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# Sudan and South Sudan

## From One to Two

Bona Malwal

*Academic Visitor, St Antony's College, University of Oxford*

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*To my Twic Mayardit community  
of Greater Gogrial, of Greater Bahr el  
Ghazal of South Sudan.*

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# Foreword

Bona Malwal has written the definitive political history of post-colonial Sudan. He is in an excellent position to tell this story because his entire life has been involved with the political process that began with independence from the United Kingdom in 1956. At that time, he was a secondary school student. He became involved with political and public life almost immediately and never stopped his patriotic engagement on behalf of his own people in Southern Sudan, as well as the entire national entity known as Sudan.

As Bona Malwal describes the manoeuvrings and machinations of the British colonialists, and then the various Arab-dominated regimes in Khartoum, and then the power struggles within the Southern insurgency, he never forgets the underlying suffering of his people in the provinces that today constitute the independent state of South Sudan. Unfortunately, those people continue to suffer today, even though they have been self-governing since 2005.

As a retired American diplomat who specialised in sub-Saharan Africa, I now understand a lot more of what I experienced in Sudan as a result of this book. I was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1989 to 1993. My main policy objective during those four years, under the leadership of President George H. W. Bush, was to contribute to the resolution of internal wars in Africa.

Because Sudan was in the midst of a very long civil war when I took office in 1989, I naturally sought to become involved in a mediation effort between the Arab government in Khartoum and the Sudanese African insurgents in the southern third of the country.

My first impression of the leadership in Khartoum was quite negative. I found Prime Minister Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi to be weak and uncertain. He was clearly in no position to engage substantively with the leadership of the southern insurgents of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

I also found that the SPLM leader, John Garang de Mabior, was not terribly interested in peace in 1989. He refused to begin negotiations with Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, and then refused to negotiate with the successor regime of Omer al-Bashir who took over in an Islamic military coup in June of that year. I had persuaded both leaders to meet with Garang

with no preconditions, but Garang insisted on a long list of unacceptable preconditions. He was clearly in no mood to negotiate.

Bona Malwal has helped me understand what was driving Garang from the very beginning of the southern struggle. In those days, during my frequent visits to Khartoum, I usually stopped first in Cairo, in view of the Egyptian strategic interest in the Sudan and the Nile River that runs through it. My main interlocutor in Cairo was the Chief of Egyptian Intelligence, Omer Suleiman. When we talked about Garang, he never stopped repeating: 'Garang wants power in Khartoum. He will never have power in Khartoum.'

From the very beginning, at the time of independence, Bona Malwal was consistent in his demand for 'self-determination' for the people of Southern Sudan. He never advocated either for independence of Southern Sudan or unity of Sudan. He wanted the people of South Sudan to decide. He describes Garang, on the other hand, as constantly talking about a 'New Sudan'. Basically, my Egyptian friend was correct, Garang wanted power in Khartoum as the future head of an African majority in the greater nation of Sudan. From the time of independence, Northern Sudan has been under the control of an Arab-speaking minority. Garang believed that the African ethnic groups in greater Sudan could constitute a democratic majority under his leadership.

Unfortunately, Garang was killed prematurely in a helicopter crash, just as the people of South Sudan were beginning a six-year transition of self-government that led to full independence in 2011. Bona Malwal describes the time that has been wasted since 2005 as the South Sudan leadership has made a complete hash of governance. Most of their revenue from oil production has disappeared to corruption, and inter-personal factionalism has paralysed any efforts to bring benefits to the long-suffering southern peoples. Self-government and independence have so far proven to be a poisoned chalice for the people of South Sudan, thanks to selfish and callous leadership. Bona Malwal describes this with great sorrow, believing that the situation would have been much better if John Garang had lived to apply his firm hand of leadership in South Sudan.

Malwal describes everything that has taken place since 1955 in great detail, as someone who was in the thick of all major events. To read this book is to know the half-century tragedy engendered by the initial decision by the British colonial regime to keep the African south and the Arab/Islamic north together as one national independent entity.

It was a monumental mistake. Many thousands of people in both North and South Sudan have perished through political violence, and today millions continue to suffer as a result.

Throughout his adult life, Bona Malwal has been speaking the truth about power in both North and South Sudan. He has often been considered an annoying irritant to those leaders who did not want to hear the truth. He will undoubtedly continue to tell his compatriots in the independent state of South Sudan that they should be ashamed of themselves for all the damage they are doing to their country. All the players should take time off from their violent disputes and megalomania to read this book in order to get some badly needed perspective.

Herman Cohen  
Former United States Assistant Secretary  
of State for African Affairs

# Acknowledgements

This book is the result of much prompting by my friends, both Sudanese and non-Sudanese. Very often when I have related a few of the many political problems I have had to confront in my public life in conversation with friends, they have urged me to record these painful stories for posterity. Much as I would like to, it is impossible to list here all those who have encouraged me to write this book. I also wish to apologise to the many friends who have had to share with me the bitter experiences related in this work, whose names may not have been mentioned. Most importantly, I wish to acknowledge and thank all the personal friends and benevolent organisations and individuals who have supported me materially and made it possible, throughout my professional and political career, to ensure the political voice of the long-struggling people of South Sudan was heard through the pages of the publications that I have been involved with: *The Vigilant* in the 1960s, *The Sudan Times* in the mid-1980s and the *Sudan Democratic Gazette* in exile in the early 1990s, until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which, for the first time in the history of Sudan, enshrined the right of the people of South Sudan to self-determination. Self-determination finally led to independence.

This book has become a reality only because of the unfailing perseverance and help of a colleague, Caroline Davis, who tirelessly typed and retyped the manuscript, helping me comply with the demands of the publishers that we reduce it from hundreds of thousands of words to its present size. I owe Caroline a great debt of appreciation for her patience, diligence and courtesy. Thanks are also due to all my friends and colleagues at St Antony's College, Oxford, particularly Dr Ahmed al-Shahi. Twelve years ago we co-founded the Sudanese Programme there. It has more than distinguished itself as an academic and intellectual venue for the discussion and the debate of Sudanese affairs. Ahmed has always been generous with his ideas about this work. I owe him particular gratitude.

My final expression of gratitude and appreciation is to my wife, Salwa Gabriel Berberi, and to my children, Ed Ring, Akuei, Natalina, Sandra, Philip Thon and Makol, for their continuous support and encouragement. I am, however, solely responsible for what is contained in this work.