



ARI Thematic Studies : Arab Securitocracies and Security Sector Reform

December

2011

Security Reform in Sudan: Efforts and Possibilities

*Haidar Ibrahim Ali**

The origins of the current security services go back to the period of stabilizing the colonial administration, which occurred after signing the Condominium Agreement of 1899. Sudan's strategic position had an immense importance to British politics especially after the Mehdi Revolution (1898-1885) and the assassination of Gordon Pasha (General Gordon). At that point of time, the British laid solid foundations for the civil services, which included security. The British administration succeeded in stabilizing this geographically vast and culturally varied land, despite numerous challenges.

The first challenge was the uprising of 1924 after the death of Sir Lee Stack in Egypt. The British reorganized the security services in Sudan and appointed an independent administration for it within the office of the Administrative Secretary, making Mr. David the head of Intelligence in 1926. The services went on to be called General Security and included the Department of Political Police. The latter was used for monitoring the activity of the national movement represented by the Conference of Graduates and was replaced in the mid '40s by the establishment of national parties. A number of Sudanese police officers worked there during that period and they led the security services after independence in 1956 while bringing about necessary changes in the services, making them compliant with the demands of that period. The services were mainly called the External Security Services in addition to being in charge of internal

matters. The main activity of the External Security Services was monitoring the rebellious activities in neighboring countries, while the Investigation Department monitored some of the political parties and unions especially during the rule of Abdallah Khalil (1956-1958), when the National Rule had inherited the "Law of Destructive Activity" alluding to the communists and leftists. Some embassies and foreigners were also monitored by these services under the same laws.

The regime of General Ibrahim Abboud (1958-1964) relied heavily on the security services, imposing its authority and oppressing the citizens who were known for their political allegiances to opponents and their disapproval of the system. It was during this period that the security services gained its bad reputation, which persisted for times to come. The period also witnessed important

*Director of the Center for Sudanese Studies in Khartoum.

changes in the aims and tactics of the security services as they were no longer concerned with the security of the country but with that of the regime. This has been the point of criticism and dispute until this day and it holds within it the basis of the security reform which is guided by the question as to how the work of security services can be diverted to serve the state, the society and the individual.

The period of General Abboud's rule witnessed a continuous dispute between the security services and the masses and when the regime fell due to the popular uprising of October 1964, one of the main demands was to "purify" the security services and the police. Some well-known officers were expelled and large changes were carried out in the Ministry of Interior whose head was a minister from the south, Clement Mboro who headed the ministry during the transitional period until 1965. This second democratic period did not last for long, as on 25th May 1969 the organization of the Free Officers under the leadership of Jaafar Nimeiri managed to seize power.

Institutional Structure of the Current Services: The Beginnings

The current services are based on the same organizational framework and drivers on which the security services under the rule of president Nimeiri were built. The May Revolution regime adopted changes to the frame that had existed since independence. What is more important, however, is the concept or what is called the work ethic, since the security services were for the first time ideologically influenced to serve a specific political party. The coup was actually led by the left and although there did not seem to be any prior coordination in forming a political front, both the Revolutionary Command Council and the Council of Ministers included communists, Nasserites, Arab nationalists, Ba'athists and leftist elements. One of the priorities of the new rule was to protect the revolution, which essentially meant the existence of a strong and efficient security service apparatus that was, most importantly,

loyal to the principles of the revolution. Therefore, those involved in the revolution embarked on designing this apparatus and established the National Security Agency on a new basis – which was evident from their choice of excellent graduates from universities. The employment conditions were tempting to many and the recruitment process was based on loyalty and bias towards the May Revolution. The security services were established as an independent military apparatus reporting directly to the president of the republic, with Major Mamoun Awad Abu Zeid appointed as head. The Major had previously worked in the field of security and intelligence in the capacity of an officer. At the same time, the Ministry of Interior headed by Major Farouk Osman Hamadalla maintained its control over the General Security Services.

The state embarked on establishing and organizing the security services according to the declared ideologies of the revolutionary regime. One of the historians of the period describes the security services as follows: "Both Majors Mamoun and Farouk embarked on building and organizing the security services headed by them based on the inclinations of the state and what had previously been agreed with the Russians. Hence Major Mamoun headed to the Soviet Union to build and structure the national security agencies while major Farouk headed to Eastern Germany in an attempt to rebuild the Ministry of Interior and the General Security Services. The state now had two separate security services."¹

Although the Russians and Germans suggested combining both services - which was initially accepted - their advice was not carried out on the ground. This serves as evidence to the hidden internal disputes inside the Revolutionary Council Command. While major Farouk had inclinations towards communism, the same was not true of Major Mamoun. Despite all this, the Communist Party, which was the most organized, popular

¹ Bayoumi, 1993:72.

party and had not till then expressed its dislike for the Nimeiri regime, was able to rule in terms of security. Haidar Taha writes of the period, “the Security services, which were filled with communists who flocked to it with individual initiatives, gained the support of the party’s leadership, for numerous reasons. Firstly to enable the party to control the strategic and influential positions and secondly to shut the door in the face of any other powers that could use these positions against the party. Thirdly, to secure the movement of the party, its headquarters, hiding places and its elements, while obtaining information on opponents like the Brotherhood, their organizations and the Umma Party. The fourth reason was to reduce the budget of the party which was spent on full-timers whose numbers had been on the increase since October 1964.”²

The director of the Interior Minister’s office was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and he chose 30 members of the Communist Party who represented the security cadre in the Ministry of Interior. On the other hand, the Soviets and Eastern Germans controlled the training, consultation and follow-up operations. Some of the Sudanese security experts saw that as a blatant breach of their country’s security and viewed the period as full of security chaos and lacking vision because of the absence of higher national goals. Add to that the poor quality and weakness of expertise provided by those employed by the security services³.

The love affair between Nimeiri and the communists did not last long as the dispute rose until the communists led a 3-day coup in July 1971. Nimeiri returned to power, thanks to foreign interference and the fact that some officers sided with him. He then carried out a revenge campaign during which he prosecuted the communist leadership, imprisoned hundreds of them and persecuted and dismissed them in the name of public interest. The security services were most

influenced by the persecution of the communists and hence underwent heavy changes during an operation called “Purification”.

Despite all this, the communists are the ones to be credited for the evolution of the security services as they stand today because they were the first to break the taboo of the Sudanese working for the security services, especially as such work was viewed negatively in the Sudanese culture and went against the prevailing values of solidarity. People working for the security services were given negative attributes such as being spies. Such work became a form of “protection of the revolution” during the reign of the communists and leftists and is now considered a protection of Islam and its civilizational project. In this way the most important cultural and social prejudice against working in the security services was broken, especially that the security work now attracted the educated elites because of the privileges involved. The latter point is an important change to be observed while studying the sector and its reform, which in effect is the “normalization” of work in security. Besides that, the elite that supported these services tried to enhance work for security and put a lot of effort in making it acceptable. It did not succeed because of a different reason: due to the fact that most of the new employees were dissidents of the Communist Party. The second phenomenon took place because of intellectuals and educated people flocking to work for the security services and to cooperate with them, which became more of a trend especially that most of them were assigned duties as consuls in various embassies without any overt security post or declared military rank. The aforementioned changes were important in enhancing the complexity and spread of the current security situation.

The Nimeiri regime was able to lay down new foundations for the security services, benefitting from the expertise and capabilities of the most capable of services during the Cold War – that of the Soviets and the

² Haidar Taha, 2010: 279.

³ Bayoumi, Ibid: 74.

Germans. The current apparatus can be considered a related extension of the foundations laid in the '70s of the last century, with certain amendments of course. New departments were established in order to make the security apparatus more elaborate. These are the Political Department, the Department of Foreign Intelligence, the Diplomatic Department, the Economic Department, the Technical Department, the Department of Observation and Investigation, Department of Records, Department of Information, the Legal Advisor and the Department of Administrative and Financial Matters⁴.

After his dispute with the communists and oppressing them from 1971 onwards, Nimeiri relied heavily on the security services and changed his orientation from protecting the revolution to protecting the rule of the individual. This led him to spending generous amounts on the security services and their development. A new security law was passed in 1978, after national reconciliation with the opposition parties based outside Sudan in 1977. The law was called State Security Services Law. The 1974 law on the state's central intelligence was abolished under the condition that all regulations and orders issued thereunder should remain valid until they were either abolished or amended according to the rules of this law. It is worth noting that all members who worked in the General Security Services and National Security Agency were absorbed into this system. The State Security Intelligence (SSI) represents the vital core of the system and all subsequent regimes in Sudan relied on it. Notwithstanding that, the SSI was dissolved after the fall of the Nimeiri regime on 7th April 1985 due to pressure from the masses. This decision sparked much controversy and many considered that leaving the country without a security apparatus was a grave mistake no matter what reasons lay behind such a decision and no matter under what circumstances such a decision was taken. The

democratic regime did not determine the time to renew the Security Law (1986-1989) and some laws remained valid to be applied in the civil war in the South. The former laws were also used to conduct arrests although they sparked much criticism due to their non-democratic nature and on account of being a remnant of the former regime. The coup carried out by the Islamists (the National Islamic Front) caused a qualitative leap in the apparatus as it was ideologically influenced despite its benefit from the cadres of the May Revolution and their technical knowledge. The apparatus thus became a part of the political regime and many times even replaced it.

It came as no surprise that those who carried out the coup depended completely on the security apparatuses right from the start especially since the National Islamic Front (NIF) was not a mass party. Although the NIF was the third party in the dissolved parliament, approximately half of its representatives came from the circles of graduates. This representation was based on an allocated share given to the graduates and was different from that of the geographical constituencies that relied on the majority of votes for victory. These representatives therefore were unable to influence public opinion for their own benefit. The other reason why the new regime relied on security was the rising civil war in the South and the alleged confrontation of the insurgency and the constant talk about the targeting of Sudan which in its turn justified the security grip and being on alert. The Sudanese Islamists did not feel that relying totally on the security apparatus was a controversial solution. One of their first theoreticians (who abdicated later) says, "The nature of a revolutionary regime's rule wanting to carry out basic political and social changes in the country makes the dependence on strong apparatuses a must, in order to overthrow any possible resistance to these changes."⁵

⁴ Bayoumi, 1993:78.

⁵ Al-Afandi, p. 43.

Essentially, all the powers were concentrated in the leader's office, as some called it. The main task of the office was to secure the revolution and its success. It managed to gain direct control over the intelligence and information apparatuses. The vice president of the National Islamic Front was in control of the security of the country and internal security and securitization apparatuses, receiving nightly visits from the heads of these apparatuses while issuing decisions during the day based on the reports.”⁶

The Islamists resorted to what they saw as religious rooting or religious authority in justifying the security work and they used the Koran, Sunna, Islamic tradition and comparison of the past with the present as tools of justification. Therefore, the theorists of the regime kept reciting the verse (aya) “(It is a great grace from Allah) for the protection of the Quraish, (He) who has fed them against hunger, and has made them safe from fear.” One of the verses used repeatedly in their writings and arguments to secure the regime and empower it is a verse from Hajj, 41 “Those who, if we give them power in the land, establish worship and pay the poor-due and enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity. And Allah's is the sequel of events”⁷. These thoughts directed and justified some of the criticism aimed at the apparatus of the ruling Islamic Front. The Front members were also cleared from torture and working in torture houses and all other violations of human rights.

Transformation of the Security System into a Political Organization

Certain Islamic party leaders contemplated the formation of an organizational frame similar to the “special regime” within the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which was accused in the 1940s of many acts of violence. The Sudanese Islamists focused on work in the army and the infiltration of the security services, which inevitably led to the

formation of Brotherhood groupings within the armed forces very early on.

The concept of infiltration stayed active within the organization and met with acceptance from some party leaders after the October 1964 revolution. Some saw that the armies would not stop leading coups whenever they felt there was a political void. “An organization that does not establish a military and intelligence branch lacks the essential earnestness needed to protect itself and its theories”⁸. The movement embarked on establishing cells within the army, especially after the May 1969 coup which quashed communism from the first day. On the other hand, the work of the National Front accelerated the movement's inclination towards military and intelligence work, or what was otherwise known as its military security doctrine. In 1977 the movement decided to change its strategy and aimed towards independence from the traditional political parties and for the first time in its history, as Al-Afandi states, the movement gained a secret agenda. Although the organization worked in secret, it nonetheless did not have a secret program. One of the movement's leader's documents this development by writing that it “was necessary to establish offices for central intelligence with limited branches in universities and some cities. Those who underwent military training focused on developing it and linking it to a culture close to the intelligence know-how and its management. Another group agreed with such development and focused their energy on working in private offices where the members were isolated due to the secret nature of the work and thus were deprived of any cultural influence or communication, ethics and experiences prevalent in other organisational frames. Their presence in the heart of the conflict often makes them respond most violently to violent actions”⁹. This is the basic core upon

⁶ Ibid, p.110.

⁷ The translation of the Quran by Pickthall.

⁸ Abd Al-Salam, 2010: 30.

⁹ Ibid, p. 32.

which the current security system was built and on which the Islamist rule relied.

The apparatus is often criticized for deviation and misuse of the power given to it. Abd Al-Salam writes about this matter: “Members of the special services felt they were special because of the information and training provided to them and although most of them appeared to be loyal and moral during their careers, some elements of extremism and perversion found their way into the services, beside the presence of a climate that enables, supports and protects odd behaviour”¹⁰.

Al-Afandi sees that the transformation of the secret program meant that its details could not be revealed to many of the members. He further elaborates: “This also means the presence of an organisation within an organisation that is aware of the agenda and is in charge of its execution. Such an organisation will have wide powers within the movement and will take the form of a “super organisation” or in other words a superstructure that is hard to be monitored by most of its members, and even harder to strip of its leading position”¹¹.

The influence of the “super organisation” increased after the coup because of the lack of organization within the movement under those extraordinary circumstances. The whole movement in fact gave its blessings to this monopoly of power. Al-Afandi says, “All of this happened in accordance with the legal and constitutional norms of the movement, since the Shura Council met and gave the senior leadership the powers to act as it deemed suitable until everything returned to normal. This practically meant that the organisation would not undergo any changes.”¹²

The most capable of the “super organisation’s” elements emerged within this organizational vacuum. The security services

were the only organized and united body, capable of replacing the absent political regime. Therefore, the new regime gave utmost priority to building efficient security services that would be able to endure the challenges of the time. During that period the security services carried out all the tasks that were meant to be carried out by the political regime and it did not limit itself to securing the presence of a ruling authority. One commentator writes that “these services were the only ones informed about the intricacies of the situation and were the only ones who had complete freedom of movement, besides being the only ones able to secure channels of communication between all the active centres of the regime. Hence the services played a big role, not only in securing the rule, but also in political coordination.”¹³

The new regime benefitted from all the members of the Islamist movement and their sympathisers and asked them to provide information that the regime relied on while making all the decisions of that period. Membership of the Islamist movement became almost like becoming a spy for the regime. They were found everywhere and Abd Al-Salam gives the following example: “The work of the intelligence and security apparatus encompassed the state’s official executive apparatus and the former’s loyal members took charge of protecting the ministers and big officials within the central and loyalist apparatuses. The position of an office director became an exclusively private security apparatus position and this apparatus assured the leadership that they were aware of everything that was happening and that they secured quick and efficient communication channels that adhered to the conditions of secrecy that were highly in demand during that period. On the other hand, as time passed by, this apparatus inculcated the ethics of the security services that went against the liberal and consultative nature of the Sudanese Islamist movement.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid, p.33.

¹¹ Ibid, p.44.

¹² Ibid, p. 45.

¹³ Al-Afandi, p. 46.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 111.

The new security services included a large number of Islamists in its ranks, which was the case in all ministries and other state offices. What differed, however, was the quality of those who were chosen for work and the fact that the resources of the security services were larger than those of other state institutions. Add to that the fact that the adventures of working for the security system and its growing influence attracted a lot of enthusiastic young people¹⁵. From this we can only imagine the abuse and violations of human rights, which represented a burden and disgrace for the Islamist regime, especially since its supporters insisted on calling it “the Civilizational Project”. The reality was, however, different, as Al-Afandi further writes: “The security apparatus practically became very close to the governing regime in the new state and included those members who were most enthusiastic for this regime and most willing to defend it. It was the most active apparatus and the most informed about what was going on. In addition to that, there was no other party that had the capability or even the will to compete with this apparatus.”¹⁶

The absolute power of the security apparatus led to practices quite alien to Sudan’s modern history. The Islamists introduced torture for the first time as well as what was called torture houses. Thousands of opposition members were arrested, beaten and humiliated by an impulsive youth who had both power and the alleged support of God. The apparatus, whose influence spread into all the governmental institutions, attempted to dismiss opponents or those accused of working against the revolution under the pretext of either maintaining public interest or purification. The apparatus gained unlimited power in the absence of institutions that would receive complaints. This was followed by the prevalence of the security mentality throughout the whole regime. Al-Afandi describes the situation: “The government’s

institutions became hostages of the security services and their behaviour. And when one of the young employees of the apparatus attacked an innocent person or committed a crime against him, everyone starting from the president of the republic and below leapt to defend and justify such acts as if the whole government had become a public relations apparatus for the security services.”¹⁷ This is similar to Al-Turabi’s theory that advocates the dismantling of the state and making it dissolve into society, which in this case means the dissolution of the apparatus or the security services into the society.

Naturally, reports and news of human rights violations leaked out of Sudan and organizations working in the field adopted strong campaigns against the Sudanese regime. In 1993 the United Nations appointed a special rapporteur to monitor the situation of human rights. A number of special international committees looked into complaints against the Sudanese government that revealed a great number of violations. These embarrassed the government, which in turn started looking for justification. Most party leaders denied their knowledge of what was happening, which was not far from the truth because the security apparatuses had a monopoly on information. The government propaganda tried to picture the whole case as a struggle between Islam and the West, stating that Sudan was targeted because of its implementation of religious law. In a comment on Casper Pero’s report, who was the then special rapporteur on human rights, an official newspaper wrote: “Thank God that the evil intentions of the West against Islam and Muslims were revealed by this person called Pero, who blatantly attacked the tolerant Islamic religion and its heavenly laws which exceed the understanding of the human brain.”¹⁸ With time, the Islamists tried to deny their responsibility what happened. In a newspaper interview Ibrahim Al-Sanoosi, the

¹⁵ Al-Afandi, p. 47.

¹⁶ Al-Afandi, p. 47.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.47

¹⁸ *Modern Sudan*, 24/12/1994.

leading figure of the Islamic Front said, “I am not denying that I am one of the leaders of the Islamic Salvation and all the human rights violations that occurred happened because of our work as we deemed it better for Islam and Sudan when we took over power.”¹⁹

Some Islamists have recently attempted to critically re-evaluate themselves while some talked about the phenomenon of the Islamic regime being swallowed by the apparatuses that it had established – a contention that seems odd at first. One of the cadres, Al-Tijani Abdelqader Hamed says, “How can security elements rule over an Islamic organization that is based on religion and that believes in the freedom of human beings and their dignity? And how can emerging secondary elements dominate over an old Islamic organization that has suffered from the brunt of repression and persecution by the security services for some time?”²⁰ Hamed sees that the majority of Islamists underestimated the role of the services. He quotes Al-Turabi’s comments on Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Afandi’s book saying that the former is exaggerating and asks, “Who are the people in these services? Aren’t they our younger brothers? And Al-Tijani Abdelqader comments, “but our little brothers’ constant attempt to dominate has not stopped. On the contrary, their political abilities have increased and they finally managed to get rid of Sheikh Al-Turabi and his organisation.”²¹

The failed attempt to assassinate the Egyptian president Husni Mubarak in 1995 in Addis Ababa came as a strong blow to the Sudanese security system and it dented its pride in its claim that it can do whatever it wants. The work of the security apparatus that was singled out by a number of security members brought embarrassment to the regime especially after the incident led to accusations as well as international and regional isolation. The incident scared the Islamists, especially the leadership, the cadres and those who tried

to confirm that they had no knowledge of what was happening inside the services, which in its turn confirms the theory of control held by a “super organisation”. The Islamists retracted from exporting the Islamic revolution and threatening the neighbouring countries. The Islamic movement paid a high price for the strategic mistake of giving up its constants. They cooperated with the CIA and surrendered Carlos and deported Bin Laden while they stopped the activities of the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference. They reformed the security services and some leading members were temporarily exiled only to return after the dispute between Al-Turabi and Al-Bashir in 1999. One sign of the deterioration was the authorization of the 1998 constitution. The regime made many settlements with human rights organizations and this was a turning point in the history of the Sudanese security services as the means they used changed dramatically. The apparatus attempted to reform itself while the pressure of internal opposition mounted.

Totalitarianism of the Soft Security System

The security system adopted new and different policies and methods which in the end accomplished the same aims of control and domination, sometimes even intimidation. The security system no longer needed torture houses and raiders. The system became one of the state’s most modern institutions when it came to using new technologies in communication and transport. It also attracted the most capable young people from the ranks of graduates, thus recruiting the young elite since it was no longer considered shameful to work for the intelligence. On the contrary, it became acceptable and its members openly introduced themselves, hence integrating themselves with others. Add to that all the privileges and facilities lifting these young people to social classes higher than they could have imagined.

The apparatus started acquiring a more civilized nature whilst ranks started disappearing except in internal dealings. Employees of the security were present in all

¹⁹ *Al-Sahafa*, 09/09/2000.

²⁰ p. 124

²¹ p.174

the civil service facilities and they could be found amongst university professors, doctors, engineers, journalists, teachers, clerks and public transport drivers. The security services almost became representative of the entire society, working intensively in the economy and many of the successful and effective companies on the market - especially those working in electronics and communications - were grateful to it. The former deputy of the apparatus became an elected member of a well-known communication company and such companies with links to the services transcended Sudan to have ties with countries like Dubai, Turkey, Djibouti, Egypt, Qatar and East Africa.

The security services almost became a state within a state, if not the only real state that actually governed the country. It might not be far from Al-Turabi's rather leftist thought of the dissolution of the state into the society. The idea behind the development of the current security services is manifested by the services ruling the state and the society, while believing that it represents both. The internal and regional circumstances prepared the ground for such a development, as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Naivasha in 2005 marked the start of a new epoch in Sudan's history. One of the main achievements of the services was ending the war despite not achieving peace. While the climate of reconciliation and forgetting the past prevailed, the heads of the security services embraced this climate and called for a new era. The new agreement and the constitution of 2005 highlighted new goals and tasks for the security services that were in accordance with the peaceful period and democratic transformation. This is the natural state of things as it is impossible to talk about democratic transformation while keeping laws that restrict liberties and contradict the new constitution.

The new security system which was formed after the agreement and after combining the National Security and the Intelligence Services, attempted to change its policies, relations and methods. The National Security

and Intelligence Services surprised the civil society with a public relations campaign and calls for unofficial meetings while photos of its director Salah Gosh made headlines in newspapers and in the media. The beginnings of this transformation can be traced to November 2002 during the holy month of Ramadan when Gosh invited a publisher from Al-Watan newspaper for a seminar that took place after dinner and after breaking the fast (iftar). According to the organizers, the aim behind this initiative was to move away from a relationship of confrontation to one of dialogue. They further believed that it would be the beginning of breaking the ice and the mistrust. The head of the services admitted that they had adopted the rather extremist side of the Islamic thought and system although Islam encompasses all methods and ways. He also added that they had opted for a jurisprudence based on wills and circumstances justifying that in historical events from the Prophet's period and the period of the Righteous Caliphs and perhaps even the Umayyad Caliphs²².

After less than three months the security services invited a number of editors-in-chief, column writers, legal personalities and leaders from civil society organizations to an address by Major Salah Abdallah, the director of the whole apparatus, who said, "There is a new and unprecedented practice in our Arabic and African world which was dictated to us by those in charge. Another precedent is that Sudan is a country for everyone with different political and ideological identities. Everyone has the right to govern the country, therefore anyone can compete for this position and the state institutions belong to all the Sudanese." He tried to suppress the allegations directed at the services by the opponents of the Islamic Salvation party (in his own words) stating that they were re-evaluating the experience, trying to make up for the drawbacks and develop it so that it is up to date with the progress taking place everywhere else. He said that they were

²² *Al-Sahafa*, 01/12/2002.

confident that the apparatus was one for the citizen's safety and for the protection of national security. He also added that within the apparatus, they do not fear anything because they strongly believe in themselves and that they are carrying out their duties according to orders they received. He further explained that people differ in what they heard but those in charge within the apparatus decided to reveal their identities and to embark on a dialogue with the society and strengthen their relationship with it so that the society becomes directly aware of what they are doing. He further explained that many of the conjectures about the apparatus are built on word of mouth and that people are unaware of the large amounts of work carried out by the apparatus. The Major addressed the audience by saying "You do not see our work, although you might see the procedures". He indicated that they carry out many tasks that they do not reveal or talk about and therefore the director of the apparatus made those in charge within the apparatus present extensive explanations about its new core.

The director described the services as being a sovereign apparatus governed by the president of the republic and its work being governed by a law. The services are made up of six departments: the political department, economic and loyalist departments, a special department for the South and another one for Khartoum. Within his speech he also declared for the first time that some soldiers were chosen for the study and teaching of Quran, indicating that there was an increasing interest in social relations and fortifying solidarity within the members of the services. He also reported that those working for the services were loyal to the nation and its causes and that the apparatus had sacrificed 78 martyrs during various operations. Major General Mohammed Jaafar Mohammed, head of the political department, stated that his department included several offices related to insurance, one to community safety and another to the security of the state of Khartoum, while a fourth monitored foreign activity in the country. Mr. Mohammed

explained that his department monitored the political activity of various parties and tried to insure all strategic locations, fight armed activities, vandalism and criminal acts and protect the country. His department also tried to distance unions from party allegiances, while directing student activities. He talked about the Department of Community Safety saying that it was different from the Community Safety Police although the two did cooperate. He added that they were interested in Islamic religious activities, different methods, extremist activities, monitoring tribal work and controlling its negative activities. They also monitored activities related to women and tried to coordinate positive work in that regard.

Then Brigadier General Abd Al-Azeem Al-Rifai, the head of the Southern Sudan Department, introduced his department followed by the head of the Economic Department who talked about the role of his department in investment, monitoring the movement of investors and providing special information related to them to protect them against fraudsters. The meeting was concluded by the General Director of the Security Services who made it clear that immunities within the services did not exempt the members from sanctions imposed on transgressions of law, asserting that they would not allow the services to be politically targeted while the services would not, at the same time, allow its members to trespass the law. He revealed that a number of the services' officers and soldiers were serving a prison sentence because of certain abuses.

Therefore, it is clear from the declarations of the director of the services that they were taking steps towards opening up, starting dialogue and making concessions. One journalist commented on these developments: "But it is slow, cautious, insufficient, late and done by a method that is inadequate for achieving the desired goals. There are still those who left the Islamic Salvation at its start or in the middle of its rule and the threat still exists of reverting to limiting liberties and using the old methods if we did not agree with

them or if we were not patient enough while they do everything from one side. All of this is hard to accept and may lead to more external pressures and imposition of solutions by force.”²³ The security system’s intentions for reform were clear. However, they wanted to do that according to their own conditions and without affecting their position and role. The slogan “Security and Freedom” was often used during that period, because many Sudanese were apprehensive of the challenges stemming from the agreement. And although they were dedicated to the security and unity of their country, they were also anxious about the violation of their democratic rights.

The Image of the Sudanese Security Services: The Internal View

The former director of the National Security and Intelligence Services, Salah Gosh, who is currently the president’s adviser on national security, provided a comprehensive presentation of the services, their future and success in an interview²⁴. He responded to the following questions about national security as follows:

- What are the changes that occurred to the concept of Sudanese national security? What are the current threats that it faces and what will be their effect in the future?

Salah Gosh (SG): We are trying to develop and realize a concept with deep strategic importance to the Sudanese national security, built on achieving the security of the Sudanese citizens no matter what their religion, colour, language or ethnic background. This necessarily includes their political, economic, social and environmental security and it means that our vision of the national security is based on achieving sustainable and balanced development. This concept also includes the development of our natural resources and their optimal utilization,

protecting the environment and preserving the interests of future generations, next to contributing to world security and peace, which is a concept that is built on an exchange of interests and establishment of regional and international partnerships.

- The concept of national security is now complex to the degree that it is difficult to protect it against threats. In your opinion, what are the largest threats that face the country?

SG: The concept of national security has evolved greatly in the last three decades and it is no longer connected to military threats alone. It now includes political, economic, social and technical aspects; and the complications of protecting our interests in the international arena during the last two decades contributed to the emergence of a strategic aspect of national security that in turn led to the inclusion of tasks such as protecting the environment, achieving human security, developing resources and their optimal use under the banner of national security. Therefore it is hard to pinpoint one specific threat to the Sudanese security based on this concept. From the economic point of view, we find that Sudan’s possession of farming capacities in the midst of a global shortage of food and a struggle for it might constitute a threat for Sudan. The same goes for energy. On the other hand, overcutting vegetation in forests can be viewed as a security threat because of the correlation between rain and forests. The lack of education that would provide qualified staff is also a form of threat to national security. Nonetheless, I can say that because of Sudan’s special geographical position and its huge natural resources it falls under the radar of foreign strategies, which in turn means that the administration of national strategic interests should be viewed from a national and not political party point of view. Thus in order to achieve national security we cannot allow any disputes between rulers and opposition parties.

²³ *Al-Sahafa*, 01/12/2002.

²⁴ This interview was published over three days in the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Raed*, on December 6th, 7th and 8th, 2009.

•One of the largest successes achieved under your leadership of the NSIS is that you spared the country from a wave of American wrath after the events of September 11th and your cooperation with the American leadership on the terrorist files. What is the scale of the technical (not political) cooperation between the Sudanese and American intelligence?

SG: I consider the time I spent as a director of intelligence as full of successes, among which I consider the greatest one to be the practical application of the slogan that I have raised and which says that the security services are there to protect the people, not to scare them. This system is there to make the citizen feel safe and not scared. We managed to neutralize the antagonism between people and the services. One of the other great achievements is making the services stronger and more professional which made our services number one in the region. All the Western services that we have cooperated with admit that. The Egyptian services are the only other ones on the African continent that compete with us. We managed to establish special relations with all the intelligence services in Africa, Western Europe and Asia.

Our relationship with the CIA comes within the ambit of these relationships, although this relationship is special and is the only official friendly channel between Sudan and the American administration. Our cooperation in the field of fighting terrorism comes according to our vision and definition of terrorism and how to approach it. We talked to them openly and clarified to them that the biggest fuel of terrorism is the United States' policy towards the world and the Arabic world specifically. You might have meant by your question to ask about the benefit behind such cooperation. The benefit is large. It is known that the relationship between Sudan and America was tense from the '70s of the last century until the beginnings of 2001 and communication between the two was completely absent. The American policy was actually targeting Sudan because they nurtured the opposition and supported it financially. Then they instigated our

neighbours against us and officially declared war on us through the latter. And in the midst of such animosity the Sudanese Intelligence sought to start a dialogue with the American administration. After the dialogue started, shortly before September 11th, the Americans became more convinced of its benefit and we managed to achieve great goals. Amongst these goals was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which came as a natural result of the dialogue started between Sudan and the United States. The cooperation continued until it became the main tool of dealing with the Sudanese issue. The cries of extremists calling for taking extreme measures against Sudan, including some military ones, were refuted and the American administration is now eager to listen to the voice of our government and work with it to deal with many issues. This is now a declared policy and a huge change that put an end to the deterioration. On account of this dialogue and exchange of information the Americans discovered that they held wrong information about Sudan and they scrapped hundreds of documents from their classified archives which in fact constituted a reference to the situation in Sudan. The technical examples are numerous and it is difficult to cite all of them, but for example, we managed to prove that some of their sources of information were merely information traders and we, as a regime, managed to reach those traders and obtain confessions from them about the fabrications they were passing to the Americans. Our cooperation with them protected the country and the region of the African Horn from direct interventions. My dear brother, it is no secret that the United States made a decision to enter Somalia again after its withdrawal from there. But by carrying out direct talks with the Sudanese services we managed to convince them to abandon this decision, thus saving the region from a direct American military presence which could have been destructive.

•Does the National Security Advisory encroach on the performance of the security services? Where is the Sudanese National

Security Council? What is its formation and tasks and what does it specialize in?

SG: The National Security Advisory is not a new body or invention. It exists in many countries and it does not interfere in the work of other ministries and institutions due to the nature of its formation and specialization. Its work is limited to coordination and scientific support within a limited framework which might be due to the nature of the concept of national security, requiring immense efforts from many individuals. National security is not achieved through the force of weapons only, but also through hard political, economic, social, scientific, technical and media work and also by establishing international and regional relationships.

Being informed about these operations requires coordination between different parties and also requires providing support linked to the national security. It further requires preparing special studies about national security that is linked to many parties. This, for example, means preparing pure economic studies led by economic specialists while our role as an advisory comes within the frame of economic research related to the national security or one that has links with many parties. Since the advisory is in charge of executive tasks as mentioned before, it therefore expresses the views of the National Security Council which is a national apparatus leading operations to coordinate and direct the national effort to achieve national security. The Advisory hence includes political parties with connections to the national security both from the military sector like the uniformed services or the civil sector like the Ministry of Exterior and others.

•It is known that you are the first who published invitations in the Sudanese newspapers to join the security services. What are the risks and how do you view this experience?

SG: I told you in this interview about my determination to build a professional, politically unbiased security apparatus that

would be part of the state as a whole and would belong to all the Sudanese who would compete to work for it under well known conditions and holding on to these conditions is a proof of our sincerity. I made sure that there was no pressure in joining the services and that the criteria for working for the services were based on known steps starting with providing an introduction, then taking examinations to measure abilities. The University of Khartoum, with which we had a contract, carried out the examinations, corrected the answer scripts and sent us the results. The university did its work professionally and we are committed to the results received from them. Afterwards we carried out other steps such as a medical inspection and so on. Our experience has been successful, carries no risks and it confirms that the services are the property of all Sudanese and do not belong to one party or another.

•The services have become one of the strongest intelligence services in the region. How was that achieved?

SG: This was definitely achieved with great effort and coordination, the strongest of which was the support of the president and his protection of the services from the meddling of politicians. This gave me a unique chance to build this great institution making it all seem like a miracle especially that this is an unprecedented golden era in the history of Sudanese Intelligence and it might not occur again. The clarity of our vision and making the staff aware of it played a great role as well. The strength of our message and the establishment of appropriate behavioural patterns are my highest priorities. They are followed by the development of administrative methods, the use of modern technologies and IT, preparation and improvement of the work environment, establishment and building of the infrastructure of the institution. I managed, thank God, to accomplish all of this as I continuously monitored and evaluated the whole process although it took a long time. Building the institution and developing its

ability has become a personal goal in addition to an institutional one. I was able to achieve all of this because of my ability to change, apart from my confidence and courage and above all God's help and I dedicated great time and effort to the improvement of the final professional outcome, which resulted in an apparatus that is internally strong. I also focused on foreign relations and was lucky enough to foster strong ties with all the African services and our services headed all the other African services for two years. I can assure you that the African services have the strongest ties with Africa and we are the number one security services in Africa who had relations with all the other African security services, while most of the other security services have limited relations. We also fortified our relations with most of Western and Eastern Europe's security services. We are an institution with great bilateral relations and are respected by everyone and everyone acknowledges our professionalism and ability. Our relations with some of the heads of state, their armed forces and foreign ministries have often exceeded those of some of our neighbours. We play an important role in the bilateral relations between these countries and Sudan.

Diffusion of the Security System: Some Examples

The roles and tasks of security services differ in a totalitarian ideological regime that works (in its own words) on the improvement of the Sudanese citizen. Therefore, there are no aspects in the public or private lives of the citizens that were not included in the sphere of interest of the Sudanese security services. The regime made the capital a laboratory for its Islamic experiment although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement stipulated that Khartoum would be a national capital representing the cultural diversity of Sudan. But the authorities issued the Public Order of 1997, the structure of which included departments such as the Department for the Protection of Families and Children, Department of Negative Phenomena and the criminal departments for: the homeless,

furnished apartments and alcohol. It is important here to point out the crucial role of the police, as the security services were careful not to make the police feel that it is being marginalized. At the same time the services tried to prevent the overlap in security specialization, while trying not to diminish their absolute monopoly on security. Hence the security services left a lot of the security tasks which indirectly help the protection of the state's security such as suppressing citizens, spreading control and limiting freedoms to the police. The security services were careful not to diminish the authority of the police but they limited that authority to different aspects of certain security and authority matters alone. The National Security and Intelligence Services almost monopolized all work related to political security, i.e. anything related to activities opposing the regime in addition to foreign security and relations with other countries. The security tasks of the police varied internally and socially. The police was divided into divisions like the community safety police, public order police, and comprehensive security police which were positioned throughout neighbourhoods. It is noticeable that these tasks are related to public behaviour and assault related crimes like theft, self-harm and assaults on the community. Direct assaults on the state though, are restricted to the security services. There is also the Popular Police, which is almost a militia that supports the police.

The contact between the police and the security services is not apparent but sometimes there is competition between the police and the armed forces in remote areas. That happens mainly because the army does not have legal powers to resolve disputes and intervene in solving daily problems and the soldiers sometimes take action merely because they are armed.

The services for monitoring community safety varied greatly and they were also known as divisions to the extent that furnished apartments had their own division in the services. The head of the Furnished

Apartments Division in the State of Khartoum stated that the plan aims at raising awareness amongst tenants and landlords across the capital. He indicated that special committees with links and specialization in the subject were formed and he stressed the importance of being practical under these circumstances to avoid the causes leading to the spread of behaviour which in turn leads to crimes dangerous for the society and the state²⁵.

The Security Services have currently become censors of the media under the pretence of the sensitive situation before the referendum in the beginning of January 2011. Under these circumstances two newspapers, *Al-Hurra* and *Akhbar Al-Yawm* were suspended as a punitive measure by the NSIS on 06/07/2010. The suspension also included *Al-Tayyar* and *Al-Ahdath* newspapers based on instructions from the security sergeant who requested the deletion of news and written materials that were in print. The situation did not enable journalists to substitute the articles which hindered the publishing of the newspapers. The apparatus attempts at the same time to establish strong ties with the newspapers and journalists.

Till this day and despite the controversy over reform and development, the apparatus is still responsible for political and security tasks. When the Juba Coalition tried to stage a demonstration, news broke out that “The security adviser of the president of the republic and head of the National Congress Divisions General Salah Abdallah stressed the importance of ban on staging a march by any group under the current circumstances” and accused the Juba Forces of failing to organize any demonstrations during the past twenty years wondering how it could dream of bringing the National Congress down by a popular uprising. He also added, “We firmly declare that we will not allow any revolts protected by arms in Khartoum and we tell all those dreamers in the region and the world that it is impossible for a popular uprising to take place.” He further called on the people to

²⁵ *Al-Ahdath*, 21/07/2010.

say good-bye to these parties in four months, when the elections were to take place²⁶. He also added that Sudan was targeted in order to break its will and that there were attempts to infiltrate the security and support the opposition in fighting the National Congress. This was the way the head of security was talking about the political cadres of the party and with much confidence because he has the power to implement what he says.

It was reported that General Salah Abdallah, the director of the NSIS, presented awards to a number of leading personalities in the art and cultural spheres as part of the Services’ plan to integrate them with the society. The awards were in the fields of singing, music, poetry, short stories, archaeology, plastic arts, photography, folklore, radio and television, cinema and comedy, besides giving awards to the winners of the cultural competition from the ranks of the services²⁷. As part of the same policy it was reported that “The General Director of the NSIS attended a football game between the Sudanese *Al-Merreikh* FC and Chadian *Gazelle* FC accompanied by both the presidential advisor of the Republic of Chad, the Chadian Minister of Interior and Deputy Security Commissioner. He talked about the role of sports in deepening the friendship of peoples and he donated fifty thousand pounds to support *El-Merreikh*.”²⁸

The Army and the Security Services

The circumstances of the long civil war in the South and then in Darfour imposed close cooperation between the security services and the army while the military felt that the security services were an extension of the army. Observers of the emergence of the National Security Services during the rule of Nimeiri in the early ’70s of the last century can confirm this rumour. The NSS were established as an independent military apparatus controlled directly by the president of the republic. Bayoumi writes that “The

²⁶ *Al-Ahdath*, 16/12/2009.

²⁷ *Al-Sahafa*, 16/01/2008.

²⁸ *Al-Sahafa*, 05/05/2010.

services are mainly charged with combating espionage, foreign spies and sabotage, besides working on intelligence, evaluating it and providing the final information to the decision makers for them to make their decisions.”²⁹

As mentioned above, the new apparatus was headed by a member of the Revolutionary Command Council, Major Mamoun Awad Abu Zeid. Some excellent armed forces officers who worked at the Department of Military Intelligence were assigned to work for the new services and moving from the army to the security services remained a casual matter similar to that of moving within the different armed forces, while the leaders and cadres of the services retained their military ranks. When Sudan adopted the system of consulates abroad (which mostly represented the security elements in embassies), most if not all of the consuls were from the army or had a military background and old links with the leadership of the military intelligence.

The move from a military to a security regime came as a step towards achieving a civil society and it is said that rebellious military forces can not sit on their arms forever. They will inevitably leave their posts at some point, while intellectuals and elites take their tasks and theorize and suggest forms of the political system, appropriate laws and outlines of the constitution. In the case of the rebels who already subscribed to ideologies (as was the case of the Sudanese Islamists), the change was quick and easy. A new constitution was established in 1998 which meant the end of the Revolutionary Command Council’s role. At that time there are only two members from the Council in the ranks of the government and both of them are two retired military ministers. At the same time the army was busy with the war in Darfur and it is said that there were battalions working as special forces for the apparatus or as militias and these were involved in preventing Khalil Ibrahim’s attack (from the Darfur Justice and Equality Movement) last year.

²⁹ Bayoumi, 1993: 75.

The following report clarifies the existing relationship between the security services and the armed forces: “The director of the Security and Intelligence Services met with the leadership of the joint Sudanese and Chadian forces yesterday. The forces were in charge of reinforcing the military and security protocol that was signed in February 2010 to protect the security on the borders of the two countries. Major Ata appreciated the role and task of the joint forces that dealt with loose security on the borders and thus achieved security and stability. This comes as confirmation of the fulfilment of the irreversible Agreement. He also stressed that there is continuous coordination between the leadership of the two countries and the related services in order to implement and develop the agreement and to foster close relationships between the two countries leading to cooperation, strategic bonding and overcoming the hurdles left over from the previous era. Major Ata further clarified that the armed, security and police forces of both countries are very capable and they have proven that by patrolling the borders and providing security without the help of external powers. He considered this a sign of the new resolve and determination of the countries to move forward to reach security, peace and development on the borders of the two countries in general.”³⁰

Darfur and the National Security

Since 1989 the current regime has been trying not to appear involved in the tribal struggles between the Arab and non-Arab tribes in Darfur by operating through official institutions. This led to the idea of creating non-official militias, so the authorities recruited and armed the youth of the Arab tribes taking advantage of the economic situation and unemployment, thus fuelling ethnic hostilities. It is logical to say that the security services were at least aware of, if not part of, the creation of the Janjaweed as it is impossible to smuggle such large amounts of arms and set up military training camps

³⁰ *Al-Sahafa*, 09/08/2010.

without the knowledge of the security services. This indicates either ignorance or complicity.

The leaders and elders of the Arab tribes were charged with leading the militias and tempting the youth to join them. The term “Janjaweed” was used to address the concepts of knighthood, masculinity and ethnic superiority. It is said that the militias are the ones who spread the term, which is a combination of words, and its members gained the bad reputation of spreading violence, terror and scaring rivals. Their practices were scary from the start and violated all basic human rights. Acts like group killings, burglaries and rape were in many cases a normal part of the Janjaweed’s strategy. Their raids resulted in the displacement of many citizens outside and inside of Sudan. Most of them came from the black tribes and there is talk of the settlement of tribes from Africa (such as the Tuareg) in Darfur in order to change the ethnic composition and make the Arab elements dominant. The question can be asked differently: what was the role of the security services in the halting of the Janjaweed’s operations, since the services are considered the guardians of national security in Sudan and the voice demanding to protect citizens and impose security?

Reform and the New Law

It can be said that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Naivasha) of 2005 was the driver behind the political parties’ search for reform and re-evaluation of the National Security Services’ tasks and powers, which were all modelled by the Islamic group that overthrew the democratically elected regime of 1989. Both the Agreement and the transitional constitution of 2005 indicated a change in the role of the services during the coming period. Articles 150 and 151 of the constitution state the following:

150 - (1) There shall be at the national level a National Security Council, the composition

and functions of which shall be determined by a National Security Act.

(2) The National Security Council shall define the national security strategy based on the analysis of all threats to the security of Sudan.

(3) There shall be established security committees at the Government of Southern Sudan and state levels; their composition and functions shall be prescribed by the National Security Act.

151 (1) There shall be established a National Security Service that shall be charged with the external and internal security of the country; its mission, mandate, functions, terms and conditions of service shall be prescribed by the National Security Act.

(2) The National Security Service shall be representative of the people of Sudan; Southern Sudan shall, in particular, be equitably represented therein.

(3) The National Security Service shall be professional and its mandate shall focus on information gathering, analysis and advice to appropriate authorities.

(4) There shall be established National Security Service offices throughout Sudan.

(5) The National Security Service shall be under the supervision of the Presidency.

This means the following:

Formation

The constitution stipulates the importance of creating a National Security Council whose form and tasks are drawn from law, which is in addition to the tasks determined by the constitution. It is clear from Article 151 that the split in security services which was present in the Law of 1999 when two services were established - one in charge of internal security and the other in charge of external security - was no longer required. There was also a need to create new unified services under the new law that would be in charge of Sudan’s internal and external security. The

other matter was related to regional representation, especially the representation of Southern Sudan in the membership of the services.

Tasks

The position of the services amongst the public authorities: The constitution entrusted the Security Council with the task of drawing the national security strategy based on the threats to Sudanese security (Article 150 – (1) and (2)). This requires that the law specifies what is meant by threats to the national security in order to enable the National Security Council to carry out its tasks. It is hence necessary to clarify the position of the services within the public authorities and especially its relationship with the government, because there should be a clear distinction between the state and the government in that the government means the political power present for a specific period of time while the state is identified as the permanent services through which the government practices sovereignty over the people and the region during a certain period of time.

These services, security services included, should be unbiased towards successive governments and towards the legal political formations within the state. The services' impartiality towards the legal political formations would mean that they are part of the protection services with whom everyone cooperates and it would make work easier for the services, while clearing any misunderstandings about the protection of national security and public liberties. According to this distinction, what happens inside the legal political formations or amongst them does not fall in the the security apparatus' sphere of interest. Lawyer Nabeel Adeeb comments, "The constitution stipulates that the services' work should be professional and focus on the collation of information. This issue makes law-makers responsible for defining the type of information related to the security of Sudan and which the security services should obtain. Acquiring general

information is available for everyone therefore there should be no reason for creating services that would search for information."³¹

In a series of questions put forward to him, Major Salah Abdallah (Gosh), the General Director of the Services, was asked about the necessity of limiting the services' role to gathering information only and whether that would diminish the services' role or whether surpassing that would put the country at grave security threats. The Major answered as follows: "The main role of the services is, of course, gathering information, which constitutes 90 % of its activity, but the services play other important and vital roles in many fields. Those who are talking about limiting the services' tasks to the gathering of information only are neglecting great energies that are useful in many respects."³²

The political arena witnessed a heated debate about the new roles and powers of the services. The newspaper headlines aimed at creating excitement and sensationalizing the debate in articles with titles like "A scream that hurts the ears: Will the Security Services shed their skin in the coming period?"³³ or "The Security Services: without claws and teeth"³⁴. The political parties entered a sharp dispute that included two coalition members - the National Congress Party and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Sudan - and almost led to the dissolution of the coalition and abandoning of the Agreement. The constitution was withdrawn and postponed many times in order to be further discussed and amended and the National Security Act was one of the last acts to be approved before the parliament was dissolved. Acting before the parliament convened, the Director of the Security Services and Intelligence held a press conference at the headquarters of the services and opened the meeting by saying that the security services could not be

³¹ *Al-Sudani*, 02/12/2008.

³² *Al-Raed*, 08/12/2009.

³³ *Al-Ra'i Al-'Aam*, 23/07/2005.

³⁴ *Al-Sahafa*, 20/01/2009.

effective without having the power to arrest. He likened the attempts of some to take that right away from the services to the dissolving of the services before the famous revolution in April 1985 and focused on the issue of arrest that was the source of the dispute. Some parliamentarians objected to the power of arresting people considering it to be a breach to what was agreed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The head of the parliament, Yasser Arman considered what was written in the Security Act's draft to be a breach of the Agreement and expressed the animosity that the National Congress is known of. He added in a press release that "detention and other practices carried out by the services do not conform to the requirements of a democratic transformation. We fear that the power to arrest could become one of the barriers that could emerge during the elections and it might be misused." The Minister of Legal Affairs of the Southern government, Michael Makuei explained that the joint legal committee had agreed to transfer the powers of arrest, call-out and investigation to the police. The National Congress repudiated the agreement at the last moment³⁵. The Director of the services objected to such an act, which has no precedence in the world. He pointed out that those who were demanding the withdrawal of the right to detain came to the Services and asked them to detain Sheikh Mohammad Abdul Kareem because he accused the Communist party members of being infidels. He confirmed that the Services intervened as negotiators and not as captors. Politicians nonetheless expressed their worries over the power of detention working against their political interests. The speaker of the Sudanese Communist Party said that the Security Services could turn against them any minute because there were no guarantees for the Services to behave in an unbiased way that would protect the democratic transformation³⁶.

³⁵ *Al-Ahdath*, 20/10/2009.

³⁶ *Al-Ahdath*, 20/10/2009.

The controversy over the necessity of having strong controls to prevent the abuse of the right of detention was still present even after many had been convinced of the need to detain in certain cases. One of the officials explained the thoughts behind the concept, saying, "I have dealt with almost all of the Security Services of the world and detention within their powers is carried out based on the security law which the constitution allows. They interrogate them then present them to the prosecutor. I wish we could distinguish between the security services and the intelligence services, since here in Sudan we talk about one apparatus that practises both security and intelligence. These powers are specific to the security services while the intelligence services do not have the right to detain citizens."³⁷

The period of detention also caused a big debate but a new security law was approved in the end by a large majority in the parliament. Once the law was approved, General Salah Gosh, the General Director of the National Security Services, was dismissed from his position. The decision to do so caused a great deal of speculations, as some considered the change as the beginning of a new era for the security services. However, General Gosh was given a different position and when a journalist asked him, "People in Khartoum wondered upon hearing of your appointment as an advisor to the president whether it was a merciful dismissal or a real promotion, especially that you are the regime's strong man?", the General responded, "The president answered by appointing me an advisor and it confirms that he trusts me and that my abilities are untouched. His trust has actually increased as he made me in charge of such a high-ranking political position like his advisor on security matters. And as his highness the president said, I became a part of the pilot's cabin. Either way, I confirm that I am at the disposal of the party and the state in carrying out any tasks in any position in accordance with my

³⁷ *Al-Ahdath*, 10/10/2009.

abilities and qualifications.”³⁸ It did not take long to see what the General was up to, especially that it was expected that the position of an advisor was a respectable way to freeze powers. From the start, Gosh turned the advisory into a beehive of activity and created tasks for it that corresponded to the periods of elections and the referendum. The National Security Advisory (as it was called) alongside the Council of Ministers’ Secretariat started shaping a mechanism for joint administration during the current year. The advisory was made up of 50 experts and executives who embarked on preparing a program or document for 12 cases that would be presented to the political powers for them to adopt in the future in order to find an escape from the political stalemate. And according to the Presidential Advisor on Security Issues, the advisory is an apparatus for leading the state, studying various options and choosing the appropriate ones to face the challenges of the coming period without interfering in the work of its institutions. Here the advisory will study the option of establishing two states in the case of separation. He further explained that the Council of Ministers is the institution responsible for coordination and follow-up, but their role is advisory, not executive. Major Hasaballah Umar, General Secretary of the Advisory, added that the advisory would focus on the country’s relations with its neighbours, securing the region and its political problems, besides dealing with the issues of instability, conflicts, food scarcity, environmental change, poverty and basic services such as health and water while fulfilling the role of the state, as well as focusing on population movement due to political and economic development and the issues of foreign presence. It seems like the advisory was in charge of the state’s strategies and that’s why the Minister of State said that it was established at the right time because the country is experiencing great challenges. He said that the advisory resembles the State’s gut instinct in revealing what’s hidden and

predicting what the country will face.”³⁹ In reality, the advisory resembles Egypt’s former Policy Committee of the ruling National Democratic Party, but the difference is that Egypt is led by politicians and technocrats, while Sudan is headed by security agents. The justification is always present: the country is in danger. Although this is true, it does not justify the monopolization and rule of the security agents over the political life of Sudan. The security services are now the strongest, most organized, most efficient and wealthiest of all political parties.

Conclusion

The National Security Services are considered the real rulers of Sudan and not a mere apparatus that provides services to the state or ruling party. This comes as a result of the absence of politics and political parties in the country, because the Sudanese political parties have aged, most of their leaders are in their seventies and eighties, while Sudan’s youngest political party, the Communist Party, has been postponing its general assembly for the last 40 years. All parties include a number of factions and there is a clear fragmentation especially considering that more than 78 parties wanted to participate in the elections. There are parties with ridiculous membership patterns, e.g. where the members of the Central Committee or Political Bureau are the same as those of the General Assembly.

Despite these conditions, many parties have faced oppression, prosecution and violence previously unknown in Sudanese political history. Thousands of employees in the civil services and public sector have been dismissed, amongst whom are union cadres skilled in public work. This has resulted in immigration and seeking asylum and despite its strong security grip the regime was not able to stop those who opposed it while fleeing from the country. The country was emptied in a methodical and planned way and there are tens of thousands of Sudanese who

³⁸ *Al-Raed*, 08/12/2009.

³⁹ *Al-Sahafa*, 21/01/2010.

now live in exile in countries like Australia, the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, the Arabic Gulf, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Chad and others. Most of them are qualified people with high political awareness. This is a great political, social and professional loss for Sudan.

Despite the fact that the April 2010 elections were marred with many irregularities and instances of fraudulence, and that they did not live up to international standards according to the reports of international observers, they still reflected an accurate picture of the political imbalance in which the security services and their ideologies play a decisive role. A large number of the security cadres hold leading positions in the party and the government, which simply means that the next period will still be the period of soft security in Sudan, until the recovery of its political parties.