



## WARNING

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# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

19 May 1972

### MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Peace and Conflict in Sudanic Africa\*

This memorandum discusses the origins, current status, and probable future course of three African insurgencies. The battlegrounds -- in Chad, Ethiopia, and Sudan -- are remote areas on the periphery of virtually everything. At the moment fighting has ceased in Sudan, the conflict in Chad is at a low ebb, and the guerrilla war in the Ethiopian province of Eritrea drags on. But the root causes of conflict -- the racial, cultural, and religious divergencies and political aspirations for separation -- remain potent. Hence, we are not sanguine about an early resolution of any of them.

These conflicts, of themselves, are of marginal importance to the rest of the world. But, for a variety of reasons, the US, France, the USSR, and China, have some interests at stake. In the case of the US, a major communications base, Kagnew Station, is located in the heart of the insurgent area of Ethiopia, and is likely to be affected by events there. Arabs and Israelis are involved in a complicated fashion, and there is a danger that the quarrels of Sudanic Africa may be caught up in, or become a part of, any future major outbreak in the Middle East.

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\* *This memorandum was prepared in the Office of National Estimates and discussed with appropriate offices in CIA, which are in agreement with its principal judgments.*

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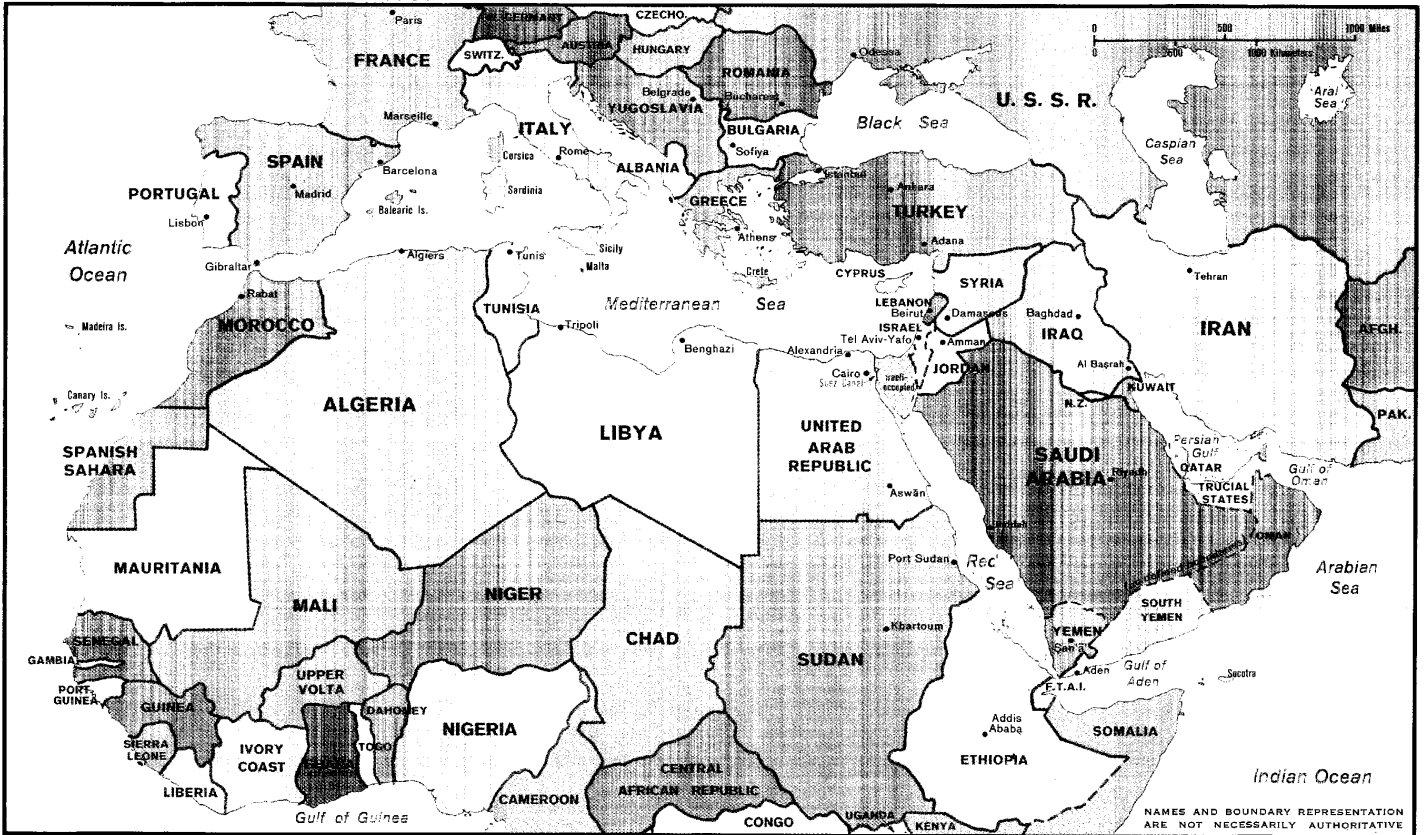
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### Northern Africa and the Middle East



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## I. THE SETTING

1. Across the widest part of Africa from the Atlantic Coast of Mauritania to the Ethiopian province of Eritrea on the Red Sea is an ethnic frontier, the meeting ground of Arab and Berber peoples of the North and black Africans of the South.\* Cutting through the same general area, and in places coinciding with the ethnic border, is a line of cultural and religious demarcation, setting apart an essentially Moslem area from Christian or animist lands. National boundaries tend to ignore both these lines. Indeed, the separation of peoples and cultures is nowhere neat or clear. Clusters of Arabs have lived for centuries well south of the ethnic border, and Islamic missionaries have proselytized millions of blacks in parts of East and West Africa.

2. In Sudanic Africa religiously homogeneous areas are generally reasonably peaceful, even if racially divided. This applies to much of the western Sahara, where Islam prevails in

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\* *Sudanic Africa, as used in this paper, refers to the countries in this band -- Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and Ethiopia.*

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both black and Arab-Berber communities. The sparseness of population probably contributes to the relative tranquility, as does the policy of deliberate neglect practiced by black governments of Mali and Niger towards the white Tuareg nomads who roam the desert, ignoring frontiers and administrators. In Mauritania the white Maures (the Arab-Berber majority) control national political life, but rely on the better educated blacks to man the bureaucracy. The western Sahara is by no means devoid of political tension, for there are fierce personal and factional rivalries. The point is that racial, religious, and cultural distinctions are not the highly charged issues they are in the eastern half of Sudanic Africa.

3. This paper deals mainly with the three countries at the eastern end of Sudanic Africa -- Chad, Sudan, and Ethiopia. There, a mixture of separatist aspirations and cultural, religious, and racial antagonisms have brought on prolonged and bitter guerrilla wars. At the moment the conflict in Chad has subsided, and a truce in Sudan has brought a halt to the fighting there, but suspicions have not been allayed and tensions are still high. The primitive folk in this remote part of the world have little concept of

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nationhood or any other modern institutions, and tend to identify themselves by race, creed, and cultural affiliation. Moreover, a variety of outside influences -- Arab and Israeli as well as those of the major powers -- makes the situation quite complex.

## II. THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT

### *Race*

4. Fundamental to the conflicts in Chad and Sudan, and a lesser ingredient in Eritrea, is the long-standing mutual dislike of Arab northerners and black African southerners. This stems from the master-slave relationships of earlier times. Until well into the twentieth century, Arab slavers raided black communities in southern Chad and southern Sudan. To a good many blacks as far south as Tanzania and Zaïre, the word Arab is still synonymous with slave trader. In the past decade, interventions by North Africans in black African affairs, e.g., Egyptian and Sudanese involvement in the Congolese and Nigerian civil wars, Algerian backing for Cameroonian rebels, and Libyan support to Chadian insurgents, have kept alive the old fears. Even Leopold Senghor, the urbane poet-President of Senegal, in a speech in Morocco last fall discussed

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Arab-black relations in terms of the colonizers and the colonized. Actual skin color makes little difference. For example, many Sudanese who call themselves Arab are as black as the Bantus and Nilotics of southern Sudan. Nonetheless, race is a sensitive issue, since a good many Africans tend to see the Sudanic African conflicts as clashes between racial groups.

*Religion and Culture*

5. Misunderstandings and discrimination in religious and cultural matters are probably at least as important as racial antagonisms in the origins of the Sudanic insurgencies. It is rather difficult, however, to separate these factors from the whole catalog of complaints lodged by the disaffected. For example, did the southern Sudanese turn to violence primarily because they hated the Arabs? Because government Islamization policies threatened Christian and traditional forms of worship and social organization? Or because they felt relegated to second-class political status in a nation they had no part in establishing? In the southern Sudan it was all of this.

6. Similarly in Chad, a mirror image of Sudan, Christian and animist blacks lorded it over a politically impotent and

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educationally inferior Arab Moslem community. The Chadian ruling elite engaged in no deliberate discrimination against Islam, but took a rather cavalier attitude to Moslem sensitivities. Enraged rebel leaders at an early stage in the revolt toyed with the idea of declaring a Holy War, and appealing to the world community of Moslems for assistance. In Chad as in Ulster, ancient religious antagonisms are easy to arouse, and chance incidents often appear to the participants as religious persecution.

7. Sectarian considerations had little to do with the origins of the Eritrean insurgency, but have since assumed greater importance. At the start of the revolt in the early 1960s, the Eritrean rebels included both Christians and Moslems, reflecting the divided religious affiliations of the province of Eritrea, and indeed in Ethiopia itself. Over the years the rebel movement has taken on an almost exclusively Moslem coloration, in part because recruiting efforts have been more productive among Moslem youth than in the Christian community, in part because the rulers of Eritrea are Amhara Christians, and also because the exiled rebel leadership found sanctuary in Damascus, Baghdad, and Tripoli, and absorbed a good deal of Moslem militancy from their hosts.

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*Political Separatism*

8. An additional ingredient in all of the Sudanic African conflicts is the inclination of the disaffected to seek political separation from the dominant group. In pre-colonial times the ethnic groups lived apart from each other, traded occasionally, and expressed their disagreements by frequent raids and assaults on "the enemy". The colonial powers put a stop to tribal and ethnic warfare, but this kind of enforced pacification did little to instill unifying, national sentiments. Indeed, it was hardly in the interest of the colonial administrators to do so. With only limited military support, colonial officials preserved the peace by keeping mutually antagonistic groups apart from each other.

9. Independence changed all this. With the abrupt departure of the British from Sudan and the more gradual French withdrawal from Chad, colonial restraints were lifted. Inexperienced new governments, formed from local political elites -- northern Moslems in Sudan, southern Christians and animists in Chad -- were expected to share political power in some fashion with more primitive fellow citizens, who had either had scant contact with the dominant group or who nursed old grievances against it.

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10. The post independence histories of Chad and Sudan are characterized by total misunderstandings between the major ethnic-cultural groups. In Sudan the northern rulers conceived of national unity in terms of an Islamic state, closely linked to the Arab world. As they saw it, southerners who did not share this view should be pushed to adopt the customs and outlook of the North. Hence, Sudanese domestic policies came to include an aggressive Islamization program, the substitution of Arabic for English in schools, the expulsion of foreign missionaries, and an abrasive military rule of the laggard southern regions.

11. Southern Sudanese resistance began with a mutiny of southern army units on the eve of independence. The mutineers fled to the bush and formed roving bands which became the core of the developing insurgency. Atrocities committed by both sides in the South in 1962-1963 hardened attitudes and ruined the efforts of moderates to find a compromise. The insurgency movement burgeoned under the name Anya-nya (poisonous insect) and several competing southern provisional governments sprouted up as expressions of the separatist aspirations of the major black tribes. For a decade, until early 1972, northern troops held key towns and lines of communication

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in the South, made occasional forays, and suffered from Anya-nya raids. More than a million refugees, perhaps a quarter of the population of the South, fled to the jungles and swamps or to neighboring lands.

12. When independence came to Chad in 1960, the Moslem half of the population took little note of the event and played only a minor role in the organization of the new government. Trouble set in fairly early when the regime assigned non-Moslem blacks to collect taxes from the Arab Moslems, who had been left alone by the French. The Moslem revolt, which began as a minor incident in 1965, gathered momentum, drawing upon the heritage of ethnic and cultural animosity and the blunders and impositions of the government. The insurgency never developed much cohesion. Lacking firm leadership, bands of ragged, poorly armed nomads and farmers fought in isolated engagements against units of the Chadian, and later also the French, army. The goals of the insurgents were as vague as everything else in this struggle. They mainly wanted to be left alone, and, therefore, sought some sort of autonomy.

13. Developments in Eritrea in the past decade differ markedly from those in Chad and Sudan. The Eritrean claim to a separate status

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from Ethiopia stems from its peculiar heritage. There is no collective memory of past greatness or of lost freedoms. Rather Eritrean history consists of prolonged obscurity, followed by subservience to a series of foreign rulers: Turks, Egyptians, Italians, British, and now Amharas from central Ethiopia. The colonial experience, particularly the Italian interlude, provided Eritreans with a greater exposure to the modern world and its ways than others in Ethiopia had. It is mainly this self-perception of separateness rather than racial or religious differences which gives substance to Eritrean aspirations for autonomy or independence.

14. Eritrean dissidence originated as a reaction against the incorporation of their homeland into the Ethiopian Empire in 1962.\* The movement began with a handful of exiles, and has retained an elitist character. Over the years it has attracted intellectuals and students, particularly the unemployed or underemployed, but made little impact on the general populace. Discontent with Amhara domination is widespread, but so is apathy. The nationalist slogans of the rebels do not strike responsive chords. The guerrillas probably number

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\* *Eritrea was dealt to Ethiopia by the UN in 1952. It had a semi-autonomous, federated status until absorbed into Ethiopia by Imperial decree in 1962.*

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fewer than 2,500, but they are well armed and trained, and are adept at fending off or eluding a much larger Ethiopian field force.

### III. THE FATE OF THE INSURGENCIES

15. Biafra and Katanga are conspicuous reminders that separatist causes have not fared well in independent Africa. There is nothing inevitable about this, but the obstacles to success of even a well-organized secessionist movement are formidable. An African government, however inept, commands a treasury and an armed force and can bestow jobs and favors. It also claims legitimacy, i.e., recognition by other African governments. Biafra, for all its advantages in leadership, organization, and skills, gained official recognition from only a few African states, and this had something to do with its failure. It is because all African states are heterogeneous collections of peoples within illogical boundaries, that the principle of inviolability of territorial unity of each state is almost universally accepted. Most African governments fear that secession is contagious, and believe they are all susceptible.

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16. Though the odds are against their success, separatist movements in Africa are nonetheless generally hard to put down. This is particularly true in Sudanic Africa, where the distances between the capital and areas of dissidence are so vast, the logistics and morale problems of maintaining government troops in the field so great, and the expenses of counterinsurgency so crippling. In Sudanic Africa all of the fighting has taken place on the home ground of the insurgents. In these circumstances, guerrilla forces need not be very competent or well organized to keep the conflict alive. Indeed, the most impressive facet of these lackluster wars is their duration; 17 years in the Sudan, around 9 years in Eritrea, and some 7 years in Chad.

17. By every other criterion, these have been dismal, inept performances by all participants. There has been a good deal of killing and destruction, generally in a purposeless way. It is difficult to gauge success or failure of campaigns, because an air of confusion has pervaded since the beginning. On the insurgent side the lines of command are vague, leaders are often more involved in factional disputes with rivals than in combating the enemy, and the bands of guerrillas are normally out of contact or communication with their fellows.

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*Chad*

18. The insurgency in Chad is now in a most uncertain status. A year ago it appeared to be withering away. French troops brought in from the metropole and from Djibouti in 1968 had served as cadres in the Chadian Army, and as special units. After they had chased down and defeated the major guerrilla bands, President Tombalbaye offered an amnesty and decreed a series of reforms which belatedly gave the Moslems a greater chance to participate in national life. New administrative arrangements afforded greater local autonomy, the central government incorporated some of the previously jailed Moslem elite, and plans were drawn up for development in the Moslem lands.

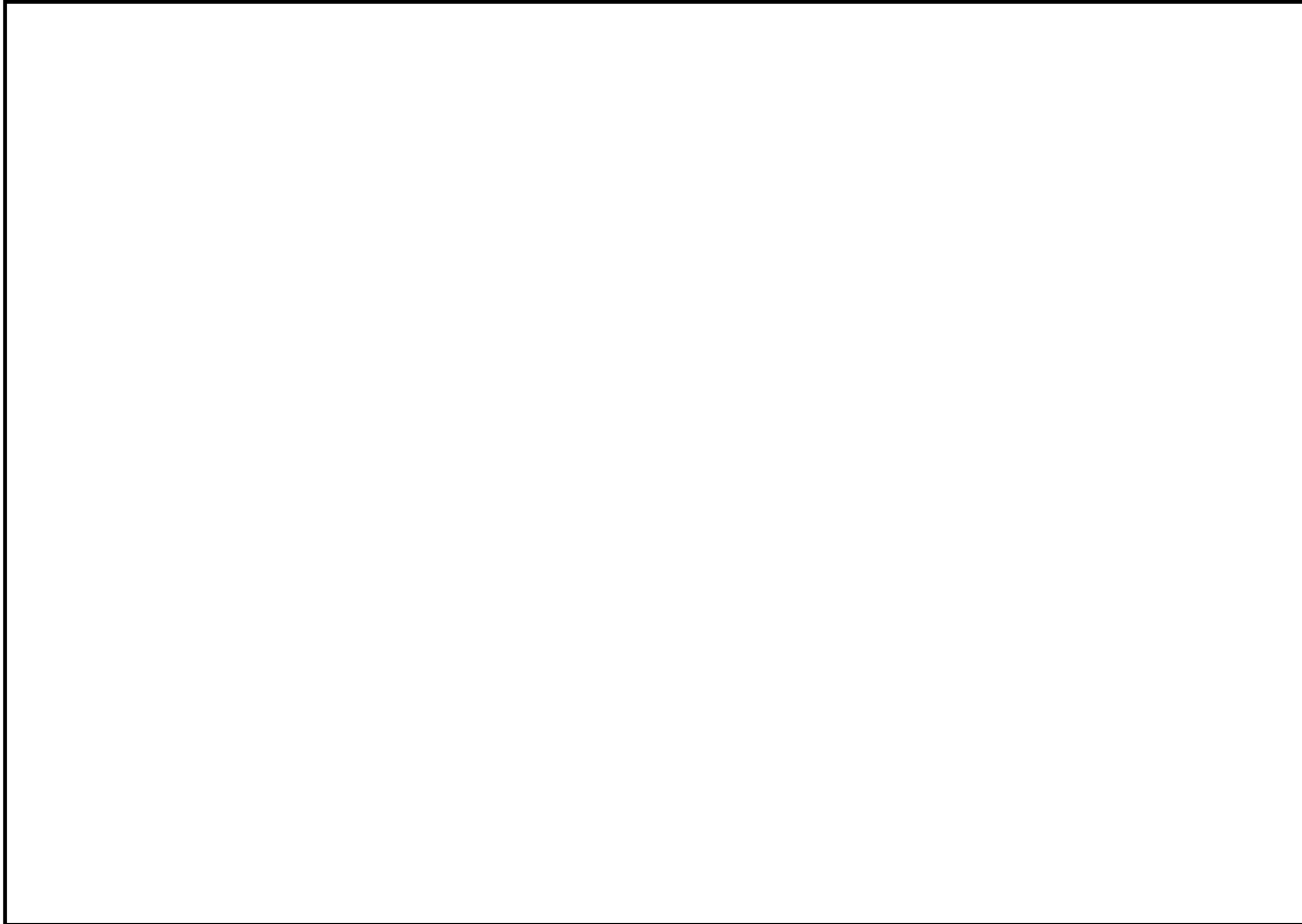
19. The Chadian spring of 1971 was followed by a brief summer and an early frost. Tombalbaye was disturbed and frustrated by evidence of arms shipments from Libya to remnants of the rebels. He therefore used a minor incident of pamphleteering in the Chadian capital in August to break relations with Libya. In response the Libyans stepped up aid to the insurgents and recognized them as the true Chadian Government. By early 1972 there were signs of growing strength in the ranks of the Moslem rebels in northern and eastern Chad and a worried French general arranged to bring in a company of

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reinforcements from France. Inflammatory broadcasts from Tripoli helped revive the spirit of Moslem resistance. Amidst these ominous developments, the Sudanese Government began to cooperate with Chad to cut off the Libyan arms flow, and French diplomatic pressures on Chad and Libya brought about a kind of detente. Governmental relations were restored and the Libyans ceased overt support to the rebels.

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have been lost, but this is a very touchy issue. Pompidou is committed to the principle of disengagement and is gradually reducing the French military presence. If fighting were to resume on a large scale which led to many French casualties, he would probably reconsider the French neo-colonial military role. He would not, for example, send French draftees to Chad. Without a strong French military and technical presence in Chad, it would be very difficult for the regime now in power to preserve national unity.

*Sudan*

22. The civil war in Sudan was much more extensive in terms of people involved, ferocity of fighting, and intractability than the other Sudanic conflicts. For about the last 10 years the war has been a stalemate. From time to time successive regimes in Khartoum have made gestures toward ending the conflict but each time mutual distrust prevailed.

23. President Numayri, unlike his predecessors, has actually managed to bring the fighting to a halt. Aided by Emperor Haile Selassie, and benefiting from the strength he gained from vigorously

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squashing a leftist coup attempt, Numayri persuaded Anya-nya leaders to meet with Sudanese officials in Addis Ababa in late 1971. The southerners arrived in a suspicious and cautious mood, but were gradually convinced of northern sincerity. The agreements signed at Addis in March of this year provide for considerable southern autonomy within a national political framework. Some 6,000 of the Anya-nya guerrillas are to join with an equal number of northerners to form a southern contingent of the Sudanese Army. Other arrangements are left to Numayri and joint commissioners.

24. If goodwill can be sustained and the instrumentalities of reunification carried through promptly, there is a fair chance that peace can be preserved. President Numayri and others are stumping the hinterland to drum up support for reconciliation. The Sudanese cabinet, which includes some southerners, and the ruling party, which is generally responsive to the President, are for it. Also, the Ethiopian and Ugandan governments, which had covertly supported the Anya-nya for years, are publicly endorsing the accords. They have withdrawn their liaison agents, cancelled training programs, and cut off the arms flow.

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25. But reconciliation is still in a very delicate stage, and could be wrecked quite easily. A good deal depends on how long Numayri can hold power. Sudanese politics are normally turbulent, and previous Presidents who appeared to be firmly in control were overturned suddenly. There is no assurance that Numayri's policies would prevail after his departure, for there is a considerable reservoir of anti-southern sentiment in the North, particularly in the Army and among pro-Egyptian factions. These groups, and the Presidents of Libya and Egypt, had hoped that Sudan would join the Confederation of Arab Republics (CAR), and seek closer relations with members of the Arab League. The reconciliation scheme now fairly well rules out such developments. Nervous southerners would not stand for membership in the CAR. The price of internal peace in the Sudan, then, is some degree of estrangement from the Arab World.

26. Looming ahead are massive problems of resettling a million or more southerners, now abroad or in the bush far from their old villages. Before the South can begin to participate in national life, it will require help in devising political forms and economic infrastructure. The meager resources of the Khartoum government are grossly

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inadequate, but foreign humanitarian agencies will probably provide considerable help.

27. Most important now, and in the long run, is the attitude of the Sudanese. This is the big opportunity, which may not present itself again. There is widespread relief in the South that the shooting has stopped. But it is too early to judge whether or not there is enough momentum to carry through a real reconciliation. It is clear from the reluctance of refugees to return that there is very little mutual trust or confidence. At best it will be an uneasy truce endangered by efforts of recalcitrants to stir up trouble. Reversion to civil war seems less likely than a long confused period of attempts by two very diverse cultural groups to find agreement.

*The Eritrean Insurgency*

28. In the aftermath of the Addis peace conference, a number of Ethiopians are wondering why their own guerrilla war in Eritrea cannot be resolved by negotiations. It cannot because Haile Selassie has no intention of bargaining with those he considers bandits; because he still hopes to crush the rebels militarily; and because the Eritrean rebels in contrast to the Anya-nya do not represent a disaffected population.

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29. Clearly, Haile Selassie sees the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) problem as a manageable one, to be tackled with counterinsurgency in the field and diplomacy in Arab and Communist capitals. The Ethiopian Army's Second Division and the Israeli-trained emergency police have been moderately successful in combat, and diplomatic appeals to China, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the two Yemens probably have had some effect in cutting down the arms and training available to ELF units. The insurgency goes on, much as before, with cyclical bursts of activity, followed by months of dormancy. So long as the Sudanese Government forbids ELF transit and safehaven, the rebels are inconvenienced, though not critically hampered. In short, Ethiopian counter efforts have not had a major effect in curbing the ELF.

30. The ELF leadership, most of which lives in exile in Arab capitals, still has access to funds, facilities, arms, and training. At the moment it is badly factionalized into two or three main groups, which are dominated by strong-willed, feud-prone personalities. Attempts to bring the rival groups together have failed, and the splits have grown to the point that factions of ELF have begun battling each other in the mountains of Eritrea.

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31. Imperial Armed Forces are probably sufficiently large and competent to wipe out the insurgency if they were so directed. This would require the concentration of armed force now deployed elsewhere in Ethiopia, and a better command structure. To Haile Selassie the risks of this, in terms of a potential challenge by the military to his own position, are greater than the prospective achievements. If the Emperor chose to grant some greater autonomy to Eritrea and provide more development assistance, the ELF would be greatly undercut and weakened. But in practical terms, the Addis Government would not want to seem to be rewarding dissidence, or to favor a non-Amharic province. Hence the counterinsurgency will probably drag on for years, until the ELF either withers away (which it shows no sign of) or makes a concerted move against Imperial authority at some moment of internal crisis in Ethiopia.

#### IV. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

##### *The Powers*

32. The governments of Sudanic Africa and the leaders of the dissident movements are highly sensitive to pressures and influences from the outside world. All of the great powers and some of the lesser ones are at least marginally involved in the troubles of Sudanic Africa. The US communications base in Eritrea -- Kagnev Station -- and US

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military aid to Ethiopia are important considerations in the course of events there. China recently established diplomatic relations with Ethiopia and is negotiating some rather large economic aid projects with Ethiopia and Sudan. The USSR, once the main arms supplier to Sudan, is trying to regain some lost influence there and compete with China and the US for influence in Addis Ababa. The French are heavily involved in the affairs of all countries from Chad westward to the Atlantic and in the East they govern the Territory of the Afars and Issas. This small colony includes Djibouti, the terminus of Ethiopia's rail link to the sea.

33. At the moment all of the outside powers are acting in a very cautious fashion. The truce in Sudan and the restoration of relations between Chad and Libya have temporarily lowered tensions in the area. So far as one can tell, none of the external powers is engaged in rekindling the conflicts. From the US point of view, the government in Sudan and the policies it espouses are as good as can be expected; the insurgency in Eritrea, though worrisome, has not affected US personnel or property; and the Ethiopian Government is still a friend of the US.

34. As for the Communist powers, the Chinese are trying to ingratiate themselves with the legitimate governments in Sudan and

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Ethiopia, and are not now sponsoring any dissident factions. In the past Peking had provided training and arms to the ELF. They are advertising themselves as fellow sufferers in the oppressed underdeveloped world, without great power pretensions. So long as their economic aid is useful to the Africans, and they keep out of mischief, the Chinese are likely to build influence in these countries, at the expense of the USSR, and perhaps also of the US.

35. The Soviets are still recovering from the bruises of last summer when Numayri crushed the coup attempt of the Sudanese Communist Party, executed a number of party leaders, and hinted that the Soviets bore some responsibility for the revolt. Relations between Moscow and Khartoum are still cool, and, barring another leftist coup, it will be a long time before Russians are trusted in Sudan.

36. Soviet relations with Addis Ababa are clouded by their arms assistance to Somalia, the traditional foe of Ethiopia. The continuing supply of military goods and training to the Somali Army is upsetting to Haile Selassie, but he values his non-aligned status

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and hopes to stimulate a little competition among the US, China, and the USSR for economic aid to his backward country. The Russians are not yet particularly forthcoming, though they are worried about the new large Chinese official presence, and would like to get the Americans out of Kagnew Base.

37. In general the USSR is not particularly happy about the eastern Sudanic governments and would welcome a change in any of the capitals. But they have very limited assets in terms of organized local sympathizers, and perhaps at this time they lack the incentive to take on the risks of encouraging political change. In a broader sense, the USSR is expanding its interests and activities in the Indian Ocean area, including the Red Sea. If new political turmoil arose in Ethiopia or Sudan, or if the insurgencies flared up, the resulting tensions could bring the Soviets more directly onto the scene. If the Soviets were to take a more assertive posture, the conflict of interests between the USSR and the US in this area would become much more obvious, and touchy situations could arise.

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V. SOME UNCERTAINTIES

44. All of the Sudanic African governments are fragile creations, highly dependent upon single strong rulers. The replacement of Tombalbaye in Chad by a more radical, or even a

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pro-Communist chief of state would not be a matter of much concern to the US. Chad is not important. On the other hand, the removal of Numayri or of Haile Selassie could change the situation to one less favorable to US interests. If Numayri were succeeded by a figure more sympathetic to Moscow or Peking, or Cairo, it would have an unsettling effect on the whole area. The hard-won Sudanese unity would be very difficult to maintain; indeed, a new government might deliberately scrap the southern agreements. In addition, a leftist regime in Khartoum would be more likely to furnish aid to the Eritrean guerrillas. The US has no formal diplomatic relations with Sudan and few other interests there.

*The Ethiopian Succession*

45. Probably the major uncertainty hanging over this area is the shape and character of post-Haile Selassie Ethiopia. The Emperor is vigorous, but he is approaching 80. The Crown Prince, the constitutionally designated successor, has no experience in governing, and is not consulted in any way. At the Emperor's death, the Crown Prince would almost certainly be accepted nominally as the new Emperor, but might face a turbulent situation very quickly. The pent-up frustrations of the modernist elite, the personal ambitions

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of a score or so of generals and feudal nobles, and the latent tribal discontents of the subject peoples of the Empire would be manifested in some fashion. This could range from peaceful delegations to the new Emperor to violent attempts to remove him and change the form of government. Almost certainly, the Eritrean guerrillas would consider the Emperor's death the long-awaited moment for an all-out drive to gain control of their province. Such a move would probably fail, unless the Imperial forces in Eritrea fell into disarray, or were withdrawn to the capital to serve some political purpose.

46. Even if the Imperial transition proves to be more orderly than the above scenario suggests, there will be some anxious moments and difficult decisions for US policy makers. In the changed situation US interests might be more difficult to determine. For years US advisors have urged Imperial authorities to adopt more modern methods, but if, in a new regime, an internal division were to arise between modernists and traditionalists in Ethiopia, both factions would probably expect support from the US. If tribal or regional dissidence arose, the US would be called on to provide more military aid to the central government. In the event that the Eritrean guerrillas gained control

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even briefly over the areas in Eritrea where US installations are located, local US officials would face a very dicey situation.

47. At the death of the Emperor the question is likely to arise of the degree of US interest in, and willingness to become involved in, the affairs of Ethiopia. In part the response to this will depend on how important the US considers the communications base at Kagnew. Already the size of the US contingent is being reduced. But, some of the activities carried out at Kagnew would be difficult or expensive to duplicate, and are too important to drop altogether. Presumably, therefore, Kagnew will have some importance to the US over the next few years as a communications facility. In addition are general considerations of US friendly relations with Ethiopia, and the costs of preserving these. Ethiopia, in and of itself, is sometimes an embarrassment, but there are few others states in the area willing to associate themselves so forthrightly with the US.

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