

a non-Arabic-speaking audience. It is likely to become an essential reference point for academic analysis of the Egyptian revolution while also serving as a detailed but highly readable introduction for students, journalists and policymakers.

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Sebatatso C. Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem': Race, Rhetoric and International Relations, 1961–1991*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan (hb £64.99 – 978 3 030 28770 2; pb £44.99 – 978 3 030 28773 3). 2019, 245 pp.

While many African states were celebrating the fruits of independence by the end of the 1950s, some were facing national challenges because of their colonial heritage. One of the colonial problems that has shaped modern-day postcolonial Africa is the concept of the nation state. Many scholars have challenged the applicability of the nation state to the African context, but few have highlighted the challenges that post-independence African elites faced while attempting to create a nation state. Sebatatso Manoeli's brilliant book, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, sheds light on competing Sudanese political narratives about the so-called 'Southern Problem'. The author argues that elites from North and South Sudan utilized Third World solidarity discourse to their advantage vis-à-vis the North–South conflict. While the Southern Sudanese civil war has been broadly studied through a military and humanitarian lens, Manoeli focuses on the diplomatic discourse used by each side. Competing narratives by the government and rebel groups of the South were essential in shaping conditions on the ground and securing international support and legitimacy worldwide.

Manoeli organizes her analysis of archival and oral accounts of the discursive battle between the government and rebel groups into eleven chapters. The first four chapters outline the colonial history of the 'Southern Problem' and examine different narratives from both sides. The following two chapters show how these competing narratives were received in regional and international circles. The author then discusses two significant periods in Sudanese political history, when Mohamed Mahgoub in the 1960s and Ja'afar Nimeiri in the 1970s utilized anti-colonial sentiments and socialist networks to gain an international lead over the rebel groups. The final two chapters focus on the repositioning of the rebels' discourse in the light of the second civil war, which constructed a credible image abroad.

However, the book's tremendous significance is in uncovering the replication of colonial discourse by elites from both sides of this conflict. For example, the leadership of the Sudan African National Union (SANU) reproduced colonial categories in their representation of the South (p. 34). Similarly, the government's quest for national unity and social coherence, which marginalized ethnic languages and cultures, reproduced colonial practices in South Sudan (pp. 51–2). African liberation leaders aimed to liberate African territories from colonial presence; however, as Manoeli

shows, their decolonization stopped short of breaking away from colonial thinking and practices.

Sudan's post-independence elites were occupied by building the very nation state imagined by the colonial administration; therefore, they failed to construct a governance structure that could include various cultures and ethnicities beyond the limits of the nation state structure. As James C. Scott famously explained, this failure of imagination can be traced to the state's inability to apprehend complex realities. A preoccupation with development would lead to the failure of the state's project to organize and rationalize societies. Sudan's political elites were not interested in the rich functional structure and complex behaviour of the organic entities they governed. They saw them as resources that must be organized (made legible) to produce optimal outcomes according to a centralized, narrow and strictly utilitarian logic.

Sudan's 'Southern Problem' also highlights the role of regional and international players in shaping Sudan's foreign policy discourse and internal politics. Manoeli elegantly grasps how the government under Nimeiri drastically changed course from a socialist position to becoming an ally of the USA (p. 144). Likewise, the rebel groups in the South became entangled in Ethiopia's foreign policy when they sought refuge there (p. 150). It is also worth mentioning how Israel supported the Southern rebel movements to counter the pan-Arab influence in Sudan while also supporting the apartheid regime in South Africa.

In addition, the book underlines unconventional factors that shaped the South Sudan civil war. Unlike dominant narratives that emphasize race as the central factor in the war, religious discourse also influenced the dynamics of the North–South conflict: for example, Father Saturnino Lohure played a critical role in rallying Catholic financial resources behind Southern Sudan's armed movements (p. 23). Before the secession of the South in 2011, these religious narratives were powerful in Northern Sudan, where they were employed by Muslim leaders.

The political elites who shaped Sudan's post-independence history succeeded in liberating the country from the colonial administration. Still, they failed to liberate their imagination, as Manoeli shows in her book. Their discourses on human rights and African solidarity were just pragmatic vessels to inherit colonial state power. *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'* examines the competing discourses between the North and South and shows us how values were sacrificed for political power. South Sudan, which became the newest state in the world in 2011, is one of the most war-torn countries in Africa due to civil war and ethnic conflict. The freedom fighters who fought the North to end racism and discrimination in turn produced a dictatorship that discriminated against ethnic minorities and peoples. The problem lies not only with colonial administrations that left the continent decades ago, but also with the colonial mindset that is still shaping African politics.

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