M. O., The Sudan Ethnicity, op. cit.; Mazrui, A., "The Multiple Marginality of the Sudan", in Hassan, Y. (ed.), Sudan in Africa, Khartoum University Press, 1971.

[19] Abdel Salam, F., "Ethnic Politics in the Sudan", in Hurreiz, S. and Abdel Salam, F. (eds.), Ethnicity, Conflict and National Integration in the Sudan, Institute of Africa and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, 1989, pp. 29-68.

[20] Ibid., p. 59.

of discrimination by the centre was an armed violence and separation from the North.

Radicalism, for its part, stresses ideology, because the promises of the existing ideologies have become hollow and redundant. Abdel Salam believes that the SPLA/SPLM best illustrates this mode of political behaviour in contemporary Sudan. Unlike separatist ethnic organisations, the SPLA/SPLM sought to unite co-ethnics into a broad political coalition with a common political creed transcending specific claims and identifications, and with a nationwide goal and a definite ideological objective of socio-economic and political development for the whole of Sudan.[21]

In Abdel Salam's words, one wonders whether separatist and radical politics would have arisen in the first place in Sudan had there been an elaborate accommodatory system operative in the country that took into account the "legitimate grievances of the marginalised groups".[22] It is evident that the onus of upholding this accommodatory system and maintaining unity falls on the centre, and more specifically on the dominant groups in power.[23] At times, the capacity of the centre and its readiness to attend to the grievances of the "marginalised groups" was reduced, for many reasons, rendering its role less conducive to national integration. At other times, however, it is observed that the attitude of the centre was more accommodatory and conducive to national cohesion, allowing for "… peaceful mutual tolerance between Muslim Arabs and Sudanese indigenous (sic) groups …".[24]

Clearly then, the vital contributory role of the centre in consolidating the bases of unity and undermining factors of disunity is undeniable. However, this is not to say that the centre has been successful in this respect. An assessment of the centre,s role in national integration is undertaken elsewhere.[25] Here our interest is to single out and focus on one concept (out of many) produced by the centre on national integration. To a consideration of this concept we turn now.

# 3. Unity-in-conformity concept

"Unity-in-conformity" is a core concept with many variants. After briefly considering the theoretical assumption and general features of this concept variant, this section will attempt to relate the concept variant to the concrete situation of diversities in Sudanese society. Concepts of unity and national integration are historically shaped by political conjunctures. But as we have already mentioned, the social determinants and historical transformations which produced this concept, important as they are, are not our prime concern here. An in-depth inquiry into the nature of these transformations requires separate treatment.

The dominant inter-group interactions in the 1950s and 1960s in postcolonial Sudan gravitated between accommodation and separatism. Like many African leaders at the time, Sudanese leaders stressed the need to strengthen national unity and to avoid religious sectarianism, ethnic cleavages and tribal divisions. In the 1970s, the centre adopted a pattern of accommodation which, for what it was worth, proved its relative effectiveness in "maintaining" fragile unity into the early 1980s. A

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[21] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[22] Ibid., p. 64.

[23] This is given different designations in Arab-Islamic Capitalist Class in El Battahani, (1988), "nation building", op. cit.; A coalition of Bureaucratic Merchant Class in Shaddad, op. cit. or Ruling Northern Elite in Khalid, (1990).

[24] Hurreiz., S., "Ethnic-cultural and Nation Identity in the Sudan: An Overview", in Hurreize, S. and Abdel Salam, F. (eds.), op. cit. According to Hurreiz, this was more in line with the social fabric of Sudanese culture and identity because it enabled different groups to mix and merge wishfully, thus forming wider groups. For example, a cultural process of integration (Arabisation, Islamisation and Africanisation) did take place, albeit voluntarily, gradually and irregularly. This created the contemporary Sudan with its relative unity and inherent disunity, pp. 79-98.

[25] El Battahani, A. op. cit.

deep crisis affecting the social and political order exposed the centre's limited capacity to offer genuine accommodation. It was only then that a variant of the concept of unity-in-conformity was, for the first time, put into effect. Responding to this development, oppressed nationalities and groups perceived the centre as reneging on the tradition of accommodation and mutual co-existence, which with all its fragility had maintained a semblance of unity in the past. Different competing core concepts of unity emerged in the 1980s. One of these, the unity-in-diversity concept, stands as the main rival and in sharp contrast to the unity-in-conformity concept. From here on, and as far as this paper is concerned, it makes sense to speak in terms of a competition between different variants pertaining to these two core concepts of unity: unity-in-conformity and unity-in-diversity.

Historically, the structure of colonial capitalism enabled the centre of Sudan firstly to produce a unity-in-conformity concept, the main variants of which are Arabism and Islamism. Later, the peripheries of Sudan responded by advancing a different notion of unity (Africanism), giving a different perspective on Sudan identity and national integration. Yet, at a conceptual level, Arabism, Islamism and Africanism are all rival variants of the core concept of unity-in-conformity, and as such share the same underlying assumptions of the concept. A theoretical sketch of this core concept is presented by considering some features of these variants, e.g. Islamism. It is believed that an elaborate exposition of one variant will, to a greater extent, reflect more clearly the underlying assumptions of the core concept. Hence, what is related to Islamism necessarily applies, in essence, to both Arabism and Africanism.

Furthermore, whatever is discussed here as features and properties of Islamism, the concept variants are not derived from one particular source. Instead, these features are inferred from the positions, documents and policy statements of different influential groups at the centre. As such, these features are not explicitly stated, but are put together with a view to accounting for the nature of core concepts while doing justice to the variant under discussion. With this in mind, it is our assertion that in dealing with national integration, the unity-in-conformity concept is idealist, ethnocentric, and of a totalitarian-authoritatian nature, leaving for the time being its patriarchal, retrogressive and other peripheral capitalist features. We shall briefly examine how the Islamist variant reflects the traits of the core concept.

The ascendancy of the Arab-Islamic hegemony has been noted by many groups and perceived by them as negatively affecting their role and contribution in building a viable united Sudanese social formation. Indeed, some subordinated groups feel that the overall thrust of the hegemony of the centre is systematically working towards nullifying their distinct cultural attributes. A former prime minister once stated that they were not willing to abandon their Arab Islamic culture for a mirage,[26] referring to indigenous non-Arab-Islamic culture and the call to incorporate and recognise their values in a Sudanese identity.

For its part, the hegemonic centre believes that only by promoting its culture can the unity of Sudan be maintained. Submitting to the will of the centre, or to put it in mild terms, conformity with the value system of the centre by different groups is taken as a prerequisite for Sudanese unity and identity. On the other hand, emphasising the particularity and cultural individuality of groups in the peripheries is perceived as a threat to the unity of Sudanese society as a whole.

What is, then, the rationale of the centre? What are the philosophical bases of the centre's belief that extending and universalising its "superior" culture (religion) over other cultures and groups would ensure unity, while resisting this process would ferment disunity? As far as the Islamic part of the variant concept is concerned, its perspective of unity-disunity is essentially derived from Islam. To

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[26] Former Prime Minister El Sadig El-Mahdi discussing the proposed Penal Code for 1988 in the Constituent Assembly, 1988-1989.

be more precise, it is derived from a particular idealist (revivalist) interpretation and ideological appropriation of Islam.[27]

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is a monist religion with a built-in universalist drive which conceives of the human race as but a target for conversion. It is, in effect, pitched in constant competition with other religions and cultures[28] and consequently is less accommodating to other creeds and beliefs. This is more likely the case when Islamic-revivalist concepts of integration stress the need to universalise and absolutise their values as prerequisites for attaining unity and social cohesion. In other words, the argument here is that all parts of the whole must reflect and share the same essence if the unity of the whole is to be secured.

It is believed that the Islamist variant reflects, in an important way, a Hegelian idealist conception of totality. This is:

> … an expressive totality, a totality all of whose parts are so many total parts each expressing the others, and each expressing the social totality that contains them, because each in itself contains in the immediate form of its expression the essence of the totality itself...[29]

The unity produced by such a concept is immediately present in, and extricable from, each of its parts. Each part of the whole is but an expression of the essence of the whole.[30] Within this perspective, the unity of the whole suppresses the distinctness of the part of instances (determinations) constituting it. This expression of the essence of the whole is but the will of absolute truth, reason or the divine. History is conceived as a process moving towards a predetermined end, the rising of the absolute to self-consciousness[31] or the realisation of the Almighty's will over each.

It is not the intention here to discuss the theoretical or philosophical aspects of the idealist conception of history, but to indicate that the realisation of self-consciousness by the Absolute (attainment of unity) is hampered in reality by many distractions, albeit of a temporary nature. History is the progressive unfolding of events towards the ultimate objective. Here, the role of conscious agents of history (bearers of truth) is to affirm the will and majesty of the divine on earth by transcending situations of discord and imperfections.

That these assumptions underlie Islamists' variant of the unity-in-conformity concept is not difficult to establish. The foundation of one Islamic society-state lies in the doctrine of *Tawhid*, the unity of Allah and human life.[32] In the course of realising this unity, the *Ummah* (nation, in the broad sense) has to adhere strictly to sources of religious guidance (the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet) and the model of Medina experience. In reality, however, many factors and historical challenges intervene to thwart the process of Tawhid and frustrate the Ummah's effort to unite and live up to its ideal and destiny.[33]

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[27] Mohammed A. H. Hamed, "Sudan's Crisis and the Search for a Peaceful Way Out", in El-Watan (a Kuwaiti newspaper), 24/10/1985.

[28] A. Mazrui, commenting on his book Cultural Forces in World Politics, James Currey, London, 1990, in the BBC World Service, Meridian Programme, on 7/12/1990

[29] Callinicos, A., Althusser's Marxism, Pluto Press, London, 1976, p. 40.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] El-Turabi, H., "Principles of Governance, Freedom, and Responsibility in Islam", The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, vol. 4 No. 1, 1987, p. 2.

[33] Abdel Gabar, F., Materialism and Modern Religious Thought (in Arabic), Research and Socialist Studies Centre in the Arab World, 1985, pp. 121-134.

The continuous fragmentation and deviation of the Ummah from realising its ideal are attributed to an interplay of internal and external factors. Internally, historical fall and laxity on the part of Muslims lead to the drift of "public life… away from the moral values and norms of religion", [34] while externally instigated factors cover the activities and interests of a wide range of forces and cultural tendencies such as imperialism, colonialism, atheism, heresy, nationalism, secularism and modernism.[35] The ultimate objective of these forces is perceived as being to disintegrate and debilitate the Ummah and corrupt its creed, thus dissuading it from carrying out its divine mission. The argument established here is that if the Ummah is to succeed in transcending situations of schism, discord and spiritual decay, it should follow the sources of religious guidance and urge all to rally around God's call (the Absolute).[36] Following Allah's path would inspire a "process of revitalization that would completely integrate politics with religion",[37] and allow religious belief to permeate all walks of life and lay the foundation of unity in Muslim societies.

But how does this relate to the question of unity in Sudan? It is maintained here that in the context of the diversities of Sudanese society, Islamism (the attempt to think out unity on the basis of this perspective) is neither a conducive nor a plausible concept for a workable unity. This, however, should not be taken to mean that Islam, as a repository of values, symbols and aspirations, has no role to play in contributing to national unity. Rather, our concern here is confined to Islamism, the concept-variant of unity-in-conformity, and it is this which lacks the capacity to contribute positively to the viable unity of a diverse society.

In Sudan, Islamism sanctions Muslim endeavours to absolutise their (historically determined) values and culture as bases of unity and polity. Indeed, Sudan's unity and identity are both reduced to nurturing and evolving Islam or, to be more precise, a particular version of Islam:

> … It is imperative to promote and develop the culture of the centre for it is this (Islamic) culture which unites the nation and gives it its distinct features and attributes. Without this Islamic factor Sudan would have never existed...[38]

To reduce the objective complexity of Sudan's cultural and social structures to Islam is surely to inflate one element of a diverse totality at the expense of others, if not to deny the very fact of diversity. The capacity and readiness, therefore, to accommodate different elements (for example non-Islamic, non-Arab groups) within a unified Sudanese totality is thus altogether undermined.

Calls constantly to maintain (Islamic) sources of unity are sometimes expressed in Jihad to defend Islam and extend its frontiers against the infidels (land of war). Attempts by different marginalised groups to press for their otherwise legitimate claims are rejected outright as impairing unity and publicly dubbed racist, ethnic, "tribal", "atheist", "secular", "crusaders", "zionist", "communist", etc. Quite often, a conspiracy theory is invoked to explain away any attempt by internal forces to challenge this monolithic Islamist concept variant of unity. The combined objective these enemy forces pursue is claimed to ferment disunity by spoiling the creed of the Ummah. Consequently, revitalisation of sources of Islamic religion is proposed as a panacea to ensure unity and avoid discord.

However, in the context of multiple Sudan, such a panacea is nothing but a call for an ethnocentrism or "Islamocentrism." This concept overstresses the primacy of Arabic language and culture and

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[34] El-Turabi, H. op. cit.
[35] Abdel Gabar, F., op. cit.
[36] El-Turabi, H., "On the Relation between Arabism and Islamism", El yom Assabon, 19/11/1990, pp. 28-29.
[37] El-Turabi, H., (1987), op. cit.
[38] Ahmed, Hassan Mekki M., in El Engaz Al-watani, 20/11/1990.

regards the history of Muslims as the sole repository of values, symbols and norms in the light of which the modern life of Sudanese people should be modelled. Aspects pertaining to Sudanese identity are believed not to be negotiable since they are not the product of historical processes, but a given fact of Islamic religiosity. Non-Islamic cultures are perceived as a threat to Sudanese identity, as they are informed by:

> … a militant brand of secular discourse extremism. It became the normal (since 1955) for such discourse to express itself by raising arms, involvement in guerrilla activities against the right of Islamic culture to exist in the South and to dominate in the North (emphasis added).[39]

A corollary of this reasoning is the call for and establishment of an Islamic state and a totalitarian political system. The logic of this reasoning runs as follows. The state attends to the demands of the majority;[40] the majority are Muslims; in Islam the state deals with both private and public domains; thus an Islamic state is a guarantee for the unity of the country.[41] Notwithstanding provisions to safeguard minority rights, this logic expresses an eventually totalitarian concept of polity. In this polity, (a) power (legislative, executive and judicial) is vested in an Imam, reflecting the will of the Divine more than the general will of the people, and (b) the modern concept of citizenship is lacking, or at least difficult to reconcile with the Islamic concept of polity.[42] Fears were expressed as to the tendency to stratify the population according to creed as male Muslims, female Muslims, male non-Muslims and female non-Muslims.[43]

Tied to this categorisation of citizens is the uneven distribution of political, economic and social goods and entitlements. Many observers believe that a version of the Islamist concept variant of unity was put into practice in Sudan during 1983-1985. During this period, social and economic differentiations were either religiously sanctioned or else not dealt with effectively. Forms of Islamic charity failed to curb social ills. Equally, attempts to curb these problems structurally and initiate socio-economic development were controversial, to say the least.[44] Consequently, the ensuing deprivations have further consolidated an already existing schism and discord which the concept purports to transcend in theory. In a nutshell, Islamocentrism, a totalitarian political regime and economic stagnation are hardly conductive to unity.

However, this conclusion is not peculiar to the Islamist variant of the unity-in-conformity concept. Other variants of the concept (Arabism and Africanism) are equally predisposed to lead to the same dead end. Essentially then, this concept of unity-in-conformity, with all its variants, is inherently antithetical to the very nature of Sudan's diversities, which are grounded on objective historical conditions. Instead of realistically dealing with these objective conditions (i.e. recognising and synthesising them), the concept obliterates them, only to produce a monolithic concept of unity. Traced to its philosophical assumption, this can be expressed as being that rather than comprehend the complexity and diversity of empirical realities, the sole interest of the concept is in discovering and establishing the Absolute (in Islamism, Arabism, Africanism) in:

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[39] Ahmed, Hassan Mekki M.

[40] Sudan: The Christian Design, The Islamic Foundation, Khartoum, 1989, p. 5.

[41] National Islamic Front, Sudan Charter, Khartoum, 1989, p. 2; Sudan Times 1988-1989; Hamid, M. B., Centre Region Relations in the Sudan: The Federal Option, DSRC Seminar series No. 81. October 1988.

[42] Consider the attempts by Sadig El-Mahadi won was at Paris, to reconcile between his concept of an Islamic State and the modern (secular) concept of citizenship.

[43] Sudan Times, 1988-1989.

[44] For example see Shaa El Din, F. and Brown R., Towards an Understanding of Islamic Banking and Research Centre, Monograph series, No. 21, February 1985.

> … Every element, whether of the state or of nature, and the actual subjects ... come to nothing but their mere names. The world is left uncomprehending of the absolute.[45]

The limited capacity of this concept to offer a differentiated concept of unity can much more clearly be grasped if considered in relation to the potential of the other rival concept of unity-in-diversity.

# 4. Unity-in-diversity as an alternative concept

Studies informed by the concept of unity-in-diversity have, to some extent, emerged as a critique of the dominant concept of unity-in-conformity. Whilst the former focuses on the efficacy of cultural variables and political groups (on the groups-agents pole of the continuum of our theoretical sketch), this alternative concept attempts to redress the imbalance by leaning more toward the structures-social processes pole, without entirely neglecting sociocultural variables (ethnicity, religion, etc.).

In order to account better for the complex unity of the Sudanese social formation, an urgent need has been felt by many researchers to synthesise the two poles of the theoretical continuum and then analytically integrate variables relating to both, i.e. class, ethnicity and the state.[46] Heeding this, a number of studies have endeavoured, with varying degrees of success, to deal with this theoretical synthesis and integration.[47] This paper is an attempt to bring out much more forcefully the theoretical framework underlying these studies, and to contribute to nominating unity-in-diversity as a viable concept. In contradistinction to the features of the unity-in-conformity concept, the concept we are suggesting here as a viable alternative is characterised as realist, non-centrist and of a historical and dynamic nature. Before we elaborate on these traits, however, a note on the methodological premise of this concept is in order.

## 4.1 A methodological premise

In view of the diversities of Sudanese society (as indicated above), a methodological position of the alternative concept is that in peripheral societies patterns of ethnic and cultural stratification, the class/occupational stratification system and the relations between social groups are massively overdetermined:

> … It is this over-determined complexity which constitutes the specificity of the problem requiring analysis. It does not help, here, to depress some factors of this matrix (e.g. ethnicity or class) in favour of others (e.g. culture or religion) and then analytically to subsume the former into the latter, since it is precisely the generative specificity of each, plus the over-determined complexity of the whole, which is the problem….[48]

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[45] Callinicos, A., op. cit., p. 33.

[46] Professor M. O. Beshir expressed this need when, in one of his studies on diversity and unity in Sudan, he stated that "I have not tried in this paper to discuss the issue of ethnicity and class in the case of Sudan. This is not due any rejection and the suggestion that class is relevant or to the proposal that there is no correlation between class and ethnicity in other similar cases. The relations are rather hard to handle and there is overlapping which can easily lead to confusion". See Beshir, M. O., (1984), op.cit.

[47] O'Brien J., "Toward a Reconstruction of Ethnicity: Capitalist Expansion and Cultural Dynamics in Sudan'', American Anthropologist, Vol. 88, No.4, December 1986, pp. 898-907; A. A. Ibrahim (1985), op.cit.; EI-Battahani, H., (1986) op.cit.; and (1988) op.cit.; Shaddad, M., op.cit.

[48] Hall, S., (1978), op.cit. Expressing a similar proposition, AI-Hardalo cautioned Sudanese intellectuals and politicians not to magnify one element of Sudan's complex structures at the expense of another when dealing with the intricate issue

This will be clarified further below. Here, suffice it to say that the overriding concern of the two competing philosophies or positions is unity in differentiated society. Yet, issues relating to how such unity would be achieved are set within different problematics. In the previous section, the account of the unity-in-conformity concept has been considered.

As far as the unity-in-diversity concept is concerned, some of the questions raised within this problematic relate to the following. What fundamentally distributes the population of Sudan into different occupational/class categories? What, essentially, is the role of ethnicity in the distribution of these groups and the maintenance of the social order? How have these class structures evolved and what role have the state and ethnicity played in this? How are we to understand the relations of these variables (class, state and ethnicity) in the totality of the whole social matrix and its stratification? How, then, is this matrix affected by what we might call the ethnic element? Or, for that matter, the religious? And given the diversities of the Sudanese social formation, as indicated above, what is it that maintains the dominant structures of legitimation through this apparent complexity? What produces the structures of these societies as structure-in-dominance? Above all, what holds this society together?

Pluralist and unity-in-conformity analyses suggest that overall cohesion is achieved through the domination of one segment in the political institutional order, the universalisation of the centre's culture and its imposition on the constituent parts and regions of Sudanese society. Yet, these analyses, though correct in recognising the centrality of power and the hegemonic culture of the centre, conceive questions of unity/disunity in too limited and segmentary a fashion. Imperative integration is achieved in Sudan neither exclusively through political institutionalisation nor via cultural domination. It is our argument that the unity of Sudan's social formation is not a simple, undifferentiated unity, as such analysts would like us to believe. In differentiated, complex societies, we are required to account not just for the existence of culturally distinct institutions and patterns, but for that which secures the unity, cohesion and stability of this social order in and through (not despite) its differences.[49] This calls for the introduction of a new concept of totality, a concept which should be understood in a double way "as simultaneously involving tendencies to unity and differentiation."[50] Which pole of the relationship (unity-in-diversity) will be dominant depends on the historically specific conditions and the social formation.[51] In a word, the unity-in-diversity concept is based on a realist concept of totality.

## 4.2  Relevance of the alternative concept

The idealist concept of totality, as interpreted by the unity-in-conformity analysis, acknowledges the centrality of the Absolute, the realisation of which bestows unity and suppresses the distinctness of the constituent unity as a condition of the cohesion of the whole. In contrast to this, the unity-in-diversity concept does not attribute the unity of the whole to the presence of actualisation of the Absolute, nor does it consider the whole as something in, yet separable, from its parts. In the realist concept of totality:

> the unity of the whole does not suppress distinctness of the determinations constituting it; rather this distinctness is the precondition of any unity which is not the self-relation of the spirit (or the Absolute )....[52]

of national unity in Sudan. "Political Parties and National Unity''. Paper presented to Nationalism and National Unity Conference, University of Khartoum, January 1984.

[49] Hall, S., (1978), op.cit.

[50] Post, K., "Rethinking Marxism'', Mimeos.

[51] Wolpe, H., Race, Cclass and the Apartheid State, James Currey, London, 1989, p. 8.

[52] Callinicos, A. op.cit., p. 45.

These analyses, derived here from a number of studies, assert the materiality of the world without undermining the significance of spirituality and cognition[53] for the specificity of the entities constituting the world, and at the same time, (in the case of social formation) their unity within a complex structure, 'structure-in-dominance'.[54] Unity of the social formation is the function of relations of subordination and dominance obtaining between the constituent parts of the structure in dominance. To grasp the nature of this unity further, it is essential to be more specific about two terms: complexity and structure.

The complexity of the whole depends on comprehending it as consisting of a number of distinct but interrelated instances. In social formation, apart from the economy itself there are the ideological (ethnicity, religion) and political instances, none of which is reducible to the economic. Complexity may derive not only from the relative autonomy of the ideological and political practices vis-à-vis the economic, but also from the combination of several modes of production, "together with their ideological and political conditions of existence in a single social formation".[55] A pertinent question here is how are these instances ordered and how do contradictions between them operate?

The complexity of the social totality possesses a structure, a structure-in-dominance. The fact that one contradiction (instance) dominates the other presupposes that the complexity in which it features is a structured unity. That this structure implies the indicated domination-subordination relations between the contradictions (instances) is essential to securing its imperative unity. Domination is not just an indifferent fact, it is a fact essential to the complexity itself. Hence, complexity implies domination:

> … as one of the essentials; it is inscribed in its structure … so to claim that this unity is not and cannot be the unity of, simply, original and universal essence is not ... to sacrifice the unity on the alter of pluralism. It is to claim something quite different... the unity of the complexity itself, that the mode of organization and articulation of the complexity is precisely what constitutes its unity. It is to claim that the complex whole has the unity of a structure in dominance.[56]

Accordingly, the conception of totality that emerges is one radically different from the idealist (unity-in-conformity) one in which "the whole is simply the sum of the individual relations of cause and effect between particular events".[57] All forms of reductionism, whether to the spiritual essence of the whole (Islamism) or to the Absolute (Arabism, Africanism) or to the economy (class) are ruled out by the conception of the whole as a complex unity of necessarily related but relatively autonomous instances. The unity of the whole is the result of a structure in dominance determined in the last instance by the economy. This determination or overdetermination is the idea of a structure whose complexity, the mutual distinctness and interdependence of its elements, is expressed through the way in which the economy displaces the dominant role within the structure to a particular instance, organising the other instances in terms of this structure in dominance. Organising the instances and ordering the domination-subordination between their contradiction is a historically specific process (as in capitalism). More important, this ordering should be understood

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[53] Post, K., op. cit. Materialism dose not exclude or even undervalue the process of (spirituality) cognition, only arguing that mental processes are made concrete by action in the material world, and can have no real significance unless this is so.

[54] Callinicos, A., op.cit., p. 45.

[55] Berton, T., The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism, Macmillan, London, 1984, p. 74.

[56] Callinicos, A., op. cit., pp. 41-42.

[57] Ibid., p. 43.

always in a double way, as simultaneously involving tendencies to unity and differentiation[58] or to disunity.

In a nutshell, then, the social totality is a complex structured unity: its complexity lies in the fact that it is a unity of distinct, relatively autonomous instances with different modes of development; its structures lie in the fact that its unity results from the hierarchy of the instances through the determination by the economy in the final analysis.[59] That the totality is structured is as essential to its nature as that to its complexity.

Contrary to the ethnocentrism of the conformity-based perspective of unity which considers differences as antithetical to unity, this perspective recognises differences as built-in elements of its totality. A tunnel vision perspective is irrelevant here. Instead:

> …the differences have to be welcomed as part of the Kaleidoscope of national life, contributing in their various ways to the national whole. If this can be achieved, we can have unity with diversity – or, as we might put it, ethnicity (or multi-religiousity) and diversity without conflict … [60]

Within such a non-ethnocentrist perspective, no culture or value system of a particular segment has the moral right to universalise its attributes over others as a condition of the unity of the whole. Different parts contribute to nurturing unity and national cohesion. Consequently, factors which are often regarded as divisive and contributing to a breakdown of indigenous culture are now factors which unify[61] and help bring together different groups, culture and individuals in a dynamic interaction to create an integrated whole. Commenting on the utility of this approach, a Sudanese intellectual had it that:

> Sudan is an Arab country, but its Arabism is not like that of Syria; Sudan is a Muslim country, but Islam in Sudan is not like Islam in Saudi Arabia; and Sudan is an African country, but its African character is not similar to that of Kenya….[62]

From the point of view of this perspective, differences are recognised and contradictions are not written off but dealt with by the people in the course of shaping their own destiny. In Callinicos's words, it is the working out of these contradictions between instances constituting the social whole which determines its trajectory. History is not the expression of a spiritual essence, nor is it the progressive realisation of the innate characteristics of a nation (Arabism) or culture (Africanism). It is a process whose development is the outcome of the relations (and contradictions) of the economic, political and ideological instances composing the social whole.

Thus in dealing with the Sudanese social formation, as in the case of any other social formation we are concerned with a totality of concrete "…complex and structured beings and processes".[63] The way in which the differences (contradictions) are articulated with each other and worked out in the structure in dominance determines the particular direction in which the process will develop. At the same time, the unity of the whole is not a homogeneous one; it is the unity of the essentially uneven instances.[64] This unevenness is not an accidental characteristic of the social whole, but reflects the

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[58] Post, K., op.cit.
[59] Callinicos, A., op.cit., p. 46.
[60] Stevenson, R., in Hurreiz, and Abdel Salaam, F. (eds.), op.cit., p. 207.
[61] Ibid., pp. 205-206.
[62] Khalid, M., Interview, SPLA/SLM Radio.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Post, K., op.cit.

relative autonomy of the different instances and the different timescales according to which they develop.[65]

It is peripheral capitalism which defines the trajectory of the Sudanese social formation, organising and determining the relations in and between its various instances (economic, political and ideological). The resulting unity is essentially of an uneven nature, with hierarchically ordered instances (and contradictions) within the social totality. It is a unity of a janus-faced character, being always simultaneously functional and contradictory, both constructive and destructive, both integrative and disintegrative; which side of the relationship will be dominant depends on the historically specific conditions and the social formation.

## 4.3 Obstacles to unity

In Sudan, the relations within and between instances are characterised by the fact that class and union-class contradictions (ethnic, religious, cultural) overlap and are materially and ideologically mutually reinforcing. In the present conjuncture, this has tilted the relations more towards a destructive and disintegrative pole. The situations actually obtaining can be generally described as hardly conducive, in political, economic and social terms, to unity and integration. We shall elaborate on this by briefly considering the rigidity of the social structure and the social mobility processes.

In Sudan, the ethnic factor intertwines with non-ethnic factors (education, wealth, occupation, status) to produce a complex unschematic stratification matrix. This does not mean that social differentiation in Sudan is exclusively ethnicity-based, as some studies have tried to establish. It is our position here that the stratification system is a class-determined one in which ethnic (or religious) elements constitute a relatively more visible index of more complex structured peripheral capitalist societies, like Sudan, where class, status and ethnicity interpenetrate. The public signification of the stratification system:

> … is more explicit than in societies where no ethnic (religious) index exists; it is a more rigid system, since any member of the society (in particular those of the oppressed nationalities) rising in status has to negotiate more than one system of status symbolism. The calculus of social mobility is far more complex…[66]

That is, members of marginalised ethnicities, classes and social categories (e.g. women) passing upward from one position to another have to negotiate (peacefully) the public signification of the social structure along several axes.

A corollary of this is that the society as a whole, but particularly those groups seeking upward mobility and those in dominant positions of power and privilege, are each preoccupied with their own concerns, the latter protecting their status and the former trying to promote their position. The ensuing deadlock and infighting stifles the system and reinforces its rigidity. Needless to say, the burden of this rigidity is borne out by the marginalised classes and ethnic nationalities.

This point can be further developed by considering social mobility as an index of the efficiency and rationality of the existing social structure. An oversimplified schema is used here to divide/classify the population into three core ethnic categories: Northerners, Easterners and Southerners. The dominant classificatory scheme, which reigned in Sudanese studies for some time, was based on a Northerner-Southerner dichotomy, but this has failed to capture the complexity and diversity of

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[65] Callinicos, A., op.cit., p. 46.
[66] Hall, S., op.cit.

Sudanese society. As an alternative, we suggested here that a category of Westerner (not in the geographical sense) be introduced to reflect the diversity of social structure. This category of Westerner refers to ethnic groupings occupying an intermediary position between Northerners and Southerners, sharing ethnic and/or cultural affinities with the former and social/economic status with the latter. The criterion thus employed is based on a combination of ethnic, social and economic indicators. The enhanced or restricted chances for social mobility of the three core ethnicities, Northerners, Westerners and Southerners, is a function of the nature of the stratification system.

The stratification system approximates a pyramid with the upper triangle dominated by Arab-Muslim ruling classes and groups, together with a tiny fraction of Westerners and Southerners who were able to assimilate or come closer to the jallaba class in economic wealth, social status, language, education and values. The jallaba rank highest on all social, economic and political aspects, with their positions and privileges protected and legitimised as such by state ideology, national chauvinism and manipulation of cultural boundaries (i.e. religion). The middle layers of the social pyramid are likewise occupied by a predominantly Arab-Muslim intermediary stratum of middle classes. This did not result from numerical strength, if any, but it is rather a consequence of colonial and post-colonial transformations in education and employment. Yet, there are increasingly significant numbers of Westerners and Southerners who have managed to penetrate into middle-ranking positions and occupations. Peasants, artisans and urban workers in the North are congregated in the lower layers of the pyramid, but these layers are overwhelmingly dominated by nomads, poor peasants and marginalised groups of Westerners and Southerners, for example. The later are typically incorporated into positions with the least status and material reward in the national labour market.

This social stratification system is not legitimated by culture alone, but mainly by underlying structures of peripheral capitalism. And these structures had historically evolved as an outcome of the intrusion of colonial capitalism in 1898-1956, and since then have been maintained by postcolonial development. Endeavours to adjust the lopsided nature of the system and remove (ethnic-cultural) irrational barriers to social mobility were all in vain. Stagnation, rigidity and inefficiency characterised the performance of the social stratification system.

Different analyses have attempted to probe the nature of the "dysfunctionality" of this system and account for its rigidity and consequently the threat posed by these to unity and national cohesion. As suggested above, analyses derived from the unity-in-diversity concept are much more adequate than analyses based on the unity-in-conformity concept in accounting for the stagnation and disintegration of present structures. In broad agreement with the arguments of this paper, some analyses stressed the bourgeois class nature and the hegemonic fraction(s)[67] in mismanaging the economy and society and pursuing a dead-end line of development.[68] Hence:

> …war, political instability and the resurgence of obscurantist ideology (and disunity) are all symptoms of the present crisis in the Sudan. This is a crisis of structure and crisis of development ...[69]

In other words, the structure-in-dominance is in crisis, meaning that the postcolonial national integration projects, largely informed by the unity-in-conformity concept and maintained through

[67] Ali, T.M.A., The Cultivation of Hunger, University of Khartoum Press, Khartoum, 1990, and O'Brien., J., "Review of Class and Power in Sudan'', International Journal of African Historical Studies, 21, (3).
[68] Umbaddah, S., op.cit.
[69] Shaddad, M.Z., "Some Recent Trends'', in Deng, F., and Gifford, P., The Search for Peace and Unity in the Sudan, The Wilson Centre Press, Washington, 1987, p. 29.

the hegemonic Arab-Muslim domination over all features of organised social life, have failed in historically transforming Sudanese society.

# Conclusion

Studies of integration in Sudan have been placed within a broad theoretical sketch in the form of a continuum with two poles, one for studies focusing on groups, agents and culture and the other for studies focusing on socio-economic processes and structures. Dominant concepts of unity/disunity are said to have the theoretical properties of one pole or the other. In this paper, some theoretical features of two competing concepts of national integration have been considered, together with their capacity to explore issues of unity and diversity. Related to this, it is maintained that the unity-in-diversity concept has much more analytical potential and scope than the unity-in-conformity concept. The latter, it is believed, does not provide for tackling intricate issues of complexity and historically evolved contradictions since the concept is predisposed (by its philosophical idealist assumptions) to writing these complexities and contradictions off instead of recognising them as real. In effect the concept justifies exiting realities.

As an alternative, the unity-in-diversity concept is not only capable of accounting for the structured contradictions and complexities of Sudanese society, but is more conducive to constructing a viable project of unity in differentiation. This is so because the stagnation and disintegration characterising existing structures in Sudan are conceived not as historical phenomena but as a product of socio-economic processes. Removing the rigidities of the system and disintegrative factors does not mean writing off objective contradictions and differences. Since this is not an idealist conception, it is more plausible, for example, to conceive of differentiation in economic status and life-chances as the function of a rationally-based open system with no built-in ethnic and cultural barriers to social mobility. Therefore, a just and fair system is all that is required for the working out of contradictions and complexities. And what is more, the potential for this, and consequently for a viable unity, is there.

There are moments in Sudan political history which point to this potential. Here, however, we shall seek out this potential in the social structures and relations between different ethnic groups in conflict. This is no better illustrated than in the case of the <u>diyya</u> payment system, as commented on by Spaulding in his reading on <u>Deng's Recollection of Babo-Nimer.</u>[70]

As cattle owners, both Dinka Ngok and Baggara are intermittently locked into conflict and clashes (over grazing land and water), leading on many occasions to death on one or both sides. Negotiations are often sought to resolve the dispute and seek ways for compensating the other for their dead people (i.e. <u>Diyya</u>). Each of the communities represented in these <u>diyya</u> negotiations possessed complex and sophisticated social institutions in which cattle played a central role. When people asked basic questions about the value of things, or of a man's time and labour, or one's social status or relation to God, "…the answer to each of these questions may very much likely to be linked, in one way or another, with cattle".[71]

Seen from a broad perspective, the negotiation in assessing rates of diyya payment was not only, not even primarily, directed towards the question of homicide – though it did provide a mechanism for dealing with this. Rather, what was being assessed was the entire system of value pertaining to each group. Despite differences in language, religion and culture (and these were important issues for negotiators), in almost all cases the negotiations were successful,

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[70] Spaulding, J., op.cit.
[71] Ibid., p. 7.

> … precisely because they (negotiators) were willing to look beyond these important issues to even more, important ones – the just apportionment of resources and the establishment of rational and equitable <u>political order.</u> (emphasis added)[72]

This could not be more relevant to Sudanese ethnic/national conflicts. The ability of ethnic-national constituent groups, like the Baggara and Dinka Ngok, to succeed in negotiating agreements regarding both the appropriation of resources and viable political order in fact emphasises the relevance of the concept unity-in-diversity, and questions not only the failure of the macro structures to tackle conflicts, but also the ability of such structures to take conflicts to higher and complex thresholds. However, important questions remain to be answered with regard to the successful rationalities of small local-level groupings. What are the sources of this rationality and the mechanisms sustaining it? Would market forces alone provide for rationality and fairness in the economy to open up wealth-making avenues and social mobility for disadvantaged ethnicities and social groups? How could the state be more representative and accountable to the ensemble of classes and ethnic-nationalities? What are the appropriate arrangements for enabling different cultures to contribute to creating a genuine Sudanese identity? These are some of the fundamental issues that the Sudanese masses and national integration strategists are left with to reflect on and confront.

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[72] Ibid.