Dismantling the 'Deep State' in Sudan

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Abstract

In the wake of the revolution in Sudan, there has been a significant amount of discussion about the deep state. These discussions emanate from other examples across the globe, where the deep state is perceived to be an interlocking system of shadowy interests that direct government actions in ways that undermine democratic principles. What kinds of interests control Sudan—a country that has been an authoritarian state until recently—need further analysis. This article unpacks the core elements of the deep state in the country, how it developed, and the areas in which influences exist. I argue that the deep state is more than kleptocracy or corruption alone. Rather, following the work of Bourdieu, I contend that there are four major types of capital that permeate the deep state and allow those involved to maintain control. Following from this, I argue that dismantling the deep state means more than asset seizure and tracking of illicit financial flows. It must encompass a more fundamental and difficult transformation of systems of privilege, education, and connection in Sudan that are at the heart of core-periphery relations.

Introduction

The concept of a deep state at the heart of government and politics has gained more traction over recent years (Filkens 2012; Lofgren 2014). The idea has been used to convey a government within a government or, as others have put it, a shadow state where the seat of real power lies. While the concept of the deep state is sometimes questioned, it seems particularly apt in the case of Sudan, where the government throws more shadow than light, and where stories of repression and exclusion are the leitmotif of the country's post-colonial existence. In a country where private networks matter and where they can be the difference between life or death, the deep state represents a certain strain of those interests built

over decades of authoritarian rule. Today, as Sudan is governed by a hybrid Sovereign Council in which key actors from the past are in powerful positions, there is good reason to suppose that those interests remain and are shaping the country in ways that may damage its future.

The deep state has been variously described as a 'conspiratorial cabal', "a set of agencies that that are hiding in plain sight" (Lofgren 2014), or a network of like-minded individuals pursuing a particular agenda. Hailing from the Turkish term *derin devlet,* it has come to connote both the clandestine and destabilizing aspects of the intelligence state—a sense of deep power that has the ability to discipline even those at the helm of government (Filkens 2012). In Sudan, the term deep state has often been used to describe the issue of state capture and kleptocracy leading to corruption and the privatization of assets. As the Enough Project (2017, 2) contends: "Sudan's government is a violent kleptocracy, a system of misrule characterized by state capture and co-opted institutions, where a small ruling group maintain power indefinitely through various forms of corruption and violence." While this certainly describes part of the problem, it is, I contend, inadequate to explain why certain ideas prevail and why the interests of a few are able to so successfully inscribe tracks of power and behaviour into the landscape of Sudanese politics over time.

Trying to understand how a deep state installs itself at the heart of government and society needs an analysis that links micro level behaviours to macro level outcomes. It needs to explain how everyday decisions to appropriate resources are linked to a larger kleptocratic network. It also needs to understand the conditions of possibility that allow that to happen. Consequently, we need to go further than understanding corruption and theft alone. At the heart of these conditions are ideologies, intelligence agencies, media centres, communication networks, operatives, and outside lobbyists who facilitate a discursive regime that changes the very nature of what counts for truth. In Sudan, besides the intelligence agencies such as the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) and the Sudanese Media Centre (SMC) who were the recognisable face of this enterprise, there are a battery of regime officials and hangers-on who inhabit the world of representation about what Sudan is and what it claims to be. These Armani-suited individuals are the epitome of the reach of the deep state. They wear power on their bodies, in their educational credentials, and in their use of multiple languages to feign the kind of fake cosmopolitanism that lets them 'pass' in the international sphere. Dismantling this kind of privilege takes a long time—often a generation, or more, to remove.

Changing regimes changes the government and for the most part, it changes institutional office holders. Dismantling the deep state takes a lot longer. On taking power in 2019, Sudan's Transitional Government (STG) published a document entitled "General Framework for the Program of the Transitional Government" (STG 2019). It writes the immediate and urgent priorities to set Sudan on a different course. It deals with what is manageable now—the normative—in the belief that correcting the rest can come later. What it cannot do is deal with the status disparities, the ways of knowing, the connections, the ways of talking and being that buy credibility. In the shadowy world of power and realpolitik, it is these tools and the sense of certainty in who you are and who you know, that are the enduring aspects of absolute power.

This paper analyses the deep state in Sudan and asks what it might take to dismantle it. Looking at early roots, I analyse its composition and the areas through which it has been entrenched in modern day Sudan. I look at not only illicit financial flows and the restructuring of economy into a kleptocracy, but also the other agencies, public and private, that have created an enduring network of patronage and advantage. Using ideas of habitus and capital associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), I also show how privilege is marked on the bodies and minds of the actors that constitute the deep state. Finally, I turn to the ways in which this can be dismantled to assist those who are now trying to make change.

Building the Deep State
> *"From where did those creatures emerge?"*
>
> Tayeb Salih (quoted in Khalid 2003)

On Friday morning, 30 June 1989, an Islamist military coup was carried out in Sudan. It ended a period of political turbulence overseen by the privileged families of colonial lineage in Sudan, but it also inserted something much more nefarious and difficult to dislodge into the political landscape of the country.

Led by Brigadier Omar Hassan al-Bashir, a relatively unknown military officer from the north of Khartoum, it was the brainchild of Hassan al-Turabi, the secretary of *al-Jabhah al-Islamiyah a-Qawmiyah* (The National Islamic Front). Besides al-Turabi, who was the intellectual author, there was also the planner, Ali Osman Muhammad Taha, the Deputy Secretary General of the NIF who masterminded the coup and how it unfolded. In order to throw some shadow about who the coup plotters were, Hassan al-Turabi, Ibrahim al Sanoussi, and Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahman, (two of al-Turabi's close colleagues), were arrested post-

coup and detained in Kober Prison (Gallab 2008). Imprisoning these Islamist leaders alongside a group of usual suspects such as trade unionists, opposition politicians, and lawyers was a portent of what was to come. It indicated a deep and coordinated level of subterfuge, where those at the helm of the Islamist movement could achieve their aims, while simultaneously disguising their role in attempting to reshape the power structure of the country.

Planning did not stop with subterfuge around the political structure; it also extended to the information architecture of the country. As the coup took place, non-religious news agencies, newspapers, and TV stations were closed. In their place, a new media agency—rather unimaginatively called The Sudan News Agency (SUNA)—was formed. As Gallab points out, this effectively created a new media clearing house which was the only authorised news agency for news production and dissemination. These actions also resulted in the removal of more than one thousand professional reporters and journalists (Gallab 2008). In their stead, other newspapers were created, which directly represented the regime's position (Gallab 2008).

These changes created a strange duality of internal and external representations which have shaped Sudan until today. At home, the domestic population was treated to a daily diet of localised state propaganda. As Lisa Wedeen (1999) has argued, this propaganda produced a politics of 'as-if' where in public, the population dissembled in the face of power and acted 'as if' they agreed with the regime. This surface compliance was at least guaranteed by the Sudan Penal Code (1991), which specified all kinds of punishments for those who were not good Islamic citizens. Those who did not comply could look forward to a public whipping for failing to ensure *al amr bil m'arouf wa al nahi 'an al munkar* (for enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil), or harassment from wandering bands of young NIF security agents who had no compunction whatsoever about beating those who were 'contrary to public morals' (Khalid 2003, 218).

If internal representations produced a politics of dissimulation, then external representations were a whole other story. Outside of Sudan, there was a battle to 'win the hearts and minds' of westerners that involved utilising deep understandings of western society and deploying them against diplomatic actors to reduce concerns about the Islamist agenda. Hassan al-Turabi was a master of this, since he was educated at the Sorbonne in Paris, but he was by no means alone. Adherents of the regime, and those in its security apparatus, were frequently sent to external universities to master the ways they could engage with western

counterparts. This training was not only a matter of language skills, but also an understanding of *libs al-shal wa istimal al-jawal*, as Gallab (2008, 149) puts it, i.e., how to wear a necktie and how to use a mobile phone.

All of these changes meant that post 1989, Sudan was starting to emerge as a completely transformed society. A key part of this transformation was the nature of politics, which, like the rest of the system was Janus-faced, having sharply contrasting forms of language and representation. In 1992, at the start of the revolution there was a 'sham' election of hand-picked parliamentarians. Yet, as Khalid points out, this action was to disguise what came to be known as the Council of Forty, which was an inner core of NIF adherents (Khalid 2003, 198). This group infiltrated and assimilated all sources of power and money in the country such as the "army, police, security agencies, banks, media, education, mosques and anything that was left of the civil society" (Khalid 2003, 198). The glue that held this project together was al-Turabi's system of governance, called *Shar'a Allah* (Laws of God).

What emerged was a system in which religious ideology, state security, media information and wealth were welded together into an all-encompassing system. That system became known as the *tamkiin* (consolidating) strategy. At the heart of this strategy was an economic operation, started much earlier by Hassan al-Turabi under Nimeiri's rule, to funnel resources though Islamic Banks. These banks, such as Faisal Islamic Bank, were in turn part of a strategy by the Muslim Brotherhood who were able to leverage contacts across the Gulf to pull money into Islamic countries using *zakat* (alms) principles. One of the factors that allowed this situation to occur in Sudan was the relationship between 'Abd al-Rahim Hamdi, the architect of Sudanese Islamic banking, and Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Faisal Al Saud, who had Islamic banking interests in many parts of the world.

These developments created a foundation for Sudan's government and the shadow state that lay within. Unaccountable to the people who had by this time lost self-respect through policies of "demoralization, intimidation and dehumanization" (Khalid 2003, 219), the deep state controlled Sudan from within and without with the help of a network of believers, cronies, and allies who saw authoritarianism as a better option than political instability. This authoritarian mafiocracy, to quote Khalid (2003, 216), met its own reckoning in October 1999, when al-Turabi introduced a bill that was perceived as an attempt to limit President al-Bashir's power. Al-Bashir seized the moment in December of that year to launch coup number two and remove al-Turabi from the Islamist structure he had created.

This second coup was truly a 'night of the long knives' where Islamist acolytes turned on their leader. This meant that Hassan al-Turabi was side-lined by those very allies such as Ali Osman Muhammad Taha and Omar al-Bashir who had helped him in the 1989 coup. As al-Turabi was excised from government core and removed to Kober Prison again, the core of the deep state remained. Deprived now of its religious ideologue and mercurial front man, it paired down al-Turabi's *ingaz* (salvation) vision, to a more bureaucratised model instead. According to Gallab (2008), this created three groups at the core: bureaucrats, security, and military personnel. Each with its own interests and 'tribal' affiliations, the deep state was now consolidated around powerhouses that were increasingly entrenched, paranoid, and fearful of each other and what they might be planning.

The Deep State Core

Despite these issues, the deep state strengthened in the period from 1999 onwards on account of threats from without. One of them emanated from al-Turabi himself, whose disaffected followers now joined an uprising in Sudan's west, in Darfur. This movement, known as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), was undergirded by a publication called *al-kitab al-aswad* (The Black Book), which had started circulating in mosques in Khartoum since 2000. Using data that would only have come from those who had connections to power, the book carefully spelled out the economic and other inequities between the capital (usually referred to as the centre) and the peripheries. On top of this, the long running conflict with the peoples of Southern Sudan still raged on, consuming significant government resources to keep it going.

The core necessarily reflected these threats and the need to contain and destroy such uprisings across the country. What emerged was a highly developed intelligence state, a plethora of formal military and informal militia actors, and an economic model that was premised on an extractive mode of capital accumulation. Understanding how to dismantle such as system requires understanding how the technocratic, intelligence, and military elements knit together. Crucially, it also means dismantling the one thing that has continued and strengthened over time: the consolidation and interlocking forms of economic, human, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984).

Bourdieu, in his early work about why power and privilege persists over time, noted that there are four forms of capital. The first is *economic capital*, which can be classed as control over financial flows, resources, land, property, and other material goods. The second is *cultural capital*,

which encompasses educational qualifications and knowledge of how to move within the society and its elite groups. This includes knowing how to dress, how to carry yourself, how to talk and engage, what counts as acceptable behaviour, and so on. The third is *social capital,* which describes the network of connections a person has. These connections may be to others within a dominant group, and to those who have power through money or historical position in the society. The fourth is *symbolic capital,* which is about status. This is about reputation and honour and how one's perception of respectability within a group is perceived (Bourdieu 1984). All of these forms come together to create what is called 'wasta' in Arabic. This refers to the way that personal connections, patronage, and loyalty interlace to create desirable outcomes for an individual as they progress through their life course.

These ideas came together in Sudan through ideologies and social codes about how to live. At the heart of this system was the *al-harakat al-islamiyya* (Islamic movement) under al-Turabi, which welded economics, politics, religion, and society together. Thus, while wealth consolidation was one goal within the movement, it was also about acquiring and spreading certain ideas about what it meant to be Sudanese. What Hassan al-Turabi started after the 1989 coup was *al-Mashru'al-Hadari* (the Civilizational Project). These ideas about Sudanization linked the idea of a righteous society based on *shari'a* law as an instrument to a national regeneration project for the country as a whole (Khalid 2003).

What had changed after the departure of al-Turabi, was that power was less ideological and more routinised around repression of the population and strengthening of the vehicles for patronage inside the core. Now, inside the deep state, silos coalesced around major figures such as Ali Osman Taha, Omar al-Bashir, Nafie Ali Nafie, and Salah Gosh in what has been called 'Rentier Authoritarianism' (Musso 2017). Each had its own network and logic of power and control linked to the entities they controlled. The important vehicles through which patronage, wealth and advantage could be advanced were the economy, military, security, and social networks. By leveraging these areas, the regime could survive and, in doing so, prolong the interests of its core protagonists.

The Economy

From 1999 onwards, attention turned to the economy. At this point, there were good reasons to be concerned about the economic situation because real GDP was in negative territory and there was double digit inflation. In addition, tax revenues had dwindled by two thirds, corruption

had soared, foreign exchange earnings were primarily obtained through agricultural exports, and the United States had launched a trade embargo in response to the US Embassy bombings in 1998 in Nairobi.

In Sudan, the person at the helm of the strategy to drive the economy forward was Ali Osman Mohamed Taha (Verhoeven 2013). A central plank for achieving economic growth was the idea of agricultural intensification in the Hamdi triangle.[1] The problem, however, was that large-scale irrigated agriculture needs a lot of water and this had to come from the Nile. The solution was fairly predictable: the creation of a large-scale dam project at Merowe. Planned on the Nile at the 4th Cataract since the time of Nimeiri but initially lacking sufficient finance, the dam was now able to be signed off in 2002 and started in 2004. The cost was approximately three billion dollars with credit provided by China's Exim bank (Bosshard 2009, 45) and well as the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

One of the reasons why loans could be underwritten for the Merowe Dam project was the inflow of capital in October 2000 from the start of oil production. The new Greater Nile Oil Pipeline, from Unity State in southern Sudan to Port Sudan on the Red Sea, meant that oil revenue grew from USD $61 million in 1999 to USD $572 million in 2000. By 2002, it had reached 805 million USD (HRW 2003). Between the years of 1998 and 2002, oil revenue as a share of government revenue had gone from zero to 45%. By 2008, it had reached 66% before falling back to 60% in 2011 (IMF 2020; Suliman 2012).

The money from oil was a windfall to those at the heart of the Sudanese deep state because it greased the wheels of patronage networks. As the International Crisis Group have shown, these patronage networks have removed huge sums from the Sudanese economy for personal use. From the early days of the NIF regime and a privatisation program developed by Abdel Rahim Hamdi in 1992, they argue that "Islamist capitalists took advantage of the restructuring of the financial and economic management system to buy most of the former state companies under the privatisation program" (ICG 2011, 17).

Across the life of both periods of government, those at the core of the state enriched themselves beyond all measure by acquiring plots of land, hotels, transport networks, telecommunication companies, and forms of

[1] This tool of economic engineering was so named after Abdel Rahim Hamdi, Minister of Finance under both al-Turabi and al-Bashir, who called for development of the triangle of land between Dongola, El-Obeid, and Sennar, where the most significant voting bloc of the country lay. See Verhoeven for more details.

manufacturing. As the ICG documents assert, these acquisitions include the Friendship Hotel in Khartoum at $85 million bought by Ali Karti, premium building blocks in Khartoum North's industrial area bought by Nafie Ali Nafie and Abdel Haleem al-Mutaafi and thousands of acres of fertile farming land along the Nile. Inside the core, which according to ICG (2011) includes senior leadership, the intelligence services, military, and police, there are reportedly 164 companies that are owned or controlled by Sudan's deep state elite.

As the spiderweb of patronage links grew across regime officials, it thickened along key threads. Keeping things in the family, President al-Bashir funnelled wealth to his wives and siblings. His brothers, Ali and Abdellah Hassan al-Bashir who were major shareholders of High Tech—a business group with shares in 23 companies working in such sectors as petroleum, petro-chemicals, engineering, telecommunications, cement and railways—acquired spectacular wealth (ICG 2011). Following a decision by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to expel aid INGOs and centralise aid provision within the country in 2009, his wives went into the aid business. Widad Babiker Omer, the second wife of the President, is the chairperson of the Board of Directors of Sanad Charitable Foundation, the biggest Government of Sudan funded NGO. Another charity, *Umm al-Moumenein* (mother of believers), was headed by his first wife, Fatima Khalid (Bartlett 2015).

Yet, a cloud was growing on the horizon. In 2011, the oil money, and the associated benefits that came with it, came to a grinding halt when a dispute over transit fees, and later conflict in Heglig and the Nuba Mountains, led to the shutdown of oil exportation through the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline. The shutdown "led to a loss of 75 percent of government oil revenue, half of Sudan's fiscal reserves, the shrinking of non-oil exports, and unsustainable external debts of more than 43 billion USD" (Bartlett 2016, 48). This also resulted in a frantic search for other natural resources that could fill the gaping hole in government revenue. The result was another valuable commodity that lay under Sudan's earth: gold.

Within one year of the oil shutdown, Sudan became the third largest gold producer on the African continent (Elbadawi 2018). The Government of Sudan increased its gold production through corporate and artisanal mining. Corporate mining was carried out through five major domestic companies (*Ariab*, *Rida*, *Hajajiyah*, *Hokan*, and *Al Sakhrah Al Hamra*) with, according to the IMF, seven more companies projected to come on-line (Bartlett 2016). IMF staff monitoring reports in 2013 show that while gold accounted for 1% of export earnings in 2008,

it became the single largest export for the country in 2012, accounting for over 40% of export earnings and a reported USD $2.2 billion in revenue (Bartlett 2016). According to Mohamed Suliman Ibrahim (2015), a geologist working for Sudan's Ministry of Minerals, artisanal or informal unregulated mining accounts for 85% of the total gold extracted from 2010 to 2015.

The Military

The search for resources in Sudan, as well as the increasingly narrow range of actors involved, meant that wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few, with the majority of the population being excluded. The resources which became critical to the inner group—oil, gold and water—and especially those which give up their riches quickly, were soon protected by al-Bashir and a variety of military actors. As William Reno (1998) has pointed out, however, not all military actors are not created equal, and inside shadow states, the growth of informal military groups often outpaces the regular army.

The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) is the conventional army in Sudan. The Commander-in-Chief of SAF prior to the revolution was Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who now remains in government as chairman of the Sovereignty Council. Over time, SAF, which has a reputation for being "ineffective, poorly-motivated, and politically unreliable" (HBSA 2010), have interfaced with quasi-military and proxy militia groups. This interface is in relation to three major issues: first, to create the foundation for scorched earth policies on Sudan's periphery; second, to recruit militia members to swell army numbers for military campaigns; and third, to engage in population suppression in the event of protests. These relationships were seen in Darfur, where Al-Burhan was instrumental in what has been called 'preliminary cleaning' prior to the onslaught against civilians (Radio Dabanga 2019). It was also the case in the recent campaign in Yemen, where militias were recruited to buttress a ten thousand strong force (Brookings Institution 2019), and finally in Khartoum where militias worked with the regular army to quell protests at the time of the revolution (HRW 2019).

In addition to regular forces, there are private forces such as those around key deep state insiders. An example of this is a group called the Precious Stones that protect members of the Ja'ali elite, particularly the President (ICG 2011, 14). Besides private forces, there are also numerous types of quasi military actors. The first and earliest of these groups was the Popular Defence Force (PDF), which is considered a military reserve because it is legislated in law and used as military backup in conflict areas

(Small Arms Survey 2011).2 The Border Guards, created in 2003 as a vehicle to incorporate Janjaweed, were controlled by General Al Hadi Adam Hamid of Military Intelligence who, in turn, reported to Ahmed Haroun, Minister of State for the Interior (ICG 2005).

Many informal militias also exist, that operate under the auspices of *aktul al 'Abid bil 'abid* (kill the slave by the slave) where one ethnic group is utilised to kill another and loot their possessions. The two most notorious of these were the Janjaweed, led by Musa Hilal, and the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' Dagolo. The Janjaweed is an informal militia comprised of Abbala Rezeigat who, in the early days of the Darfur Conflict, funded themselves by destroying communities and appropriating property. In more recent times, they have gone into the business of goldmining (Bartlett 2016) and ivory trafficking from Central African Republic (Haenlein et al. 2016, 60). Hilal's arch nemesis, Hemedti, favoured by regime insiders such as al-Bashir and now a member of the Sovereign Council, also became heavily involved in gold mining in the Jebel Amer, developing holding companies to appropriate the funds:

> Bashir gave Hemedti free rein to sell Sudan's most valuable natural resource through this family firm, Algunade. At times Algunade bypassed central bank controls over gold exports, at others it sold to the central bank for a preferential rate, half a dozen sources said. Airway bills and invoices … show Algunade sent around $30 million of gold bars to Dubai, around a ton in weight. (Reuters 2019)

These privileges, obtained as a result of coordinating military in Yemen and being the force responsible for the 3 June 2019 massacre in Khartoum, make Hemedti one of the most feared people in the country. He does not see eye-to-eye with Al-Burhan and the army, yet he is so powerful that he has even underwritten Sudan's economy after the revolution, by depositing $1 billion in the Central Bank of Sudan (Global Witness 2019).

Security Services

At the heart of Sudan's deep state is the country's security services. The security services operate in conjunction with the military and the

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2 This unit was incorporated into the military in June 2020 and is now called the 'Reserve Department' (Radio Dabanga, 2020).

bureaucracy, but they are without doubt, the most powerful and unaccountable group in the country. Legally, the National Intelligence and Security (NISS) came into being shortly after the 1989 coup, but they were given stronger powers by the 1999 and 2010 National Security Forces Act. Members of the NISS have immunity from prosecution and disciplinary action in carrying out their work.3

The NISS in Sudan is a shadowy agency, with little known about its internal operation. The Director General role of NISS since the 1989 coup has been held by Nafie Ali Nafie, Salah Abdallah Mohamed Saleh, also known as Salah 'Gosh', and by Mohamed Atta al-Moula Abbas. Sudan's security forces have long-standing links with Iranian Intelligence, with Nafie Ali Nafie spending time there in 1981 under the pre-text of studying agriculture (Khalid 2003, 219), before spending parts of the subsequent decade travelling the Middle East and working with extremist organisations.4

The NISS is responsible for detention, torture, and interrogation which is undertaken in a variety of locations across Khartoum (HRW 1996). In the past, those deemed to be 'subversive' would be treated to a stint in the Citibank Ghost House in Khartoum, an informal torture centre—so named, because one could see the sign of the former Citibank building while you were being tortured. More recently, entities such as the Al Talaja, or the 'Refrigerator' in Bahri, Khartoum, freeze victims of torture until they lose consciousness, while in Garden City, a green building owned by Interior Minister Abdel Rahim Muhammad Hussein has been donated to enhance the network of torture facilities (CNN 2019).

One of the major activities undertaken by the NISS, is media repression via the National Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) and entities such as the Sudan Media Centre (SMC). The NTC has been actively involved for years in spying on opposition, including journalists, politicians, and human rights activists (Reporters Without Borders 2014). The Cyber Jihad Unit's role is to hack posts made on social media and to infiltrate online groups and undermine them. These entities, which are funded and fully under the control of NISS leadership, exist purely for the purpose of preventing both Sudanese and foreign nationals from releasing material that is detrimental to the deep state's interest. In the years prior to the 2019 revolution, efforts were made to block social media services

3 After the revolution, the NISS has been given another acronym, the General Intelligence Service (GIS).
4 See Profile of Nafie Ali Nafie, Sudan Tribune.

such as Facebook and WhatsApp that have end-to-end encryption and are actively used by the opposition (Sudan Tribune 2014).

In the wake of 9/11, the NISS directors have made visits to the governments of France, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) with regard to 'counter-terrorism' intelligence in a bid to deflect attention away from human rights abuses inside Sudan. Both Nafie Ali Nafie's connections in the Middle East, and Salah Gosh's relationship with Osama bin Laden while he was staying in Khartoum (ASharq al-Awsat 2019), have been maximally leveraged to provide advantage to Sudan. The war in Yemen has also strengthened ties with Saudi Arabia and the so-called troika that includes the UAE and Egypt. All of these connections have assisted deep state officials in carrying out their work and, as shown below, continue to assist those who are still in power.

Social Networks

All of the relationships discussed above, create forms of economic capital that are protected by security and military elements of the deep state. This kind of material gain is now under investigation in the post-revolution Transitional Government (see following). As Bourdieu has pointed out, however, economic capital is but the tip of the iceberg, in understanding how privilege works in a society. Far more insidious and difficult to dismantle across time are social, cultural, and symbolic forms of capital because they are carried in the networks of the deep state and multiply over time.

One of the key mechanisms for transmitting this kind of advantage is education. For decades (and even before the 1989 coup), the elite have sent their children out of Sudan to be educated in the UK, US, and elsewhere. As Table 1 shows, major figures within the core and Islamist movements were educated in either military colleges, Khartoum University, or had the benefit of well-funded education in the international sphere. This contrasts with the education system in Sudan, which since the coup has been defunded, and in which new regime tolerant institutions have been built, and infiltration of top institutions has become rife. The deep state has become 'deep' because of the ability to control knowledge production at home, while allowing their followers to take advantage of institutions abroad that are not affected by censorship.

As sites of social change, Sudan's universities have been at the forefront in the battle to cultivate a 'regime mindset'. Those forced to learn inside Sudan have been disadvantaged by the fact that the curriculum is taught in Arabic, is peppered with religious doctrine irrespective of subject matter, and by the fact that military service is often

Table 1. Educational Affiliations of Prominent Islamists

Name	Alma Mater	Government Position
Hassan al Turabi	Kings College London; Sorbonne, Paris	Popular Congress Party
Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir	Sudan Military Academy	President
Ali Osman Mohamed Taha	University of Khartoum	Former VP
Nafie Ali Nafie	University of California, USA	Presidential Advisor
Mustafa Osman Ismail Elamin	University of Leeds/ Bristol, UK	Foreign Minister
Ibrahim Ahmed Omar	Cambridge University, UK	Speaker, National Assembly
Mahdi Ibrahim Mohamed	University of Michigan/California, USA	Minister/Ambassador/Intelligence
Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin	Queen Mary, London, UK	Minister/Ambassador
Ghazi Salah al Din al Atabani	University of Surrey, UK	Minister
Qutbi al-Mahdi	Mc Gill University, Canada	Presidential Adviser/Intelligence
Magzoub al Khalifa	University of Khartoum	Presidential Advisor/Negotiator
Awad Ahmad al-Jaz	University of Southern California, USA	Minister—Energy/Oil
Salah Abdallah Gosh	University of Khartoum	National Security Advisor/NISS
Ali Ahmed Karti	University of Khartoum	Minister/PDF
Bakri Hasan Saleh	Sudan Military Academy	Minister/Interior/special forces
Abdel Rahim Mohammed Hussein	Cranfield University, UK	Minister/Governor of Khartoum State

Source: Author

required as a pre-requisite for study (Bishai 2008). On top of this, the value of a university education inside Sudan has been diluted by the exponential growth of institutions of sceptical educational value and by institutions that promulgate Political Islam and the *weltanschauung* of government officials as the way to think (Bishai 2008).

The kinds of alliances that were cultivated through education placement carry forward into the core and are strengthened through economic forms of patronage. In particular, skills gained at the micro-interaction level enable deep state officials and their subordinates to gain advantage. Specifically, knowing how to talk and engage with outsiders and the Islamist cadre, builds advantage. Knowing how to dress in Sudan in particular ways (and being able to afford to do so), is a marker of political persuasion and insider status.[5] Knowing how to engage deeply with westerners on a cultural level and being able to speak target languages becomes a valuable asset to intelligence agencies. These skills, connections, and forms of social and symbolic capital create opportunities to provide insider status within the government core.

In Arabic, the name for these kinds of connections is *wasta*, which is a form of 'personal intermediation' that can be described as something to pass onto others or something that is acquired (Mann 2014). In broad terms, *wasta* constitutes the forms of economic, social, and symbolic capital needed to advance, and is achieved by both loyalty and access to power. As Mann (2014) points out, under the policies of *tamkiin* and the later post-1999 marketisation policies in Sudan, *wasta* has been transformed from an institutionalised form of privilege, credentialed through universities and old elites, to a private, decentralized and transnational structure predicated on personal relationships with those in the know.

The upshot of this situation is that international credentials and connections, loyalty, and access to patronage becomes the major factor in success. For the regime who are not hampered by the situation inside Sudan, this presents no problem at all. Yet, for those who are dependent on impoverished educational systems and lack of contacts with regime insiders, their chance to move forward has all but stopped in its tracks.

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5 Sudanese factions often wear their political affiliations on their bodies. For example, Umma and DUP wear the ubiquitous white jellabiya that is adapted with pockets on the front or the back, pointed hats, or standard immas (turbans). Communists often wear dirty jeans as a form of rebellion. Members of the Islamic cadres wear short trousers or in western circles, expensive suits. Many can be identified by the gura or prayer mark (often made by a specialist) on their foreheads (Bartlett 2015).

Dismantling the Deep State

Given the way that the deep state and its operating logic is now embedded at the heart of government and society in Sudan, considerable effort will be needed to strip away the kinds of privilege that have been built. While finance and corruption are clearly important aspects of this, they are not, in and of themselves, the conduits through which privilege and wealth pass. The conduits are connections—social and cultural—because these enable informalized and personalized privilege to be transmitted and stabilized over time without detection. If these kinds of connections are ignored, capital may be removed, but the system of advantage will remain intact.

Where finance is concerned, the Transitional Government has started the process of its retrieving assets that have been misappropriated. Notably, efforts are underway to enlist global forensic accounting and asset recovery firms so that public money can be recouped and thus far, approximately $4 billion has been recovered from al-Bashir and family members assets alone. The 'Funds Recovery Committee', headed by Mohamed El Faki, is at work dismantling the *tamkiin* system and illicit flows of funds, but the problems are self-evident. The civilian government is today trying to accomplish this task but is doing so in full view of the very people that built the system in the first place.

The nub of the problem is that the civilians within the Sovereign Council are not operating on a level playing field with their military counterparts. As Gallopin (2020) has pointed out, the members who constitute the civilian wing have next to nothing at their disposal to make the transition to democracy. By contrast, the military wing has sprawling networks of water, mining, industry, aviation, engineering, and construction companies that are shared between the NISS and the Sudanese Armed Forces. The Rapid Support Forces under Hemedti have their own assets: the Algunade holding company, which controls mining, industry, car sales, metals, and other kinds of companies (Global Witness 2019). These parastatals are now strangling the Sudanese economy of life and funds, thereby preventing the transitional government from being able to progress.

Outside the country, money that has been misappropriated from the Sudanese people is still held in foreign banks. Following the Wikileaks data release in 2009, the former ICC Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo suggested that $9 billion was held in the UK with accusations being levelled at Lloyds Banking Group in particular (Independent 2010). Lloyds notoriety was also followed up with a lawsuit against Barclays for illicit dealings with Sudan, Iran, Libya, and Cuba resulting in a fine of

USD $298 million (Guardian 2010). In France, *BNP Paribas* and *Societe Generale*, came under scrutiny from US authorities for sanctions busting with illicit money dealings involving Sudanese currency (Middle East Eye 2019). As Kar and Cartright-Smith (2010) have previously pointed out, the value of illicit financial flows from Sudan between 1970–2008 alone, were thought to be USD $16.6 billion.

The sheer scale of these dealings and their inscrutability makes clear what the civilian Transitional Government is up against. Yet, despite what is evidently a deeply unequal struggle, support from the international community has been scarce. The struggle, for example, to remove Sudan from the US State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST) has been long and drawn out, with many hurdles in the political, judicial, and administrative spheres. The concerns are, of course, understandable, since those who have little compunction about supporting terror are still part of the military wing of the government. But to continue to hamper the efforts of the civilian government just draws Sudan into an ever more dangerous game of Catch-22. Failure to progress due to the SST designation will only embolden the military and militia leaders, leading to a reversal of the gains that have been made so far.

In the economy, demands being made by donors with regard to subsidies also threaten transitional government stability. Apparently suffering from amnesia, international donors are now demanding Washington Consensus style subsidy reductions, while failing to appreciate that it was the threat of subsidy removal that drove the revolution against al-Bashir in the first place. The IMF, at least, has learnt from past structural adjustment failures and is suggesting a social safety net before subsidies are removed (Kar and Cartright-Smith 2010).[6] Despite recognition of the scale of the problem, however, little in the way of social safety net funding has been forthcoming.

Where social networks are concerned, the move away from educational institutions to personalised private networks of *wasta* must be changed if the country is to move forward. Yet, despite the damage this has caused, much remains to be done. The only way to combat the inequality and marginalisation that comes from lack of access to patronage networks, is to make sure that Sudan's educational sphere becomes a level playing field. This means a radical overhaul of educational standards and of institutions that promulgate ideology in

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[6] Anonymous interviews after the revolution indicate that members of the intelligence and military sector were attempting to bribe bakers not to produce bread post-revolution, in an attempt to bring about instability.

favour of knowledge. Teaching itself should be internationalised and English used as a medium of instruction so that Sudan's institutions can quickly incorporate advances in science, technology, and other academic disciplines worldwide.[7] Although it is tempting to place this issue on the back burner in favour of other more pressing priorities, an ineffective education sector dilutes the human capital pool that drives the economy, government, and society forward. Failure to address this will stall the revolution in the long term.

Finally, a key issue in dismantling the deep state is the transitional government's ability to stop the expansion of militia resources and reverse the informalization of the army. At the moment, this seems to be a particularly distant prospect with shared military rule and the array of parastatals at the disposal of Hemedti. But the risk from this issue cannot be overstated. There is clear evidence following Hemedti's role in supplying militias to fight in Yemen that Sudan is being drawn further into the orbit of Saudi Arabia and its troika allies of the UAE and Egypt. In turn, they are positioning Hemedti to become the next leader of the country (Gallopin 2020). This has the potential to further inflame the internal conflict between Hemedti, who is from Darfur and the SAF leaders, most of whom are from Central Sudan. Even more concerningly, the fact that money and arms have been funnelled to Hemedti from the UAE threatens the insertion of authoritarianism once more, backed by a powerful Gulf coalition. The potential ramifications of this situation, with Sudan at the gateway of the Sahelian region, should be a major source of concern.

Sudan's attempt to extract itself from the deep state apparatus that has controlled it for decades still has a long way to go. With the power of military and militia actors, it is difficult to see how the civilian government can achieve meaningful change without significant additional help. Today, Sudan is at a crossroads where external influences and competing internal threats have the potential to tear the country apart. The rosy glow of last year's revolution has now hit the hard reality of the power and reach of the deep state. The question is whether the country will be able to stand in its own right by bringing these influences under control, or whether it will find itself barely able to stay afloat. Sudan has called for help and needs it more than ever before. The question, as always, is who will be there to hear those calls.

[7] This is not an attempt to recolonise Sudanese minds, but rather a recognition that 80% of articles in academia are published in peer reviewed English language journals.

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