

# Chapter 184

## The Role of Religion in the Formation of a New State on the World Map: South Sudan

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### 184.1 Introduction: Roots of the North-South Conflict

As history shows from ancient times of slave raiding onwards, the conflict fault line between the northern and southern parts of Sudan have always had – even when the conflict manifested in struggles around land or mineral resources, economic or socio-political deprivation – a racial, cultural and religious component (cf. Herbst and Mills 2012). When the Numeiri government, under the political pressure of the Muslim Brotherhood, declared Islamic Sharia law in 1983 as the basis for all legal affairs in the whole multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious country<sup>1</sup> religious identity was symbolically reconfirmed to be the core issue of the north-south conflict which Jok (2007: 171) addresses as a “battle over identity.” As Kaiser (2009: 191) reminds us, once conflicts reach a stage where they concentrate on differences between religious or racial identities and are based on mutual mistrust due to consistent and increasing violent clashes, such conflicts can hardly be resolved through negotiations like in cases of competing socioeconomic or power-sharing interests. To put it in the words of Stump (2008: 267): When the opposing parties’ positions are “grounded in incontrovertible religious truths [...] such conflicts often resist easy resolution and may persist over long periods of time.”

This chapter examines the role of religion in the formation of the Republic of South Sudan, which gained independence on 9 July 2011. The youngest internationally recognized State on the world map gained independence after an unprecedentedly long civil war in the history of the African continent between the Muslim-Arab dominated central government in the north and the mainly Christian-Black African

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<sup>1</sup>According to Deng (2010: 394) Sudan is among the most diverse country in Africa with 181 indigenous languages, 500 dialects and, according to Mathok (2009: 147), with more than 500 tribes.

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liberation movement in the south. The civil war had two phases with the first beginning in 1955, a year prior to Sudan's Independence from British rule. It was prompted by the south's desire to achieve regional autonomy from the hegemonic central government in the north (Cole and De Blij 2007). The mediation efforts of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), which have not been deservedly acknowledged, led to the Addis Ababa Agreement (AAA) in 1972 and the granting of regional autonomy to the south (Kobia 2008 and Nyang and Johnston 2003). The second phase started in 1983 as a direct consequence of: (a) the failure to fully implement the peace agreement; (b) the discovery of oil in the south in 1978 and the central government's order, in a bid to control the resources, that the oil should only be refined in the north and (c) the imposition of Sharia law on the whole country in 1983 under President Nimeiri's highhanded government, despite the south's unique multiethnic and multi-religious character (Rader 2012: 47–48; Cole and De Blij 2007: 561). The liberation struggle, therefore, can be interpreted as a struggle for political and socioeconomic self-determination and religious freedom. As Nyang and Johnston (2003: 215) observe, postcolonial Sudan has been “under continual contestation” as it never enjoyed the “universal approval of those living within its ‘jurisdiction’.” The core problem of state-building for them was the “general absence of widely shared principles by which the state is to be governed, such as the principle of political equality for all citizens.”

The chapter analyzes the religious symbolisms as they are reflected in the national anthem, independence celebrations, political discourse and foreign relations. Furthermore, it systematizes the South Sudanese experience by drafting a concept for a form of geopolitics of the subaltern that may serve as an example for promoting the liberation of other marginalized peoples suffering from severe and enduring oppression, especially as they relate to identity issues.

## **184.2 Territorialization Through Identity and Nation Building**

De Blij (2009: 52) argues that “for the faithful, religion is the key to identity. And such identity is part of the impress of place. Religion and place are strongly coupled.” Any kind of conflict in Africa – where religious identity plays a central role in public life – can only be understood when acknowledging that “religion is in some ways the most powerful among the powers of place” (De Blij 2009: 80). The authors of this chapter subscribe to the hypothesis that the process of territorialization driven by the factor of cultural and religious identity in itself is not necessarily problematic. Violent conflicts between territorially rooted identity groups will only evolve if their normative system is not based strongly enough on universal values like justice, tolerance, fairness and openness for dialogue to settle disputes, often also traditionally inscribed in autochthonous cultures. The lack of such basic values

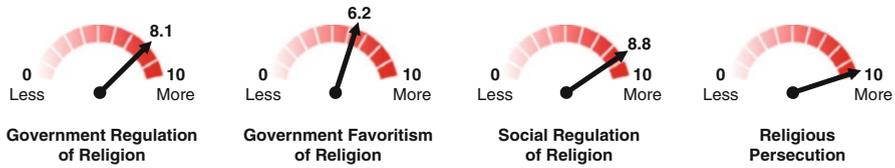
can easily lead to processes of stereotyping and “othering” towards minority or neighboring groups with a distinct cultural and religious identity (Sauer 2009) eventually leading to violent identity based conflicts.

Identity based territorialization is a common process taking place among nations and ethnic groups around the world. Occurring on a larger scale, it has laid the foundation for the formation of the present system of nation states which even in times of pronounced globalization processes remains an important framework for any kind of inter – and transnational interaction. Whereas secular Western societies tend to become more and more footloose through spatially and ever more dispersed and far reaching patterns of social and economic interaction, land as a source of livelihood and faith as a sense of social belonging, plays a central role for collective territorially based self-identification in Sub-Saharan Africa where societies are usually more strongly rooted in traditions and religion.

In the case of Sudan, fundamentalist movements had already achieved in the 1980s the formation of a totalitarian Islamic state<sup>2</sup> (Stump 2008: 288). “External expressions of religious territoriality” (Stump 2008: 266) are probably most pronounced in predominantly Muslim countries as “Islam does not recognize the distinction of the secular and the religious in human affairs: it prescribes rules for nearly all contingencies in life, and sets the aim of introducing the comprehensive Islamic state on earth” (Chapman 1990: 114). The Sudanese conflict can be rendered more intelligible when the strong influence of religion is taken into account (Williams 2011: 137). As already stated, when Islamic law was forcefully imposed as the source of legislation and jurisprudence on the whole territory of the multi-ethnic and multireligious country in 1983, establishing the Sudanese “Islamic apartheid system” (Both 2003), violence and struggle for secession became the automatic consequences for the southerners. Stump (2008: 267) describes how this constellation of oppressive power and minority resistance conflate into armed encounter: “For religious minorities, conflict often emerges from patterns of resistance to the hegemony of dominant groups, while the latter have often provoked conflict through the suppression or persecution of minorities.” From the perspective of critical geopolitics, the discursive and legal construction of Sudan as a purely Muslim territory, despite its multireligious demography, proves that the hegemonic religious actors and the respective political beneficiaries of that country had subscribed to the Islamist georeligious agenda of subjugating southern Sudan, by means of Jihad, to the “dar al-Islam,” the “sacral geography” (Heidenreich 2010) of Islamic rule, an extreme form of religious territoriality. Bona Malwal, the author of *People & Power in Sudan: The Struggle for National Stability*, noted that as far back as 1966, the Islamists had declared that “the failure

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<sup>2</sup>Hassan al-Turabi, the spiritual and ideological architect behind political Islam in Sudan and the countrywide introduction of Sharia law, defined this Islamic type of statehood and governance as follows (cited in Dau 2011: 27): “An Islamic state is part of Islam’s comprehensive, integrated way of life where there is no division between the private and the public, between the state and the society.”



**Fig. 184.1** Religious freedom country profile of Sudan before the independence of South Sudan (Source: Rainer Rothfuss and Yakubu Joseph, data from the Association of Religion Data Archives, 2012)

of Islam in southern Sudan would be the failure of Sudanese Muslims to the international Islamic cause. Islam has a holy mission in Africa and southern Sudan is the beginning of that mission” (cited in Cole and De Blij 2007: 561). The religious freedom country profile of Sudan before the independence of South Sudan reflected the reality of this ambition (Fig. 184.1); although the situation has got even worse in the north since the separation.

But, in order to capture the full spectrum of relevant causes and factors behind the Sudanese conflict it has to be considered, of course, that “conflicts are always provoked by several, mostly inter-related factors, there is always a specific set of other criteria, such as poverty, ethnicity, resource access, corruption and other forms of government dysfunction which play a role in the formation and development of a conflict that shows as a common baseline the religious identification of the involved groups” (Rothfuss and Joseph 2010: 49).

### 184.3 Territory, Identity and Terrorization: The Historical Struggle of Cultural Domination vs. Self-Determination Between Northern and Southern Sudan

Herbst and Mills (2012: 1) refer to the independence of South Sudan as “one of the most dramatic events of the twenty-first century [...] after years of bloodshed along racial and religious fault lines.” Rader (2012: 53–54), in contrast, reduces this “fault line” to an “artefact of unequal economic relations” and highlights “economic and political marginalization” as the “principal driver of conflict in Sudan.” She suggests that the territorial division between Sudan and the newly independent Republic of South Sudan should be seen as a consequence of the construction of “robust identity categories with a hard ‘inside/outside’ boundary” through economic and political marginalization rooted in “colonial interpretations of Sudan.” From a historical perspective, it has to be doubted, however, whether colonialism played such an important role in the development of the north-south “fault line” as the century-old problem of Arab slave-raiding in the whole Black-African Sahel belt

and Sudan,<sup>3</sup> existed long before the British arrived and even sought to protect the southern communities against the stiff resistance of slave traders (Dau 2011: 6–7). Thus, the implication of the Arab slave raiding in the conflict is too weighty to be underplayed and, to date, remains a vital historical antecedent of the north-south fault line. Ethnically, religiously and geographically, the group and terrains of victims have always been sharply defined: Arab slave raiders, due to their Muslim faith, were only allowed to enslave non-Muslim tribes (Euler 2008; Flaig 2009: 120–123) who, in the case of Sudan, happened to be the Black Africans in the south. As Breitlid et al. (2010: 93) put it “the slave raids in the South created an atmosphere of domination and subjugation, establishing the big divide and gap between the North and the South.” By the middle of the twentieth century, southerners did not fear the British colonialists as much as their looming new ‘masters’ from the Arab-Muslim north (Jok 2007: 79) who, even before independence, usually referred to them disparagingly as “abiid” (or “our slaves”) and seemingly had no respect for their autochthonous culture and identity (Breitlid et al. 2010: 93; Dau 2011: 19; Mathok 2009: 151; Mückusch 2008: 40).

In a historical perspective, Herz and Heide (2010: 425) underline that the distinct and territorially defined self-identification of the black Africans in the upper Nile basin dates back to 2000 BC when the area was called “Cush,” “land of black people.” After antiquity, over hundreds of years, the region was influenced by the Orthodox-Christian kingdom of Aksum with its center of power in Ethiopia. From the seventh century onwards, right after the foundation of Islam, Muslim Arabs expanded into the northern parts of Sudan. As Breitlid et al. (2010: 30) underline “for 1,000 years (from the sixth century to the fifteenth century AD) Christianity was the official religion of the three Sudanese kingdoms, resisting successfully the southward expansion of Islam.” Only in 1560, the Black African Nuba region in the southern part of northern Sudan was conquered by Ottoman-Egyptian forces, whereas the southern regions still successfully defended their Ethiopian-Christian identity and respective socio-economic interdependencies (Smidt 2008: 22).

From 1821 to 1885, for the first time in history, the south had been conquered and administered – even though as a separate region – as part of modern Sudan through the Ottoman-Egyptian regime. From 1872 onwards, attempts were made by British governors to stop slave raiding<sup>4</sup> in southern Sudan (Dau 2011: 10; Fradin 2003: 90). Muhammed Ahmad ibn Abdallah, the self-styled *Mahdi*, declared Jihad against the external rulers, reconquered Sudan in 1885 and established a rigid Islamist regime under which slave raiding among Black African communities flourished again (Dau 2011: 10; Deng 2010: 66) until the British regained control in

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<sup>3</sup>Flaig (2009: 148) shows how Islamic Jihad over the centuries served the purpose of raiding slaves from that region and that 17 million slaves were captured to meet the demands of mostly Islamic countries, by far exceeding the number of slaves within transatlantic trade (10.06 million). Flaig reminds that for one traded slave, on average one more person had been killed during the raids, doubling the overall figures of victims.

<sup>4</sup>This policy can be seen as an integral part of the then general abolition policy of the British and French colonial powers against the fierce opposition of the Islamic countries and traders, active in the respective regions (Flaig 2009: 210–212).

1898. Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah proclaimed himself to be the *Mahdi*, that is, the messianic redeemer or reformer of Islam (Cockett 2010: 13). From 1899 to 1955 the mainly “Arab-Muslim” northern and “Black African-Animist” southern parts of the colonial construct of “Sudan” were governed under the same colonial Anglo-Egyptian condominium, but under separate administrative units. To protect the vulnerable and “underdeveloped” south from further relentless exploitation and slave-raiding, visas were required to cross the north-south border. This “Closed District Ordinance” also restricted free access of Christian missionaries and consequently further deepened the isolation and “backwardness” (Dau 2011: 49; Mathok 2009: 11–12) of the south. Among northern proponents of Sudanese independence this colonial policy nurtured fears that the south shall gain independence separately from the north. In a geopolitical maneuver during the Juba conference in 1947, the British gave into the demand of northern Sudan and Egypt to incorporate the southern part of Sudan into a new and independent country. While Egypt sought to “safeguard the headwaters of the Nile by unifying Sudan under Arab leadership” (Nyang and Johnston 2003: 211), the British, in return, needed the support of Egypt for continued control over the Suez Canal. Jok (2007: 79) summarizes that the “British had created a mess by ruling the south and the north as separate entities without setting up two different countries.”

#### 184.4 Independence of Sudan in 1956: From External to Internal Colonialism and Civil War

When the new Sudanese administration was formed just before independence in 1956, out of 800 higher positions only six were conceded to southerners (Collins 2008: 65). Already in 1955 south Sudanese soldiers started an uprising against the colonial construct of a united Sudan, dominated by the “Muslim-Arab” north which feared that any concessions to the south concerning federalism or semi-autonomy were a threat to national unity (Dau 2011: 21). The Aboud military regime from 1958 to 1964 intensified its repressive military and Islamization agenda against the south, aggravating the “racial and religious polarization” which in the long run turned out to become an effective “politics of disunity” (Jok 2007: 1). Friday was declared the only public holiday also in the south and Sunday a usual working day. Christian missionary schools were converted into Islamic schools, Arabic replaced English as language of instruction and became the only language of administration (Nyang and Johnston 2003: 211). In 1964 all foreign Christian missionaries were forced to leave the country. Dau (2011: 22) summarizes that “the flood of Islamic schools and teachers that poured into the south after the expulsion of Christian missionaries convinced many southern Christians that the real reason behind the expulsion of missionaries was the imposition of Islam and Arabic culture on the south.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kröpelin (2010), in contrast, upholds the counter-narrative, stating that “Christianity has been spread by western missionaries for a century, laying the foundation for today’s problems.”

Nyang and Johnston (2003: 212–213) interpret “the north’s policy of ‘Arabization’” in a way that “the Sudanese elite have tried to remake their non-Arabic-speaking populations in the image of Sudanese Arabism.”

The internationalization of the first Sudanese civil war in 1967 and 1968 unveils the evolving geopolitical architecture behind the conflict scene. Besides some pragmatic “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” constellations, it reveals some cultural bonds between allied states that are, to date, of major importance in the ongoing struggle between Sudan and South Sudan. The regime in Khartoum oriented itself more and more toward Egypt and supported it in the Six-Day War against Israel. In return, Egypt and Libya provided weapons to the Sudanese government to fight the rebels in the south.<sup>6</sup> A military assistance agreement between Sudan with the Soviet Union provided improved access to advanced weapon technology and revealed the extent to which relationships between the regime in Khartoum and the West had been disrupted. Under the government of Dschafar al-Numeiri, Sudan broke off its cooperation with the Soviet Union and resumed relationships with the West. Under the patronage of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1972, he achieved, in negotiations with the rebel movements of southern Sudan, the Addis Ababa Agreement (Mathok 2009: 80–141), which was brokered by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), as mentioned earlier. After 17 years of civil war there were more than half a million casualties mainly among civilians in the south. The end brought a period of relative autonomy and peace to the southern region of Sudan.

Unfortunately, the relative calm was short-lived when under the increasing political influence and pressure of the Muslim Brotherhood, headed by Hassan al-Turabi,<sup>7</sup> who had become Minister of Justice in 1979, President Numeiri revoked the semi-autonomous status of southern Sudan in 1983 and introduced strict Islamic Sharia law<sup>8</sup> as the sole source of jurisprudence and custom for the whole country (Burr and Collins 2010). This policy caused a “social tsunami” in the whole country (Deng 2010: 176).<sup>9</sup> Only a few years earlier oil resources had been detected in the

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<sup>6</sup>These three countries were engaged from 1969 to 1974 in a geopolitical integration project with the vision of a joint Islamic state to form the core of an envisaged greater future pan-Arabic state.

<sup>7</sup>Hassan al-Turabi, one of the first Sudanese holding a doctor’s degree from Sorbonne University in Paris, had considerable influence for many years in Sudanese politics as spiritual and party leader and became Speaker of the Parliament in 1996. As founder of the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC), an extremist counter-organization to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), in the 1990 he contributed to the profile of Sudan as one of the worldwide hotbeds of Muslim extremism, joining over the years under the umbrella of PAIC jihadist and terrorist movements that strived for the further radicalization of global Islamist politics and transnational terrorism (Collins 2008: 219; Deng 2010: 187).

<sup>8</sup>On 1 August 2010, the National Assembly even called for the punishment of stoning to be introduced into national public order legislation, proving that the recent trend points toward an ever stricter implementation of Sharia law (Women Living Under Muslim Laws 2011: 22).

<sup>9</sup>Sharia, as the “sole source of legislation” has even been confirmed by 96 % of the (northern) Sudanese citizens in a referendum in 1998 (Collins 2008: 224).

southern part of Sudan. Thus any kind of federalism or semi-autonomy was seen as detrimental to the Islamist northern regime's quest to secure access to those important resources.

The de facto imposition of Islamic law even on all non-Muslims in the south led to the immediate break-out of the second civil war in 1983. In 1989 Islamist military forces around Omar al-Bashir, supported by the Muslim Brotherhood under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi, usurped power. Al-Bashir established the Popular Defense Forces (PDF) which forcefully recruited young northern men in schools, universities and even on open streets to carry out a Jihad<sup>10</sup> against the "Black African Infidels" in the regions of southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains (Collins 2008: 247; Weber 2008: 84). In the second Sudanese civil war, under the leadership of Dr. John Garang and with the support of some East African states and Israel within its Periphery Doctrine, the rebel forces largely joined under the umbrella of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and evolved into a rather well organized underground army (Mathok 2009: 142–213).

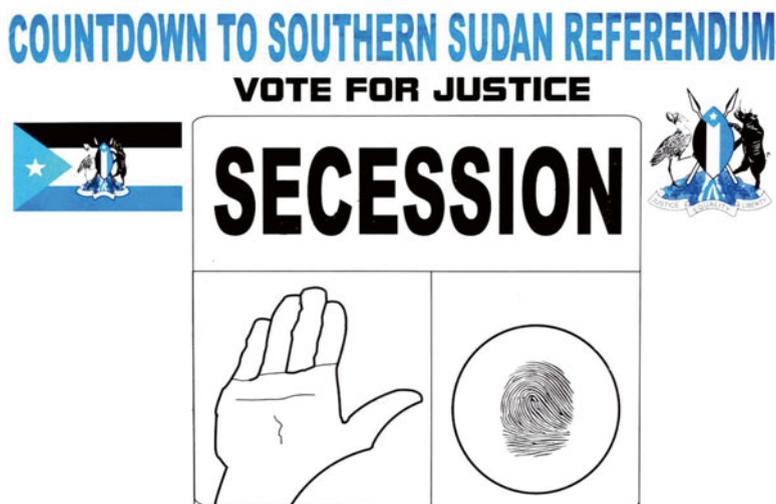
Through Khartoum's military forces, the PDF and government sponsored nomadic militias, the so called "murahilin" (sometimes referred to as "Janjaweed" as in the Darfur civil war), which were mainly from the Arabic "misseriya" or "baqqara" (cattle herder) groups, the north carried out genocidal attacks in the south which caused over two million fatalities, displaced four to six million people (Collins 2008: 258) and, as "inherent part of the war tactic" (Jok 2007: 181), brought approximately 300,000 southerners into slavery who mostly were detained in Arab households or on farms in northern Sudan (Gerber 2006: 68). During the 22 years of civil war, vast traditional settlement areas were deserted and the autochthonous social systems of many tribes have been severely disrupted.

### **184.5 The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005: Breakthrough in the Struggle for Liberty and Self-Determination**

Largely united by the spirit of aspired self-determination, the well-trained and highly motivated troops of the SPLA finally managed to defeat the northern government. Taking into consideration Khartoum's access to sophisticated weapons and, through the support of China, to oil revenues since 1997, this victory only became possible in 2003 when a second front against the central government was opened by rebel movements from the Darfur region. Following a remarkable initiative of neighboring East African states, organized within the regional development organization of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the SPLA and

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<sup>10</sup>According to Williams (2011: 136) in 1992 "a fatwa was issued by ulama (scholars of Islamic doctrine and law) which defined the war against the SPLM as a jihad."



**Fig. 184.2** Ubiquitous advertisements for the independence referendum (Photo by R. Rothfuss)

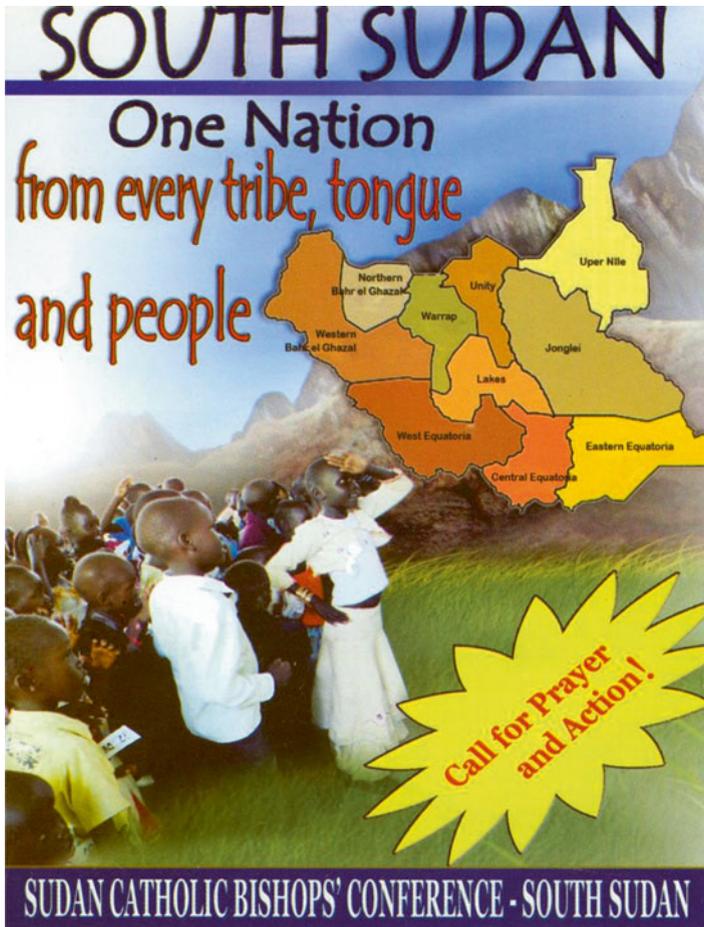
the government in Khartoum agreed on a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.<sup>11</sup> The core of the CPA was a referendum which foresaw the possibility of independence of the south.<sup>12</sup> On 9 January 2011, despite repeated attempts of the northern government to delay and circumvent the referendum, under the pressure of mainly the U.S. and under the scrutiny of international electoral observers, the southern Sudanese population finally got the chance to vote for independence (Fig. 184.2).

Dau (2011: 58) mentions that on 21 September 2010 the President of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir had issued a call for national prayer for a breakthrough in referendum issues as he was on a visit to the United States<sup>13</sup> to meet world leaders and ask for their support for a timely and transparent referendum as stated in the CPA (Fig. 184.3). According to Dau (2011: 59) “senior government officials attended the prayer” and “it was declared [by church leaders] that we would go for 101 days of prayer and fasting for the nation and [...] peaceful conduct of the referendum.” As Dau mentioned in an expert interview on 6 July 2011 in Juba, for most South

<sup>11</sup> As Collin (2008: 268) highlights “the role of the international community, including the “troika,” consisting of the US, the UK and Norway, has often been exaggerated by an ebullient Western press.”

<sup>12</sup> Egypt, supported by Libya, opposed this option of secession, fearing the loss of control of Nile water supply, and started a counter-initiative for negotiating peace between north and south following the premise of unity (Both 2003: 71; Johnson 2011: 24).

<sup>13</sup> According to Ben (2011: 13) on 1 November 2010 the US extended sanctions against Sudan in order to pressure the government to stick to the referendum deadline and, at the same time, offered to drop Sudan from the list of state-sponsors of terrorism if the referendum was held on time and the result was respected.



**Fig. 184.3** Independence prayer week of the South Sudan Catholic Bishop's conference (Image courtesy of Caritas Internationalis, used with permission)

Sudanese the day of the referendum was the most important and longingly awaited day in their lives. In his book, *Free at Last* (Dau 2011), he bared his emotional experiences on the referendum day:

January 9th came and it was a very special day that many of us thought would never come. We were unbelieving believers in that regard. [...] On the day itself, I was reduced to tears of excitement and joy as I witnessed a sea of jovial humanity, singing, dancing and ready to cast their votes and decide their own destiny. They came in their thousands to the polling stations as early as 1 AM and some, I later learned, never slept at all. I arrived at the polling station at 6 AM, thinking I was early. The day of voting being Sunday, I had intended to vote before 8 AM and then go to preach in a church but this was going to be hard with thousands of people queuing ahead of me. However, the voters were generous to let me jump the queue because they recognized me as their pastor. Consequently, I was able to vote shortly after the President and other dignitaries had voted. It was very emotional for me to

vote for the first time in 52 years of my life and in such a historic event. I stood still holding my ballot paper before the ballot box, for a minute or two prior to casting it. I whispered a prayer of gratitude to God and cast my vote in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The poll attendant said “Amen.” She had been watching my lips!

## 184.6 Independence of South Sudan in 2011: (Dis-)integration Between State Secularism, Christian Identity and Tribalism

On 9 January 2012, an overwhelming 98.83 % of the South Sudanese voted for independence. After decades of suffering and disappointing attempts to find a common way of living together within one nation state, South Sudanese used their first opportunity in history for fair elections to choose the “extreme fault-line management option” (Rader 2012: 45): To fall apart from the Muslim-Arab north, despite all looming difficulties and challenges as “one of the least developed places on earth” (Cockett 2010: 253) after “the civil war deprived an entire generation of the right to an education” (Downie and Kennedy 2011: 18).

The population of South Sudan had never experienced a well functioning statehood, granting to its citizens equal rights and opportunities for development. Therefore, in historical perspective, no strong national identity could evolve in relationship to a nation-state. Ethnic groups, tribes and clans have traditionally been the focus of self-identification (Lacher 2011; Jok 2011). Whereas the fight against the oppressive Muslim-Arab regime in the north unified most of the different tribes for several decades, now the recently established Republic of South Sudan faces the challenge of creating a common identity for all southerners, regardless of many persevering tribal disputes<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 184.4). As Downie and Kennedy (2011: 17) state, however, “ethnic rivalry is rarely the sole cause of violence” but an “extremely powerful mobilizing tool, used by politicians and conflict entrepreneurs to manipulate existing grievances over such issues as contested internal borders or the allocation of scarce resources.”

There are no official numbers concerning the proportions of different religious groups in South Sudan. Based on earlier estimations, scholarly works often still assume that a majority of South Sudanese adhere to traditional African religions (Kaufmann 2004: 45). Williams (2011: 137–138) shows that allegiance to the “new found brand of Christianity” comprised only 20 % of southerners in 1980 and reached between 60 and 70 % in the year 2000. The World Council of Churches (WCC) reports the following shares for the total population of South Sudan of an estimated 10.8 million<sup>15</sup>: 60.5 % Christians, 32.9 % adherents to African traditional

<sup>14</sup>In early 2012 these erupted into violent conflicts between the Lou Nuer and Murle tribes over raided cattle in the northeastern part of South Sudan, costing the lives of 3,000 people.

<sup>15</sup>The government of South Sudan estimates that the real size of the population amounts to 11 to 13 million in contrast to the official figures of the 2008 census (8.26 million) under the northern Sudanese administration ([www.southsudaninfo.com/Population\\_of\\_South\\_Sudan](http://www.southsudaninfo.com/Population_of_South_Sudan); 21 May 2012).



**Fig. 184.4** On Independence Day, the government uses banners to remind people of South Sudan to discard tribal cleavages and unite in (Christian) faith (Photo by R. Rothfuss)

religions and 6.2 % Muslims.<sup>16</sup> Bishop Michael Taban Toro, the chair of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), however, estimates that Christians already make up 80 % of the population of South Sudan, by far outnumbering Animists (10 %) and Muslims (10 %).<sup>17</sup> The common trend in Africa that animist religions are more and more being overshadowed and replaced by the dominating monotheistic religions can also be witnessed in South Sudan. In a representative poll, carried out shortly after Independence in September 2011 among 2,225 South Sudanese from randomly chosen households from the urban and rural areas of all districts of the country, showed the astonishing result of 93 % identifying themselves as Christian, 2 % as Muslim and only 1 % as other (IRI, 2011: 67).<sup>18</sup> This information coincides with sky-rocketing membership figures of the established churches organized within the SCC, but also of the Pentecostal churches of South Sudanese origin, such as the Cush International Church which has emerged in recent years (Fig. 184.5). Interestingly, this autochthonous church considers itself as the spiritual trailblazer for the “rising nation of Cush (South Sudan) as the nucleus for the nation of Greater Cush” which “will be made up of all the neighboring states found in the ancient land of Cush from Lake Victoria in Uganda up to Alexandria in Egypt, the ancient Biblical land of Exodus and Babylon” (Cush International Church, 2011 cited in Zillinger 2013: 18).

Natsios (2012: 220–221) underlines that the “value that churches inculcate, and the extent to which they use their influence to pursue the public good, will determine

<sup>16</sup>WCC quotes as source the World Christian Database 2011. According to this statistics, Christian denominations rank as follows: Catholics: 3,579,937; Anglicans: 1,554,000; Protestants: 1,163,600; Pentecostals: 40,482; Orthodox: 3,000; Independent: 48,850 ([www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/africa/south-sudan.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/africa/south-sudan.html); 20 May 2012).

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Bishop Taban on 6 July 2011 in Juba, Southern Sudan.

<sup>18</sup>It has to be assumed, however, that this survey was not truly representative, as the population practicing traditional African religions usually spreads over the most remote areas of the rural parts of South Sudan which are physically hardly accessible for interviewers.



**Fig. 184.5** Baptism ceremony of the Pentecostal Cush International Church at the shores of the White Nile in Juba (Photo by R. Rothfuss)

the South's future. [...] In South Sudan, Christian churches are *the* central private institution, exercising a powerful influence in the development of the emerging social order." Christianity as the uniting faith of South Sudanese citizens is being seen by the government as an important source of common identity and shared values. In a meeting with 70 delegates of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) on 6 July 2011 in Juba, the Minister of Information, Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin stressed the role of Christian churches to unite all tribes of South Sudan and serve as common source of identity instead of tribalism which too often has led to violent confrontation, paternalism and corruption in the past. However, the IRI (2011: 63) poll shows that identification among the South Sudanese citizens with their new nation is already making tremendous progress: only 3 % of the respondents considered themselves exclusively as member of a tribe and 6 % self-identified more strongly as tribe than South Sudanese citizen. An astonishingly high 49 % identified themselves only through South Sudanese citizenship whereas tribal affiliations did not matter at all, and 23 % indicating that they "feel more South Sudanese than tribe." There may be a difference between a personal statement being made during an interview in times of euphoria shortly after independence and the often unconscious behavior and action of people in the struggles of daily life. Yet, a similar poll from Nigeria showed a very different pattern of self-identification through nationality. In that country struggling with a



**Fig. 184.6** Independence celebrations in Juba, July 9, 2011: “We are not worse Arabs but better Africans” (Photo by R. Rothfuss)

north-south fault line conflict as well, only 5 % of Muslims and 9 % of Christians see nationality as their most important source of identity whereas 91 % of Muslims and 76 % of Christians see religion in that position (Pew Forum 2006) (Fig. 184.6).

In its struggle for self-determination, be it within a federal state of Sudan or an independent Republic of South Sudan, the SPLA always made clear that it rejected the adoption of any religion as state religion as was the case under successive Islamist governments in Khartoum, the most fundamentalist being the present one. In the 2011 transitional constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, regardless of the reference to the “Almighty God” in its preamble,<sup>19</sup> the separation of state and religion and religious freedom rights have been duly anchored in part I, article 8:

Religion:

- (1) Religion and State shall be separate.
- (2) All religions shall be treated equally and religion or religious beliefs shall not be used for divisive purposes.

<sup>19</sup>“Preamble: We, the People of South Sudan, grateful to the Almighty God for giving the people of South Sudan the wisdom and courage to determine their destiny and future through a free, transparent, and peaceful referendum [...]” The full text of the transitional constitution can be downloaded from [www.sudantribune.com/IMG/pdf/The\\_Draft\\_Transitional\\_Constitution\\_of\\_the\\_ROSS2-2.pdf](http://www.sudantribune.com/IMG/pdf/The_Draft_Transitional_Constitution_of_the_ROSS2-2.pdf) (21 May 2012).



**Fig. 184.7** Spiritual guidance from the Sudan Council of Churches for the geopolitical reorientation of the 54th state in Africa (Photo by R. Rothfuss)

According to Bishop Michael Taban Toro, the chair of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), the governmental Directorate of Religious Affairs in dealing with the SCC and the Islamic Council seemed to even miss out on the principle of equity in its attempt to uphold the practice of nondiscrimination. For example, if the government gave out equal amount of subvention or financial support to both faith groups, for example, for their contributions to the program during independence celebrations – despite their enormous difference in size: “This is where our government has to be very careful.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite fully implemented state secularism it is no secret that 95 % of all key persons in the present South Sudanese government are strongly rooted in Christian faith.<sup>21</sup> In a meeting between Dr. Barnaba Marial, Minister of Information and Broadcasting and church leaders assembled in an SCC meeting in Juba on 6 July 2011, he highlighted the role of the church to unite the fractious tribal society of South Sudan. He stated, however, that despite the central contribution that the government expects from Christian churches in the long-term unification and national identity formation process, credibility of church and state organizations needed to be upheld by maintaining a due institutional distance (Fig. 184.7).

The national anthem surely is one of the most powerful elements contributing to a common sense of national identity. In August 2010, all citizens were invited by the then semi-autonomous government to compose the future South Sudanese national

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Bishop Taban on 6 July 2011 in Juba, Southern Sudan.

<sup>21</sup>Newspaper article in the Sudan Tribune edition of 24 February 2012: [www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id\\_article=41707](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=41707) (24 May 2012)

anthem. After three rounds of competition, students from the University of Juba won with their lyrics titled “South Sudan Oyee” (Hurray)<sup>22</sup>:

Oh God  
 We praise and glorify you  
 For your grace on South Sudan,  
 Land of great abundance  
 Uphold us united in peace and harmony.

Oh motherland  
 We rise raising flag with the guiding star  
 And sing songs of freedom with joy,  
 For justice, liberty and prosperity  
 Shall forever more reign.

Oh great patriots  
 Let us stand up in silence and respect,  
 Saluting our martyrs whose blood  
 Cemented our national foundation,  
 We vow to protect our nation  
 Oh God bless South Sudan.

In contrast to this joyful, yet historically sensitive anthem, reflecting the hope and aspirations of the youth of the young nation South Sudan, the formerly shared national anthem of Sudan “We are the army of God and of our land” and now anthem of the remaining rump state of the northern Republic of the Sudan breathes a burdensome spirit of fighting and suffering to uphold its imaginary supremacy<sup>23</sup>:

We are the army of God and of our land,  
 We shall never fail when called to sacrifice.  
 Whether braving death, hardship or pain,  
 We give our lives as the price of glory.

May this Our land, Sudan, live long,  
 Showing all nations the way.

Sons of the Sudan, summoned now to serve,  
 Shoulder the task of preserving our country.

Whereas the northern Sudanese state motto “Victory is ours” does not imply any ethical values and completely disregards the suffering of the unmentioned “others” who supposedly shall have been defeated, the official motto of the Republic of South Sudan highlights the humanistic ideals of a modern secular state that the deprived people of the Black African regions of Sudan had so long been longing and fighting for: “Justice, liberty, prosperity” (Fig. 184.8).

The South Sudanese flag summarizes some of the most important ingredients of national identity of the young nation, including a reference to the over two million people who died during the liberation struggle. Both in the anthem and the flag, the

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<sup>22</sup>Insiders say that President Salva Kiir supported the proposed anthem so strongly that he even threatened critics of it, that he would not be available as the first president after independence if the religious elements were skipped. Listen to the anthem at: [www.goss-online.org/magnoliaPublic/en/about/symbols.html](http://www.goss-online.org/magnoliaPublic/en/about/symbols.html) (21 May 2012).

<sup>23</sup>Listen to the anthem at: [www.nationalanthems.info/sd.htm](http://www.nationalanthems.info/sd.htm) (21 May 2012).



**Fig. 184.8** Jubilant woman with two of the most important symbols of the new national identity: the Christian cross and the South Sudanese flag (Photo by R. Rothfuss)

remembrance of this national trauma is given a prominent place, lifting up to martyr status the departed liberation fighters, family members and friends who every single South Sudanese had to mourn. According to the constitutional state secularism, the government deliberately avoided any religious symbols or interpretations concerning the flag. Initially it has been used by the SPLM/A during the decade long liberation struggle. According to the government its colors symbolize the following<sup>24</sup>:

- Red: Blood that was shed by the liberation struggle martyrs
- White: Peace attained after many years of the liberation struggle
- Blue: Waters of the Nile River, a source of life for the country
- Green: The country's natural resources
- Black: Black African skin
- Yellow: Star guiding the country and its citizens.

In a gesture of forgiveness and reconciliation with the north, southern President Salva Kiir spontaneously declared in presence of the northern President Omar al-Bashir and a cheering crowd of half a million people attending the independence celebrations on 9 July 2011 in the new capital of Juba<sup>25</sup> that the Sudanese flag that

<sup>24</sup>Please refer to the section on "State Symbols" under the chapter "About South Sudan" on the government website: [www.goss.org](http://www.goss.org) (25 May 2012).

<sup>25</sup>On 2 September 2012, the Council of Ministers decided to build a new planned capital at Ramciel, over 100 miles north of Juba, together with an international airport for large cargo planes, allowing to capitalize on South Sudan's strategic location between eastern, central and northern

had just been lowered would not be given back, as stated in the diplomatic protocol, but it would be kept in the archives of the Republic of South Sudan in remembrance of the long way that both countries had gone together. Already during the announcement of the referendum results on 9 February 2011, Salva Kiir had pointed out in his speech “Hope for a Better Future” that South Sudan was willing to seek amicable relations with its northern neighbor<sup>26</sup>: “To President Bashir [...], we will work together to help Sudan regain its pride. We will assist in persuading the world to remove sanctions from Sudan.” During Sunday service in the Saint Theresa Roman Catholic cathedral in Juba on 16 January 2011 the President even called southerners to forgive the north for the death of two million killed during the second civil war: “For our deceased brothers and sisters, particularly those who have fallen during the time of the struggle, may God bless them with eternal peace and, like Jesus Christ on the cross, forgive those who have forcibly caused their death.”<sup>27</sup>

The Independence of South Sudan with its major and unusually tall Dinka tribe, its symbolic flag raising ceremony and fanfare play on Independence Day was seen by many South Sudanese, as the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 18 from the eighth century BC, concerning the fate of the Black African land of Cush alongside the upper Nile river<sup>28</sup>:

Sudan Will Be Punished<sup>29</sup>

<sup>1</sup>How horrible it will be for the land of whirring wings which lies beyond the rivers of Sudan. <sup>2</sup>It sends messengers by sea in boats made of reeds skimming over the surface of the water. Go, swift messengers, to a tall and smooth-skinned people, a people who are feared far and near, a strong and aggressive nation, whose land is divided by rivers. <sup>3</sup>Look when someone raises a flag on the mountains. Listen when someone blows a ram’s horn, all you inhabitants of the world who live on the earth. <sup>4</sup>This is what the Lord says to me: I will keep quiet and watch from my dwelling place. My presence will be like scorching heat in the sunshine, like heavy dew in the heat of the harvest. <sup>5</sup>Before the harvest, when blossoms are gone and grapes are ripening from blossoms, he will cut off the shoots with pruning shears and chop off the spreading branches. <sup>6</sup>They will be left for the birds of prey on the mountains and the wild animals. The birds of prey will feed on them in the summer, and all the wild animals on earth will feed on them in the winter. <sup>7</sup>At that time gifts will be brought to the Lord of Armies from a tall and smooth-skinned people, a people who are feared far and near, a strong and aggressive nation, whose land is divided by rivers. They will be brought to Mount Zion, the place where the name of the Lord of Armies is.

It seems that with Isaiah, chapter 18 South Sudan has found another unifying “foundation myth” that obviously every nation has and needs to have to join its yet fractious society around a heroic narrative or a bright destiny. As a natural consequence of believing that this verse refers to the new nation of South Sudan, church

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Africa to form a new international trade hub ([www.sudantribune.com/Ramciel-s-survey-as-South-Sudan,42133](http://www.sudantribune.com/Ramciel-s-survey-as-South-Sudan,42133); 25 May 2012).

<sup>26</sup>The full text of the speech can be downloaded from the government website under “Press Releases“: [www.goss.org](http://www.goss.org) (24 May 2012).

<sup>27</sup>[www.sudantribune.com/Salva-Kiir-urges-Southerners-to,37650](http://www.sudantribune.com/Salva-Kiir-urges-Southerners-to,37650) (25 May 2012).

<sup>28</sup>The first time I was confronted with the belief that Isaiah 18 was prophesying the future of South Sudan was on a flight from Addis Ababa to Juba on 2 July 2011 when a pastor was sitting next to me reading the Bible.

<sup>29</sup>God’s Word Translation (GW).

leaders started getting active in making the prophecy a self-fulfilling one. On 23 February 2012 several church representatives presented to Vice-President Dr. Riek Machar their plan to undertake a pilgrimage to Israel and asked him for financial support and advice for an appropriate gift to be brought to the Lord at Mount Zion.<sup>30</sup>

The government of South Sudan itself has found its own way to express its strong bonds with Israel and the Jewish culture symbolically. Repeatedly, it has confirmed that, as the newest state in the world, it will establish its embassy in the historical Jewish capital, the “Holy City” of Jerusalem, and not in the modern political capital of Tel-Aviv. While the Israeli government seems to appreciate this politically delicate expression of gratitude for its decade long support of the South Sudanese cause within its Periphery Doctrine, the Arab nations which had strongly opposed independence of the South (Both 2003: 70) presumably will see it as an affront against their cultural, religious and finally political aspirations projected onto this probably most intensively contested and – for three world religions – most meaningful place on earth. In a speech in early May 2012 at a rally for the presidential election campaign of the Muslim Brotherhood and now President of Egypt, Dr. Muhammad Mursi, an Imam made clear in the presence of tens of thousands of spectators who were chanting “Millions of martyrs march toward Jerusalem!” that the vision of a Pan-Islamic Caliphate, uniting Egypt with other Arab countries of the region will be realized with Mursi in power, and the capital of the “United States of Arabs” shall be the reconquered city of Jerusalem.<sup>31</sup> This religious symbolism may be qualified as just being a politician’s attempt to please voter’s emotions. Yet, the radicalization of the masses should not be underestimated in its potentially devastating political effect for the Middle East if any unexpected incidents should deepen the fractions along this major sociopolitical fault line in the region.

## 184.7 Independence: From Renewed Calls for Jihad to External Reorientation

Because of current oil disputes, arising from disagreement over Khartoum’s overpricing of its pipeline and port for shipment of oil from South Sudan and alleged failure to account for crude worth hundreds of millions of dollars, South Sudan has completely stopped its oil production since the end of January 2012, despite its 98 % dependency of state revenues on oil (Natsios 2012: 210). As a consequence, tensions on the north-south fault line have been increasing rapidly again. On 20 April 2012, Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir<sup>32</sup> delivered a hate speech in Port

<sup>30</sup> [www.sudantribune.com/Machar-says-independence-of-South,42151](http://www.sudantribune.com/Machar-says-independence-of-South,42151) (21 May 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Watch film section 1:51 to 3:30: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjmT1uBgrG0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjmT1uBgrG0) (24 May 2012).

<sup>32</sup> An arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir was issued on 4 March 2009 by the International Criminal Court due to crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture and rape) and war crimes (pillaging and attacks against civilians) committed against Black African Muslim tribes in Darfur since 2003.

Sudan, directed mainly against Black African minorities and SPLM-North rebels in the Nuba Mountains, where an estimated 30 % of the population is Christian, but also threatening the South Sudanese government<sup>33</sup>:

Our Lord, open up a new gateway for us – a gateway to Paradise, Allah willing. Our casualties go to Paradise and theirs go to the Hellfire. [...] If anybody dares to lay his hand on Sudan, we will chop it off. [...] We don't want any vermin left in the Blue Nile Province. We don't want any insect left in the Nuba Mountains. We want [Defense Minister] Abd Al-Rahim here to deliver us the land in its entirety before the end of autumn and leave the land of Sudan free of any poisonous vermin. [...] We want to liberate our brothers in the South from those vermin.

The Governor of the province of North Kordofan, Mu'tasim Zaki Al-Din further fueled hate against the neighboring country by resorting to conspiracy theory while addressing the political alliance between Israel and South Sudan and calling for Jihad against the infidels:

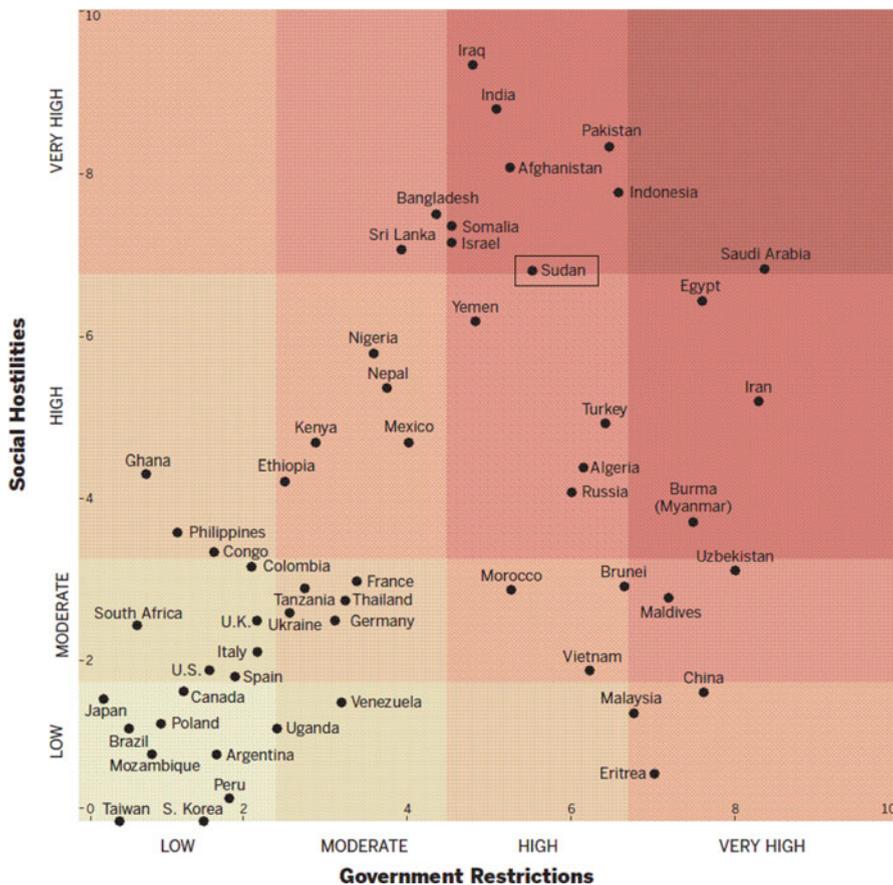
South Sudan [...] wants to backtrack and continue in the path of enmity, and of subservience to global Zionism, which remains hostile to our country. But we praise Allah for allowing us these moments so that we could get dust on our boots on the path of Allah, in response to the call to Jihad, from which we took a respite for a while because we wanted peace. Peace is the basis of Islam. [...] We were previously in the forests of the south – steadfast "mujahideen." The path of Jihad continues, even if it took a few days respite for the sake of peace. Jihad, however, must return. Today, we in the Province of North Kordofan, just like in any other province of Sudan, have declared a state of alert and mobilization. Mr. President, these are the sons and daughters of Kordofan who have responded to the call of Jihad.<sup>34</sup>

When a "Jihad" is declared it allows the government to extract funds from Sudan's Muslim evangelical agencies, the so called "da'wa" (Williams 2011: 137). Moreover, it enables the Sudanese regime to raise support from other Muslim countries for the "Holy War."<sup>35</sup> To use De Blij's (2009: 80) terminology, we would qualify these statements as another sign of the alleged "twenty-first century Endarkenment" that Islam, seemingly, is not undergoing in Sudan alone. Extremist movements, like the Muslim Brotherhood that has nurtured Islamist totalitarianism in Sudanese politics throughout the past 60 years and the al-Qaeda related Ansar al-Suna, the mainstream Sudanese movement of Salafi Islam which incited recent

<sup>33</sup>The speech has been aired on Sudan TV: [www.ajjac.org.au/news/article/sudanese-president-s-all-out-call-for-genocide](http://www.ajjac.org.au/news/article/sudanese-president-s-all-out-call-for-genocide) (25 May 2012).

<sup>34</sup>This statement is clear evidence of another present round of dangerous mobilization of religion and race in a struggle over resource control. Yet, some international observers tend to neglect the fundamentalist character of the Bashir regime (for example, Kröpelin, 2010) and the international community seems to have capitulated concerning the aim to preventing the northern regime from committing further war crimes and genocide.

<sup>35</sup>It is interesting, however, that in May 2012 the government of the Islamic monarchy of Qatar provided hundreds of millions of dollars to the Bank of South Sudan as a credit line for importing essential commodities which require hard currency ([www.sudantribune.com/US-based-billionaires-pledge-to,42677](http://www.sudantribune.com/US-based-billionaires-pledge-to,42677); 25 May 2012).



**Fig. 184.9** Restriction of religious freedom in the 50 most populous countries (Source: Rainer Rothfuss and Yakubu Joseph, data from Pew Forum, 2009: 28)

attacks against Christians and the torching of a church in Khartoum<sup>36</sup> are on the rise in almost every country of the world. North Africa and the Middle East were religiously much more diverse a hundred years ago than they are today (Johnson and Kenneth 2009) (Fig. 184.9).

<sup>36</sup>According to a South Sudanese newsblog “On 21 April, a 300-strong mob attacked a Presbyterian church compound in Khartoum’s Al-Jiraif District” just 3 days after “President Omar al-Bashir vowed to ‘liberate’ South Sudan from its government, labeling it an “insect” regime.” (<http://south-sudannet.activeboard.com/t48833714/muslims-storm-burn-and-loot-church-in-khartoum>; 25 May 2012). According to the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) the atrocities were committed by members of the Salafi Ansar al-Suna.

In a comparative analysis, the Pew Forum's (2009: 14, 24) report *Global Restrictions on Religion* showed that Muslim governments and civil societies are on average the strongest opponents of the religious freedom rights laid down in article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Non-Muslim minorities faced, throughout the twentieth century, and still face discrimination and even systematic persecution in many predominantly Muslim countries of the world. The long-term results of historical genocide and forced eviction, as well as persevering systematic discrimination can be observed in a country like Turkey, widely hailed for having promoted a moderate version of Islam within a secular state: Christian population in Turkey dropped from approximately 20 % in 1900 to 0.15 % at present (Backes 2005: 128). A similar development has been sought by the Khartoum government in southern Sudan through a decade long civil war including genocide, ethnic cleansing of traditionally non-Muslim settlement areas and abduction into slavery combined with forced conversion to Islam. It is estimated that even today over 35,000 Black African citizens remain enslaved under northern Sudanese Arabs.<sup>37</sup> On 8 April 2012, the al-Bashir regime, apparently in another attempt to finally achieve the pure Arab-Muslim territory at least in the remaining rump state of the north, has set an ultimatum of 30 days for the remaining 500,000 to 700,000 Black Africans, out of previously over two million southerners, to leave the country or otherwise loose citizenship. Sudanese of southern origin, willing to move south, even if many of the younger ones have never lived there, reportedly have been kept from getting aboard airplanes to Juba due to allegedly missing special documents for travelling abroad.<sup>38</sup> The government of South Sudan, contrasting diplomatic habits of equal mutual treatment in the relationship with other nations, has offered all northern Sudanese living in the south dual citizenship rights. Furthermore, it has pleaded for a soft north-south border to allow the traditional cattle herders from the north, to maintain their traditional livelihoods and transhumance patterns.<sup>39</sup>

Optimistic observers had expected that independence leading to the formation of a sovereign state, recognized by the United Nations and the African Union, and the imposition of an international boundary would halt violent military action against the people and territories of South Sudan.<sup>40</sup> There is evidence that the government of northern Sudan, besides having charged from the south exorbitant pipeline usage

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<sup>37</sup>The faith-based NGO Christian Solidarity International still repeatedly reports the liberation and transfer to South Sudan of hundreds of slaves every year ([http://csi-usa.org/slave\\_liberation.html](http://csi-usa.org/slave_liberation.html)). Further details on the fates and living conditions of contemporary slaves in Sudan were documented by Gerber (2006) and Walzer (2009).

<sup>38</sup>It is worth noting that 42.35 % of the southern Sudanese living for decades as refugees or migrants in northern Sudan voted against independence on 9 January 2011.

<sup>39</sup>Statement by the South Sudanese ambassador to Canada, Joseph Moum Majak Ngor Malok at the Stand Leadership Conference, 15–16 October 2011 in Toronto ([www.goss-online.org](http://www.goss-online.org); 25 May 2012).

<sup>40</sup>As Wagschal et al. (2010: 19) have shown, only 14 % of all violent conflicts worldwide between 1945 and 2007 evolved across international borders.

fees,<sup>41</sup> has seized considerable amounts of crude oil by underreporting transduction volumes,<sup>42</sup> illegal shipping and clandestine secondary pipelines. Unsettled territorial disputes in oil rich regions and the lack of demarcation alongside 20 % of the 1,800 km (1,240 miles) – of common border incite the north to attack both nearby South Sudanese communities and the Black African ethnic minorities in the northern Sudanese Nuba mountains, the latter facing literally genocide with daily aerial bombings of villages. A local rebel commander from the Nubian SPLA-North reflects the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the Islamist regime in Khartoum and the marginalized peasant communities in the Nuba region, facing a major famine, by declaring<sup>43</sup>: “We will fight the Omar Bashir regime until we die. Then our children will fight. And if they die, then the Arabs will make babies with Nuba women until the population becomes Arab.”

## 184.8 Conclusion: Geopolitics of the Subaltern

Schroer (2006: 214–215) explains the “renaissance of the regional and the local,” in extreme cases, even leading to secession and hence the reconstitution of container spaces, as a growing demand of people for self-segregation and preservation, driven by globalization. The people of South Sudan opposed over decades the incorporation into the “geographical imagination” (Gregory 1994) of a culturally homogenizing container space of an artificially construed Muslim and Arab Sudan. For South Sudan, secession does not mean to constitute a new container space in order to escape the challenges of globalization. For the historically marginalized South Sudanese it means to escape from a post-colonial container-like prison and to achieve through statehood an appropriate framework and the right of self-determination and participation as dignified human beings in African and global society.

When Routledge (1998: 236) coined the term “anti-geopolitics” to describe the resistance within civil society that “challenges the notion that the interests of the state’s political class are identical to the community’s interests,” he sticks to a mere organizational delimitation of the forces behind “anti-geopolitics.” It is too simplistic to see the political, economic, and cultural hegemony of the state on the *dominant* side alone and the subaltern position of civil society, including religious institutions, the media and educational institutions, on the *dominated* side. The lat-

<sup>41</sup>Usual pipeline transduction fees vary between 60 and 80 cents of a US Dollar per barrel for the distance between the north-south border and Port Sudan. Khartoum, however, charged the South \$32.20 per barrel.

<sup>42</sup>The NGO Global Witness has revealed discrepancies of 9-26 % between the oil production figures published by the Khartoum government and those reported by Chinese state-owned CNPC ([www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/corruption/oil-gas-and-mining/sudan-and-south-sudan](http://www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/corruption/oil-gas-and-mining/sudan-and-south-sudan); 25 May 2012).

<sup>43</sup>New York Times documentary by Nicolas D. Kristof, 22 February 2012: [www.nytimes.com/2012/02/23/opinion/kristof-dodging-bombers-in-sudan.html?\\_r=2&ref=opinion](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/23/opinion/kristof-dodging-bombers-in-sudan.html?_r=2&ref=opinion) (25 May 2012).

ter often are mere instruments in the hands of powerful institutions, often at the service of the state but sometimes also of powerful segments of civil society. The case of South Sudan exemplifies very well that a state and military-like organized movement like the SPLA can be in the subaltern position over decades. On the contrary, an extremist religious movement stemming from civil society like the Muslim Brotherhood can serve to establish the cultural and religious hegemony of a totalitarian government that oppresses non-conforming parts of civil society. Therefore, we wish to speak of the “geopolitics of the subaltern” when oppressed groups, nations or even states strive in a systematic and strategic way for the recognition of their rights and for full emancipation. Both civil society groups and states, respectively state-like organizations, as we have seen, can be perpetrators as well as victims of oppression. Therefore, there is a need to develop appropriate strategies and concepts for a more broadly defined “geopolitics of the subaltern.”

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