Sudanese Images of the Other: Education and Conflict in Sudan

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Introduction

Education can contribute to peace and reconciliation as well as to conflict and strife (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Smith and Vaux 2003; Davies 2004a). On the one hand, (re)building schools, recruiting teachers, and returning children to classrooms may help reduce the causes of fragility, legitimate the state, and create a peace dividend in postconflicts situations. The World Bank also argues that a return of children to school after armed conflict can produce an early peace dividend, cementing support for peace (World Bank 2005; Collier 2006; McEvoy-Levy 2006). On the other hand, Lennart Vriens (2004, 71) argues that education is one of "the most successful instruments for the . . . dissemination of militarism," and Marc Sommers (2002, 8) claims that "many who conduct modern wars are expert at using educational settings to indoctrinate and control children."

The complex, often contradictory role of education in conflict is explored in this article in relation to Sudan. The focus of the article is the North-South conflict, bearing in mind that other, "minor" wars and military clashes in both the North and South have "each fed into and intensified the fighting of the overall 'North-South' war" (Johnson 2007, 127).[1] I examine the pre- and postconflict political discourses and the educational discourses employed in relation to the ideological, religious, and military struggle between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the South and the Khartoum government in the North.[2] In addition, I will discuss how the political and educational discourses contributed to the reconstruction of the country and to the simultaneous sustaining and undermining of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

[1] As Johnson (2007, 127) contends, "fighting has taken place in Darfur, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and, most recently, Quallabat, Kassala, and Red Sea—all parts of the Muslim North. Moreover, there were also ethnic clashes in the South where the SPLM played a more or less successful role as a mediator of inter-tribal reconciliation." And not "only are Muslims fighting Muslims, but 'Africans' are fighting 'Africans'" (Johnson 2007, xi).

[2] Following McLaren (1975, 274), I conceive of discourses as "modalities that to a significant extent govern what can be said by what kind of speakers, and for what types of imagined audiences. . . . They are social practices that constitute both social subjects and the objects of their investigation. The rules of discourse are normative and derive their meaning from the power relations of which they are part." SPLM is the political wing, whereas SPLA is the military wing of the movement.

The complexity of the situation in Sudan should not be underrated. The roots of the North-South conflict have often been attributed to the fundamental religious and ethnic differences between the southern, non-Arab populations and the northern, Muslim, Arab-dominated government of the National Congress Party (NCP), but the causes are multiple, including a struggle over the abundant oil resources (Lesch 1998; Jok 2001, 2007; Johnson 2007).[3] Similar to other experiences of civil wars (e.g., Sri Lanka, Kosovo and Bosnia, and Sierra Leone), the Sudanese conflict reflects positions that are very rigid and entrenched, leaving little space for compromises and accommodating views (Rotberg 2004). This rigidity of positions, both during and after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement reached in 2005, makes it important to understand how individuals and groups of people as well as governments in the North and in the South of Sudan perceive their own and others' views and actions. Clearly there is a need, as Johnston McMaster (2002) underlines about the conflict situation in Northern Ireland, for "myths to be exploded and simplistic and reductionist readings of historical events to be shattered" (quoted in Davies 2004a, 169).

Context: The Civil War and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

The civil war in Sudan between the North and the South lasted, with certain intermissions (e.g., the cease-fire between 1972 and 1983), from 1955 to 2005. The cease-fire reached in 1972 came to an end when Sudan President Gaafar al-Nimeiry issued a decree in 1983 to incorporate sharia law into the penal code. In this context Army Colonel Dr. John Garang de Mabior from southern Sudan went underground and established the SPLM/SPLA. After the northerner Sadiq al-Mahdi won elections with his Umma party in 1986, the new Sudanese government rescinded Nimeiry's decree and initiated peace negotiations with the SPLA. However, the hopes of a negotiated peace were smashed when the Islamist military regime led by General Omar al-Bashir came to power following a coup in 1989.

The CPA of January 9, 2005, between the NCP and the SPLM/A defined a 6-year period (to end in 2011), after which a referendum is scheduled to be held to determine whether Sudan will remain a single country or be divided into two. In the interim, the two parties are tasked with finding solutions to a range of hotly disputed political issues from the distribution of the oil revenue to the profile of the education systems.

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[3] The complexity is underlined by Johnson, who lists 10 historical factors that explain Sudan's civil wars (Johnson 2007, xvi). The Arabs constitute around 35 percent of the population, while the Muslims (both Arab and Africans) are in a majority in the country (approximately 70 percent) and are primarily located in the North. Christians and believers in indigenous religions, constituting around 30 percent of the population, live in the southern part of the country (Lesch 1998). Due to the civil war, however, large population groups (probably more than 1 million) from the South now live in and around Khartoum, even though the number is somewhat decreasing as some southerners have returned to the South after the CPA in 2005.

Theoretical Framework

In this article I use attribution theory to explore how parties on both sides of the conflict "attribute" various causes of the strife. The initial work by Fritz Heider (1958) on attribution theory has been employed in studies of international relations (Jervis 1976), the Israeli-Arab conflict (Heradstveit 1979), U.S. containment policy (Larson 1985), and Arab perceptions of the first Gulf War (Heradstveit and Bonham 1996). Attribution theory assumes "over a period of time, persons would be expected to accurately characterize humans in terms of their dispositional properties" (Prus 1975, 3). One can distinguish between "dispositional attributions," which refer to causality ascribed to internal or more or less innate factors, and "situational attributions," which refer to external factors outside the control of the agent (Heider 1958).

Used in conflict situations, the "fundamental attribution error" refers to situations where the opponents' behavior is seen by the other party (the observer) to be abilities, traits, motives (internal attributions), while the observer's own behavior is defined as situational (environmental pressures and constraints; Heradstveit 1979, 48). The "fundamental attribution error" tends to be augmented when the observer dislikes the other and the others' behavior affects the observer's own life. Behavior attributed to the innate nature of self and Other makes behavior more predictable and gives a sense of control, but dispositional explanations may blur the complexity and ambiguity of "reality" (Renshon 1993; cited in Heradstveit and Bonham 1996, 274), creating versions of "reality" that are not easily subject to change.

Methodology

The article is based on fieldwork during the civil war in Yei River County, Eastern Equatorial, South Sudan, in 2002–4 as well as on fieldwork in and around the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Khartoum and in Khartoum city, where the ministries are located in 2002–3 (for 3 months every year). The fieldwork during the civil war in the South was conducted by two well-trained Sudanese fieldworkers, three Norwegian research assistants, and me. In the North, one Sudanese fieldworker as well as two Norwegian research assistants assisted in data collection. As a member of the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), I collected data independently for the JAM report in 2004.[4] Data were also collected during 2006–9 (after the CPA was signed), but the data collection process was not as comprehensive as what

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[4] The reports of the Joint Assessment Mission for Sudan (JAM 2005a, JAM 2005b) are the most prestigious documents on rehabilitation and transitional recovery and reconstruction needs in Sudan. With the expectation that the NCP and SPLM would reach a comprehensive peace agreement in the beginning of 2005, the JAM teams were established in 2004 under the auspices of the World Bank and the United Nations. The JAM looked at eight thematic areas, among them basic social services like education and health.

TABLE 1
Number of People Interviewed by Region and Role (2002–4)

South Sudan*	North Sudan†
10 elders	3 ministers in the NCP government (North Sudanese)
7 chiefs	5 curriculum committee members (North Sudanese)
7 priests or pastors	1 education officer (North Sudanese)
9 community leaders	5 Women's Action Group members (North Sudanese)
4 PTA members	5 headmasters (3 North Sudanese, 2 South Sudanese)
1 SPLM deputy chairman	58 teachers (25 North Sudanese, 23 South Sudanese)
1 SPLM director	56 pupils (38 North Sudanese, 18 South Sudanese)
1 acting commissioner	5 chiefs (South Sudanese)
1 county education officer	3 religious leaders (South Sudanese)
1 director of agriculture	
14 parents	
3 headmasters	
54 teachers	
41 pupils	

* All with South Sudanese subidentity. While the majority of interviews were formal, 2 priests, 5 community leaders, 8 teachers, 2 pupils, and 1 headmaster were interviewed informally.
† Among those interviewed, 2 Women's Action Group members, 8 teachers, and 3 pupils were interviewed informally (all North Sudanese).

was done prior to the CPA and was undertaken by the author without the help of the research team.

Doing Research during the Civil War

Under very challenging conditions, the research team collected data from 141 informants in the North and 154 from the South during the Civil War (see table 1).[5] Informants were selected using a purposive sampling approach to collect data from people of different ethnic groups and involved in different roles. In the South, Bari, Kakwa, and Dinka informants residing in Yei were interviewed; in the North, southern migrants from the same tribes as in the South and the members of the Lotuka tribe were interviewed, as well as Muslim teachers and Muslim leaders in the NCP.

In the South, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Committee assisted the researchers by suggesting schools and key people, though researchers identified the informants. In the Khartoum area, the researchers negotiated access to the schools in the IDP camps with the Ministry of Education. The

[5] Of the larger group of informants, the following 46 (23 residing in the North and 23 from the South) were treated as "key informants" and were interviewed two or three times, thus providing a more in-depth understanding of their views on the thematic issues: 4 chiefs, 2 priests, 3 community leaders, 2 PTAs, 1 SPLM chairperson, 1 SPLM director, 1 SPLM commissioner, 1 director of agriculture, 2 parents, 6 teachers (from the South), as well as 2 curriculum committee members, 1 education officer, 8 teachers, 3 headmasters, 1 minister, 3 Women's Action Group members (all northern Sudanese), 3 chiefs, and 2 religious leaders (from the South but residing in the North).

researchers worked with former students and a professor from the University of Juba (located in Khartoum) to identify various refugee areas in the North and then made contact with people in the schools and the communities in these areas. Researchers also requested meetings to conduct interviews with officials, in order to gain additional information about the research topic.[6]

We conducted formal interviews with individuals oriented by interview guides containing open-ended and semistructured questions and using an approach that emphasized "openness and flexibility," "on-the-line" interpretation, and "on-the-spot" confirmation or disconfirmation of the interviewer's understanding or interpretation of what an interviewee stated (Kvale 1996, 84 and 189).[7] All formal interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. One focus of the interviews was on political and educational discourses. To elicit data on political discourses, we asked informants about the civil war, what the issues of contention were, and their conceptions of the main parties in conflict (i.e., the SPLA/M and the NCP). To obtain insights into the educational discourses, we inquired about informants' perceptions of the classroom situation, the subjects taught, the relevance of the curriculum, and the medium of instruction, as well as their views on the importance of education during the war.

In addition, the research team also conducted informal interviews, which were recorded in the researchers' diaries. These informal interviews were generally in the form of conversations/discussions that were often unplanned. The questions in these interviews emerged from the immediate context but addressed the political and educational issues that were the focus of this research. The data from the informal interviews were used to both cross-check and acquire new information and were fed into the body of information gathered from the formal interviews.

In addition to conducting interviews, we observed in eighth- and ninth-grade classrooms, mainly history and social science lessons. This involved six classrooms in three schools in Yei and five classrooms in three schools in the Khartoum area; all classrooms included students of multiple ethnic groups. The nonparticipant observations were done at regular intervals. The observations were semistructured, focusing on the themes relevant for the research undertaken to elicit "live" data, in particular, in terms of what teachers and students said as part of the lessons.[8] While the researchers had prepared an

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[6] While there is always reason to question the politicians' tactical considerations when making statements in office, their responses fit well with the information received from official documents and the media.

[7] The formal interviews were challenging given the context, the warlike situation, and the variety of informants—from illiterate, non-English-speaking elders to well-educated politicians of either Christian or Muslim background.

[8] We noted considerable variation across classrooms in the South with respect to the depth and breadth of knowledge about the North-South conflict that teachers and students seemed to possess. For example, in some classes students participated actively and were quite well informed (on the radio, mostly through the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC]), while in other classes the information

observation sheet with key points to observe, it was open to unexpected events in the classroom. The observations were recorded in diaries or field notes and checked against the results from the other data sources and methodologies as a way of triangulation.

Moreover, some members of the research team analyzed the SPLM curriculum as well as the curricula from Uganda and Kenya used in many schools in the South during the war. The curriculum analyses was conducted to identify the content of the subjects of history and social science, the underlying ideology underpinning the curricula, and their focus on national identity construction. We also examined (history and social science) textbooks being used in the various schools in Yei as well as in the Islamic schools in the Khartoum area. Our discussion of the curriculum and textbooks was supplemented by Christine Oyenak's (2006) study of the government of Sudan's education policy guidelines, curriculum, and primary school textbooks in the pre-CPA period, with a special emphasis on the degree and form of cultural diversity displayed.

The data were coded according to a set of categories subsumed under political discourse (i.e., political views of the parties involved in the conflict—including their conduct and the rationale for fighting the war—as well as their views of themselves and the Other) and educational discourses (i.e., the meaning of schooling, its potential importance, the curriculum, medium of instruction, and the ideological implication of the curricula in the North and the South).

We employed these codes in our analyses of various types of data (interviews, observations, conversations, and curriculum descriptions and textbooks) and sought to triangulate the findings across these types. As will be seen below, the various data sources provided very similar portraits of the discourses in the North and in the South, though there were important differences between northern and southern discourses.

Doing Research after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

I also undertook shorter visits to Sudan after the CPA: to Khartoum in 2006, 2008, and 2009; to Juba (southern Sudan) in 2007 and 2009; and to Malakal (southern Sudan) in 2006 and 2008. Each of these visits lasted from 1 week to 1 month. Because I was the coordinator of an extensive academic program involving both southern and northern universities from 2007 (still ongoing), I was able to arrange meetings and interview a variety of actors (see table 2).[9] During my post-CPA visits to the North I conducted informal interviews with three ministers from the Government of National Unity in

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about the conflict was presented by the teachers in a monologic form. In yet other classrooms there was very little if any attention to issues related to the conflict, not least because the textbooks in these subjects were from Kenya or Uganda.

[9] The university collaboration involved two master's degree programs with Sudanese universities, Ahfad University for Women in Khartoum and Upper Nile University, Malakal, in the South.

TABLE 2
Number of People Interviewed by Region and Role
(2006–9)

South Sudan	North Sudan
1 minister (GoSS)*	3 ministers (GoNU)†
6 officials in the ministries	1 SPLM leader
1 vice-chancellor	1 deputy speaker
8 university staff members	3 vice-chancellors
3 parents	9 staff members
6 teachers	3 teachers
2 receptionists	2 taxi drivers
	2 parents

* Government of Southern Sudan.
† Government of National Unity.

Khartoum, the deputy SPLM leader (a northern Sudanese) in North Sudan, and the deputy speaker of the general assembly in Khartoum (a southern Sudanese). Moreover, I conducted informal interviews with vice-chancellors and staff members from three different northern universities, all of North Sudanese origin. In the South I conducted informal interviews with the Minister of Education, Science, and Technology in the government in southern Sudan, informants from various ministries in Juba, South Sudan, as well as with one vice-chancellor and staff members from southern universities (all southern Sudanese). Additionally, I interviewed different people not linked to the political hierarchy in Khartoum (teachers, taxi drivers, parents), Juba, and Malakal (teachers, receptionists, parents).

While the conversations with the officials took place in their offices, interviews with the nonpoliticians most often occurred in places such as hotel lobbies, restaurants, and private homes. The interviews focused on the same themes as those conducted during the war, the political and education discourses, but were adjusted to the new political reality after the CPA. That is, I asked questions about any changes in the political discourses circulating in the North and the South, and I inquired about the educational situations in the North and the South after the CPA as well the role of education and the nature of the curriculum being developed after the war.

Findings

Here I explore the attributions to self and Other included in political and educational discourses associated with the North and with the South of Sudan. While below I discuss the political and educational discourses separately, one should note how these two different types of discourses are related.

The Political Discourse in the North after al-Bashir's Coup in 1989

Despite what the media in the North and the party in power in Khartoum (the NCP) might convey about the religious situation in the country, northern Sudan is not an Islamic fundamentalist culture. Islam is practiced in varying

ways across Sudan, from the more liberal beliefs of the Sufi orders to the dogmatic conservativism of the Muslim Brotherhood and the National Congress Party (NCP; Lesch 1998). Nevertheless, the NCP (led by President al-Bashir) has not only represented and embodied a fundamentalist Islamic policy but also imposed its dogmatic version of Islam (Islamism) on other Muslims and non-Muslim groups.[10] Normative Islam, with the objective of establishing an Islamic state founded on sharia,[11] was the hegemonic discourse in the country until the emergence of the CPA, and it still influences most political decisions in the Unity government that comprises representatives of both the North and the South.

The fundamental religious dimension of the conflict was confirmed by politicians in the NCP as well as Muslim informants in the North who did not have positions within NCP. One of the Muslim politicians said, "The war is about Islam against the infidels in the South" (2003). Another Muslim informant, an educationist, stated, "Southern Sudan is an obstacle to the spreading of Islam further south in Africa. That is why it is important to Islamize the South" (2002). This is in line with the statement from the leader of the National Islamic Front, Hassan el-Turabi: "Yes, we are fighting a *jihad*, and we have always been fighting a *jihad* in Sudan. . . . We want to plant a new civilization in the South. It is our challenge" (quoted in Peterson 2000, 186).

The contempt for southerners and their culture was also evidenced in the streets of Khartoum, where southerners were/are sometimes labeled not only "infidels" but "slaves" (2002). Several of our southern informants in Khartoum confirmed such attitudes among northerners they encountered, and several northern Muslims we interviewed also acknowledged such attitudes (2002–3). This sense of civilizational superiority may be traced back to past and contemporary slavery of residents in the South (e.g., see Jok 2001), an issue to which our informants in the South referred repeatedly and critically. During the middle of the civil war, the Sudanese academic Francis Mading Deng (1995, 484) summed up the underlying reasons for the conflict in this way: "The crisis . . . emanates from the fact that the politically dominant and economically privileged northern Sudanese Arabs, although the products of Arab-African genetic mixing and a minority in the country as a whole, see themselves as primarily Arabs, deny the African elements in them, and seek to impose their self-perceived identity throughout the country."

[10] President al-Bashir has clung to power since the coup in 1989 but without ever winning office in a free and fair election. In the April 2010 elections, al-Bashir got 68 per cent of the votes, but many international observers claimed that the election was marred by intimidation and fraud. Moreover, the major opposition parties in the North boycotted the election. Lesch (1998, ix) defines "Islamist" as "an organization such as NIF [National Islamic Front], which has an exclusivist vision, based on a particular reading of religious doctrine, that it seeks to impose upon the political system and population."

[11] One may distinguish the concepts "Muslim" and "Islamic." A Muslim state is a state with a Muslim population, while an Islamic state is a state that founds its policies on sharia (see Eidhamar and Rian 1995).

The official NCP rhetoric was, however, frequently couched in a more diplomatic language, referring to the fundamental idea in Islam of *tawhid*, the notion of unity. According to this notion everybody is potentially a Muslim, based on the understanding that there is some sort of unity in all existence and that the resistance in the South therefore was completely unjustified and illegitimate. In contradiction to this insistence of unity, however, the Qur'an's differentiation between believers and infidels clearly placed the southern Christians or believers in indigenous religions in the latter category. As a southern Christian politician working in Khartoum retorted: "It is unity premised on Islamic principles and totally unacceptable to us" (2004).

While religious and ethnic divisions have taken center stage in the explanation of the conflict, the marginalizing consequences of the enormous power and wealth disparities are inextricably intertwined with perceived religious and ethnic imposition.[12] As one Islamic teacher in the outskirts of Khartoum stated: "Look at the building boom in the center of Khartoum. This is where the money is. A few miles outside Khartoum there is nothing" (for a more comprehensive analysis of the causes of the conflict, see also Johnson 2007; Jok 2007).

The Educational Discourse in the North

This ideological and religious basis of the NCP also had serious implications for the educational discourse in the country prior to the CPA. The new regime of 1989 targeted the Ministry of Education to conduct their "Islamic crusade," replaced administrators and teachers with NCP sympathizers, and prohibited students' alternative political movements. In line with NCP's overall political/religious ideology, with its strong Islamic orientation, President al-Bashir announced in 1990 that the national education system on all levels should be based on Islamic values.

The 1990 decree made Arabic the medium of instruction in the universities and established a compulsory course that was based on the Qur'an and the recognized books of Hadith (Metz 1991). All schools not under the control of the central government authorities were to be phased out, and the pupils of these schools were to be incorporated into the state schools (Kenyi 1996). The rationale for this change in the education system was underlined by Sudan President al-Bashir (2004, 55) "to strengthen faith and religious orientation and conviction in youngsters so that they may become free, Allah-devoted and responsible persons. Guided by spiritual dedication and righteousness, education shall promote and develop the cultural and

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[12] Interestingly, some Muslims in the North questioned whether religious beliefs and practices were the real reasons for the NCP's representation of people of the South as inferior. For example, one Muslim interviewee, who resides outside the central area of Khartoum, commented, "The NCP government is using religion as a means to retain hegemonic control. They are not interested in Islam as such, but only to legitimate their power base. Islamic principles are not meant to govern a country" (2003).

social values of society." As evidenced by President al-Bashir's statement above, the main objective of the national curriculum is to transfer Islamic principles, both individually and institutionally, from one generation to the next in the heterogeneous Sudan.

Since this revolution in the education system sparked controversy in many parts of Sudan, I asked one member of the National Curriculum Committee in Khartoum, who was closely associated with the NCP, about the wisdom of imposing an Islamic curriculum on a culturally and religiously diverse country such as Sudan.[13] Dismissing the question as unwarranted, the respondent insisted on the inherent unity between the South and the North and that multiculturalism was taken care of and subsumed under the umbrella of *tawhid*: "Sudan is one country based on cultural and religious unity" (2003).

The Islamic educational discourse, stressing a monoethnic and mono-religious Sudanese landscape inhabited by Muslim Arabs, is evident in the textbooks and other teaching material of the (northern) Sudanese government. For instance, Christine Oyenak (2006), based on her analysis of 41 textbooks of English and Arabic languages for primary schools produced by the National Curriculum Centre in Khartoum, concludes that the Arab-Muslim bias is overwhelming and that South Sudanese history, religion, and culture have been almost completely left out of the textbooks (see also Kenyi 1996).

Visits to schools confirmed the pervasive Islamization and Arabization in the classroom. While the Islamic curriculum was basically taken for granted by most northern educationists to whom we talked, there were dissenting voices among the Muslims. As one Muslim teacher said, "The problem (with the curriculum and textbooks) is not only that they focus on Islam, but the Arab orientation. Most Muslims in the North are not Arabs" (2003).

The children of the 2 million migrants from the South who lived in and around Khartoum during the civil war, many of whom were not Muslims, were affected by the change in the curriculum. When asked about the new national curriculum and textbooks, which were developed at school and university levels, one teacher in the IDP camp in the Khartoum area expressed the following sentiments: "The National Curriculum is planned by few people. It is not designed according to the whole area. It is designed . . . just for Muslims, not Christians" (2003). Similarly, a concerned parent from the South mentioned, "All songs are in Arabic. There are no tribal traditions, no vernaculars, no songs in my school" (2003). And a teacher from the South residing in Khartoum expressed a similar concern: "This is wrong! We cannot teach our culture until we go back. . . . [The northern authorities] see the South as a block, a stumbling block, hindering Islamisation to the rest of Africa" (2003).

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[13] The National Curriculum Committee is the authoritative body that is responsible for all curriculum changes in the NCP-controlled areas.

The Political Discourse in the South

Despite different opinions about the SPLM/A, there was a common discourse among the southerners in describing the North that cut across tribal or ethnic divides.[14] Not having access to the multiple representations of Islam that existed in the North, the informants in the South attributed a specific, uncompromising and dogmatic Islamic policy to the North, thus creating a polarized self-other dichotomy (see also Johnson 2007; Jok 2007). This pervasive sentiment about the northerners, here referred to as Arabs, was voiced in this way by one of the teachers from the South: "You just have to submit to the Arabs. We feel that there is a very big gap between the Arabs and the southerners. Their way of forcing us into their system is another form of imperialism. We need a change, for good or for bad. . . . As in South Africa . . . our rights are based on our ethnic group" (2002). The southerners' perception of the Muslim Arabs hinged on the former group's African ethnic and cultural identity and their identification with Christianity and indigenous religions.

Marked by a pervasive animosity against the Arabs, this strong negative feeling seemed to be passed on from one generation to the next. The negative opinions against Arab invasion on southern territory was pervasive among our southern informants, young and old, women and men, educated and noneducated. The following response from an elder was typical: "The Arabs despise African culture and see the Africans as inferior to them. Most of our people see the Arabs of the Sudan as killers, slave traders and greedy people. We do not like to be ruled by Arabs, because the Arabs want us to be Muslims and Arabs. But we are Africans and Christians. Arabs want to take over our land for themselves and want to take all the resources for themselves. . . . Arabs want us to practice the Islamic way of life and we don't like it" (2003). Similar attributions, such as "we cannot trust the Arabs," "they are robbing our country and our religion," "they are not like us," reflect deeply ingrained perceptions of a self-other dichotomy similar to that among northerners, albeit in reverse. It was not the situation of the civil war that had caused the bad behavior of the Arabs; rather, it was the innate, dispositional character of the aggressors that made the civil war inevitable.[15] As a chief in the South explained, "The Arabs don't want to develop the South. Arab culture does

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[14] Very few southerners questioned the ultimate goal of freeing the South from northern imposition. However, opinions differed on the overall objectives of SPLM/A of a united, secular Sudan (many informants wanted an independent southern Sudan), on the ethnic composition of the SPLM/A leadership (informants voiced their skepticism to what they perceived as Dinka domination), and the tactics and behavior of the SPLA in the southern territory. On the latter issue, for example, many southern interviewees referenced the atrocities committed by SPLA soldiers against innocent civilians during the civil war (e.g., see Johnson 2007).

[15] Similarly, Deng (1995, 409ff.) reports that "southerners generally believe that the differences between them and the Arabs are genetic, cultural, and deeply embedded. They also acknowledge that their prejudices are mutual. . . . Southern[ers'] scorn for the Arabs lies in the realm of moral values that they believe to be inherent in the genetic and cultural composition of identity."

not help to make our country more developed. That is not in their interest" (2004).

In contrast, southerners explained their own intentions and good behavior in terms of dispositions (e.g., the SPLM's good treatment of the POWs from the North), whereas the blatant violations of basic human rights in the villages in the South by the SPLA during the war were sometimes explained by the situation rather than the dispositions of the southern actors. According to an elder from the South: "The soldiers looted many the villages, but they were forced to [do so] due to lack of food" (2003).

Educational Discourse in the South Prior to the CPA

One of the reasons why youth in the South readily took up arms against the NCP government during the civil war was the experience of being denied educational opportunities (see Salaam and de Waal 2001). This was also confirmed by both SPLM spokespeople and community leaders who participated in the interviews in 2002–4. When asked about why the war started in the first place, one community leader from the South said, "Denial of education is one of the main causes of the war" (2003). Moreover, the ideological basis of the education system was severely criticized, as confirmed by one of the politicians from the South, who stated that southern students in the government schools "suffer. When they reach grade 8, there is the national examination. It is very difficult for them to pass. They do not speak Arabic well, they do not speak English well, and many do not speak their own language well. Many forget their culture. This is how the government treats us. Our children do not learn where they come from. They do not learn anything about our history, culture and language. There is a tiny number of schools with English as the medium of instruction, but with the retention of the Islamic curriculum" (2003).

As is the case in other fragile states (Rose and Greeley 2006), southern Sudanese communities supported primary schools during the war. However, the longevity of the conflict (50 years with certain intermissions) made the running of these schools very difficult, exposing a very serious situation around the turn of the century (Nicol 2002; Brophy 2003; JAM 2005b; Sommers 2005). According to Brophy (2003; citing UNICEF/AET 2002), in southern Sudan only about 30 percent of an estimated 1.06 million school-age children were enrolled in primary school. These figures deviated dramatically from the North, where 78 percent of the pupils took the eighth-grade exam (JAM 2005b, 176).

In the so-called liberated areas controlled by the SPLM/A during the conflict, the few schools in operation pursued a modernist, secular educational curriculum and used a local language (or English) as medium of instruction for the first 4 years of primary school. From grade 5 English was introduced as the medium of instruction in all schools. The modernist cur-

riculum used was either a southern Sudanese curriculum that did not, however, cover all age groups or a curriculum imported from Uganda or Kenya. The education plans and policies of the Secretariat of Education (of the SPLM Education Ministry) consciously contrasted the educational system supported by the Khartoum-based NCP, reducing the all-pervasive focus on religion and instead focusing on education's role in socioeconomic development; environmental awareness; scientific, technical, and cultural knowledge; democratic institutions and practices; and international consciousness (New Sudan Curriculum Committee 1996, 4).

Most of our southern interviewees mentioned this curricular distinction between the two systems. As one teacher stated, "Recently [the Khartoum government] said that they wanted to impose Islamic education on us with no concessions to Christians. I told them, if they do, this is why the war broke out in the South. You know that this community doesn't belong to the Muslim community! We are supposed to have rights. We are talking bitterly to them. . . . We have the right to practice our Christian faith! I just told them: 'If you want to kill me, it's OK, but I want to die as a Christian'" (2004). A member of the Secretariat of Education of Southern Sudan made a similar point, while also identifying the need to reduce dependence on foreign curricula: "First of all we need to have our curriculum as distinct from the curricula now used from Kenya and Uganda. But we also need to have a curriculum which includes our history and our roots, and not a curriculum that imposes Islam on us Southerners" (2003).

The rejection of the Islamization of the school curriculum was accompanied by a modernist discourse where Western epistemology and science were promoted as the only knowledge system thought to be relevant for progress and liberation in the South, sometimes at the expense of indigenous epistemology and values. When asked about the curriculum in the South, one southern teacher stated, "With modern education you acquire scientific knowledge and positive change. . . . It also advocates gender balance and sensitivity" (2003). And another southern teacher explained, "Science teaches ways to get modern medicine and other ways of living. It gives people knowledge about agriculture, health, caring for environment and many others for [a] good way of living" (2003).

The modernist bias was clearly at loggerheads with the curriculum issued by the NCP used in the big towns in the South during the civil war. According to our informants, particularly members of the SPLM, the modernist curriculum in the liberated areas was seen as an important tool against northern religious and political imposition. When asked about the significance of education, one SPLM representative reported, "In the movement we regard education as number one among our priorities. It is the backbone of development. Some people think we can liberate this country by only using the gun. We need different ways and strategies to liberate the people of the

Sudan—modern education is one of them" (interview, 2002). Despite the fragility of the education system, the belief in education as "secondary" resistance was pervasive among southern Sudanese. Schools in the SPLA-controlled areas were not seen merely as instructional institutions but as sites of cultural and political struggle, as well. As one teacher commented: "Life is very difficult. I teach without getting any [remuneration]. But I can't stay away from school and let the pupils remain uneducated. Education is necessary to fight the Arabs" (2003).

Northern and Southern Political Discourses after the CPA

Over the years there have been several attempts by various external actors, including neighboring states and international organizations, as well as the parties themselves, to bring the civil war to an end. The signing of the CPA in 2005 was the end result of a protracted process under sustained pressure from the international community, including the UN Security Council. Armed confrontation between the NCP and the SPLA stopped, and the ground was cleared for serious reconstruction efforts. Still there are difficulties in making the distinction, as Lynn Davies (2004c, 230) states more generally, "between conflict and post-conflict, as they are certainly not dual, nor are they linear. There are phases and transitions."

The dispositional attributions, however, continue to dominate the political discourses in both the North and the South after the CPA. Even within the Government of National Unity (GoNU), established with representatives both from the NCP and the SPLM, the basic conflict lines have been maintained. One politician from the South working in the North summed up the view held by southern informants in and around Khartoum: "Even though there is a Unity government, we from the South have very little say in the government's decisions, especially when religious principles are invoked" (2008). And it was a bad omen when the SPLM pulled out temporarily from the National Unity government in 2007, because they perceived that major parts of the CPA were not being implemented. In support of the SPLM view, Global Witness (2009) raised serious questions about whether the oil revenues were being shared fairly between the North and the South. Moreover, the fighting in Malakal in southern Sudan in February 2009, between Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Gabriel Tang-led militia, which is supported by NCP, exposed the fragility of the CPA. The arrest warrant for President al-Bashir, issued by the International Criminal Court in March 2009, may also have jeopardized the ceasefire, in that it "forced the governing party to reexamine domestic alliances and consider previously unpalatable deals, outside CPA processes" (Thomas 2009, 6). One potential outcome as seen by international observers is for the NCP to dissolve the Government of National Unity and, thus, in reality to suspend the CPA (Morse 2009).

The stalemate in late 2007, the Malakal fightings in 2009, and the dispute

over oil revenues signaled a process of "back to normality." There was a feeling of déjà vu here, reechoing violations of peace agreements in the past.

Northern and Southern Educational Discourses after the CPA

Undoubtedly, the delivery of basic social services like education is important in the reconstruction period in southern Sudan. In the field of education, a number of NGOs are on the offensive, for instance, the UNICEF-backed "Go to School" campaign (UNICEF 2006). The number of students enrolled in school in southern Sudan more than quadrupled in the 2-year period following the end of the civil war in 2005, and 34 percent of the enrolled children are girls (Luswata 2007). While there is substantial improvement in terms of enrollment, the question of school quality remains a critical one. While both distribution of learning materials and short training courses for untrained teachers have been taking place, the needs are enormous. According to Luswata (2007), about 16,000 teachers, the majority untrained volunteers, teach approximately 600,000 schoolchildren. In many of these schools the lessons take place under a tree, with only a blackboard to support the teachers.

In this context of limited resources, one should not overstate the schools' potential to play a transformative role in southern Sudan. With a large number of untrained and inexperienced teachers, sometimes more than 100 students in a classroom or under trees, and almost no teaching materials, the tasks of the teachers and administrators are formidable. The low capacity of the schools is also problematic, given the increasing number of migrants and young (former) soldiers—often traumatized—who are coming back from the battleground and are in dire need of unlearning the culture of violence acquired in the bush.

Realistically, the schools' main task for the foreseeable future will be to teach basic academic skills to the pupils, with very little time or capacity for intertribal reconciliation or peace education. There is nevertheless a sense that schools, on the basis of their very existence and proliferation, the modernist curriculum, as well as the intertribal population groups in class, can make a difference in the South.

If premised on this assumption, the question of education and peace building in the South revolves around basically three issues: the refugee situation, interethnic group relations in the South, and relations between the North and the South. The answer to the role of education in these different contexts will, I argue, differ. The situation on the ground in the South after the CPA has changed, in the sense that the Government of Southern Sudan now more or less controls the whole territory of the South, including the areas previously held by the Khartoum-based government.

The southern educational discourse is, therefore, in one sense a more inclusive discourse because it is more in line with the religious and ethnic

sentiments in the region. Given the fact that more pupils have the chance of going to school; that the curriculum is being reshaped in line with the new realities in the South; and where a southern Sudanese identity, rather than tribal identities, is being nurtured, schools may contribute to facilitating a return to the status quo or the normality of the prewar period.[16]

The great influx of refugees from the North and the countries neighboring the southern territory, however, pose challenges to the inclusiveness referred to above. The Southern Sudanese Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology's decision to establish English (or a local language) as the medium of instruction in the primary school for the first 3 years presents challenges for many migrants from the North.[17] Although all are happy to leave behind an Islamist education system (as was noted in our interviews with southerners in Khartoum; see Breidlid 2005), their children encounter big problems with English as the medium of instruction, given that they started with Arabic in the schools in the Khartoum area and hardly know any English. The pupils in the bigger towns in the South face a similar challenge, since they also had attended Arabic-medium schools during the civil war.

Moreover, many of our adult informants among the migrants and among the southern town dwellers believe that Arabic is a more appropriate language for the children to learn, since colloquial Arabic is used as the lingua franca in the South, and not English. Many informants obviously distinguish between the ideological content of the northern school system curriculum and instruction in the Arabic language, which is defined as more or less free of ideology. Thus, the medium of instruction is a contested terrain in the South after the CPA, signaling an urban-rural divide that the southern Sudanese government has to address. This poses a dilemma, since the civil war was fought on ethnic-religious grounds, and, as many of our informants explained, it was not possible to continue any aspects of an education policy, even the language of instruction, associated with what is regarded as the former oppressors (i.e., an Islamic educational discourse).

Education in the complex postconflict situation in the South may therefore both help to sustain peace among the various southern ethnic groups (the interethnic southern dimension) and create transitional problems for

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[16] In the South the civil war resulted in, at least temporarily, some sort of interethnic reconciliation, forging a southern identity that transcended in many ways the ethnic or tribal lines that were highlighted prior to the war. The intertribal spirit during the civil war thus disturbed to some extent the neat division or dichotomy, as perceived originally by the various ethnic/tribal groups in the South, between the Dinka and the Madi, between the Acholi and the Nuer, between the Kakwa and the Bari, and between cattle herders and farmers. Intertribal clashes nevertheless took place during the war and after. Tensions grew between various ethnic groups in the South prior to the elections in April 2010.

[17] In homogenous communities where only one mother tongue is practiced, mother tongue instruction is supposed to be the norm. In the big cities, however, with a multiplicity of mother tongues, the medium of instruction is English from grade 1.

the migrants coming from the North.[18] However, if we turn to North-South relations, education in the South is not likely to contribute to peace and reconciliation. Since the education system in the SPLM/A-controlled areas during the civil war functioned as a tool in the resistance struggle, the reconstruction of schools with the accompanying educational discourse is not likely to bridge the cultural and ideological gap between the two systems. More or less unintentionally, international donor interventions in education in the South in the post-CPA area contribute to consolidating a division between the South and the Islamic and Arab North by supporting the development of a modernist, Western educational discourse.

While the educational landscape in the South is gradually changing in favor of SPLM educational policies after the CPA, al-Bashir's Islamic educational discourse does not seem to have been modified in the North. What is happening, however, is that the Islamic curriculum taught in schools in the big towns in the South during the civil war is now gradually being replaced by the South Sudanese curriculum under the auspices of the Government of Southern Sudan.

One problematic aspect of the NCP educational discourse was the forceful way in which the government employed an ethnic and religious model of the nation state to homogenize a heterogeneous ethnic/religious landscape and, thus, ignored or even suppressed differences based on culture, religion, and language. As has been noted above for the southern Sudanese, whether living in the South or as migrants, or internally displaced people living in and around Khartoum, the school system of the al-Bashir regime with its Islamist curriculum was intolerable and caused a lot of tension, even leading to riots in the capital (e.g., see Breidlid 2005). The unrest in Khartoum was primarily due to the brutal behavior of the al-Bashir government against the schools and churches in the IDPs.

It was the Khartoum-based government's insistence on an exclusive narrative in the schools based on Arabic Islamism that necessitated, according to the southerners, an alternative narrative based on southern history and culture. While one might argue that a nondivided, united future Sudan needs a new national narrative, a story of the nation, the current opposing educational discourses with their conflicting narratives in the classrooms across the country, mirroring the political stalemate, must be addressed if the present peace accord is to have any value.

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[18] The focus on a spirit of national (i.e., southern Sudan) unity is clearly expressed in the national goals of education by the New Sudan Curriculum Committee (1996, 3): "promote understanding and appreciation of the value of independence, national unity, a sense of patriotism and readiness to defend the sovereignty of New Sudan."

Conclusion

Even though the ceasefire still holds (in May 2010), political and military incidents confirm the fragility of the situation and clearly expose the suspicions and anxieties held by both parties of the conflict. The research reported above, undertaken during and after the CPA, portrayed in both the North and the South perceptions of the Other that emphasized dispositional attributions much more so than situational attributions. According to the NCP, the situational attributions (the more immediate cause of the conflict) were linked to the resistance movement SPLA and their "liberation" struggle. The illegitimacy of this struggle, according to the NCP, was explained in line with the hegemonic understanding of a conflict that was perceived as fundamentally just and legal on the part of the NCP, thus understating the role of issues that put the blame for the conflict on the NCP. There was also a sense of cultural and religious superiority among the northerners that deadlocked their perceptions of the conflict. Conversely, in the South and in the IDP camps in and around Khartoum, the conflict was "understood" as something inevitable, given the dispositional attributions of the NCP and Arabs in general. Moreover, the conflicting political discourses fed into the educational discourses that did not represent two ideological strands within the same educational system but, in the eyes of both parties, educational discourses that were irreconcilable and mutually exclusive. Not surprisingly, therefore, both parties were seriously concerned about educational policies because they reinforced the hegemonic and counterhegemonic political discourses in the divided country and underlined the perceived differences in dispositional attributions between the southerners and the northerners.

In this context, simple arguments that the conflict can be explained primarily by situational factors (arguments that, for example, appear implicitly in the JAM report; JAM 2005a, 2005b) are unlikely to have traction.[19] Instead, it is important to recognize the salience of dispositional attributions in any effort to resolve the conflict in Sudan. Given the rigidity and pervasive nature of the "fundamental attribution errors" in the political and educational discourses in both the North and the South, there is an obvious need to address these perceptions. In doing so, however, it must be remembered that there is often a reality basis for the myths and the attributions ascribed to the Other. These are perceived and actual realities that have to be addressed by officials in the Government of National Unity as well as by teachers in the classrooms in the North and South of Sudan.

[19] Additionally, the JAM report on education ignores the ideological differences between the educational discourses in the North and the South, claiming that the education system in the South "is very similar to that of the North, and provides a good foundation on which to build a common education system in the future" (JAM 2005b, 183). While space does allow a more comprehensive discussion of JAM's failure to address the fundamental differences between the two systems, suffice it to say that my own interventions to include these differences were deleted at the very last stage of the editing process of the JAM report.

The outcome of such deliberations in the field of education might well be twofold, facilitating peace between the various ethnic groups in the South and exacerbating the conflict between the South and the North. While the educational initiatives in the South can be, as Lynn Davies (2004b) states in another context, "genuinely about inclusion: trying to heal and reintegrate the traumatized, the child soldiers, the refugees, and trying to build a cohesive political and public culture," the same educational interventions can augment the rift between the South and the North. This is because the secular, modernist educational discourse in the schools in the South may be perceived to contradict the policies and practices of the North. While the southern schools are not necessarily abused for war propaganda purposes, they signal an epistemological position that is in conflict with the Islamic educational discourse in the North. It is the complexity of this situation, where the educational discourses reflect the political discourses on the macro level, that makes the North-South conflict so intractable and that dampers hope for a complete resolution to the conflict and a united Sudan. These are the issues that southerners will have to consider when they vote in the referendum scheduled for 2011.

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