

Was Dr. John Garang a Unionist or a Separatist?

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Synopsis of Elhaq Paul's Contention

In his September 28, 2011 article "[*SPLM and mass media: Promoting history on falsity*](#)" published by [*South Sudan News Agency*](#), Mr Elhaq Paul undertook to disassociate Dr. John Garang and the SPLM/A leadership from any claim to the attainment of self-determination in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the successful secession of South Sudan from the North.

Mr. Elhaq Paul argues that Dr. John Garang was not a separatist and therefore cannot be the founding father and the hero of the independence of South Sudan. Thus, Elhaq Paul maintains, any attempt by the SPLM/A leadership in Juba or his wife Madam Nyandeng, through public media, to project him as an ardent separatist, the great champion of South Sudan liberation struggle, the hero of South Sudan independence and the founding father of the new nation is a falsehood that would have been rejected by Dr. Garang himself. According to Elhaq Paul's thinking, Dr. John Garang was an "avowed unionist" who had nothing to do with separation or the present image being concocted on his behalf. Mr. Elhaq Paul concludes that all those actions being done by President Kiir's government amount to state promotion of Dinka superiority under Dinkocracy—Dinka hegemony.

In an attempt to support his claims, Elhaq Paul quoted from "[*John Garang Speaks*](#)"—a book purportedly written by or about Dr. John Garang in which he had allegedly stated his main objections to South Sudan separation from the north in preference to one United New Sudan. To buttress his indictment of Dr. John Garang, Mr. Elhaq Paul cited the oft-time quoted statement of Dr. John Garang that 'our first bullets were fired against the separatists.' And these first victims of the SPLM/A are supposed to be Samuel Gai Tut and Akuot Atem Mayen. Both gentlemen were killed, according to Mr. Elhaq Paul's assertion, because of their secessionist beliefs.

In what appears to conjure up a grotesque picture of an Old Testament prophet, Mr. Elhaq Paul give the impression of someone on an urgent divined mission to warn, inform and redeem South Sudanese from being misled into entertaining and accepting fabricated and distorted history being written by one community—the Dinka—purposely to enshrine their ethnic superiority of

Dinkocracy. For those who have been exposed to his writings for a while, this is the overarching theme you can adduce whenever you study his work: resistance to and redemption from Dinkocracy.

In a nutshell, Mr. Elhaq Paul thesis is that Dr. John Garang is not the father and champion of South Sudan's independence because (1) South Sudanese, through the ballot box, liberated themselves from the Arabs, and (2) Dr. John Garang was a murderous unionist who killed, imprisoned or/and threatened separatists—Akuot Atem, Gai Tut, Dr. Riek Machar, Dr. Lam Akol etc—who liberated South Sudan from the Arabs. For that reason, in his judgment, these separatists—dead or lucky to be alive—should be the true champions and founding fathers of South Sudan independence and not Dr. John Garang, Kerubino Kuanyin, William Nyuon, Arok Thon, Joseph Oduho, Majier Ghai, President Kiir, Pagan Amum, Wani Igga etc.

Response to Mr. Elhaq Paul's Core Argument

As anyone can grasp from the plethora of counter-arguments and counter-claims already made against his article, there are a lot of objections that one can muster against Mr. Elhaq Paul's fundamental disputation. The first of course is about whether or not Dr. John Garang, the former leader of the SPLM/A, was a separatist or a unionist. This has to be well established because, in Mr. Paul's argument, Dr. John Garang can never be the real hero of South Sudan's independence or the founding father of the nation insofar as he is not a separatist. The assumption here is that only separatists liberated South Sudan. And since only liberators should be bestowed the honor of being the national heroes/heroines and founding fathers/mothers of the republic, a person like Dr. John Garang, Mr. Elhaq Paul affirms, cannot qualify for that accolade: they must be excluded at best or maligned at worst.

Mr. Elhaq proceeds to counsel South Sudanese to take Dr. John Garang by his own words which are, allegedly, revealing of his unionistic bearing. But which are his words? That (1) "Our first bullets were fired against the separatists"—in the 1980s which places him among the unionists—or that (2) "I and those who joined me in the bush and fought for more than twenty years, have brought to you CPA in a golden plate. Our mission is accomplished. It is now your turn, especially those who did not have a chance to experience bush life. When time comes to vote at referendum, it is your golden choice to determine your fate. Would you like to vote to be second class citizens in your own country? It is absolutely your choice"—Rumbek, May 15, 2005, which put Dr. John Garang on top of the separatists' list? On which basis must anyone pick proclamation (1) in total disregard to declaration (2) or choose statement (2) without putting into consideration affirmation (1)?

Indeed, as Brian Adeba points out in his reaction to Elhaq Paul's article, the main problem with Elhaq Paul's argument is that his "article failed to account for Garang's flexible stances on self determination and the evolution of these stances over a [long] period of time." In other words, the Dr. John Garang that Mr. Elhaq Paul seems to be sacrificing may be the one of the 1980's while he would be contented, it is apparent from his pronouncements, to dine on the table, and worship under the feet, of Dr. John Garang of May 2005. But since it is the same man leading a party battered, and in the process shaped, by different circumstances over a long period of time, which Dr. John Garang should South Sudanese take on his words and on which words precisely?

Judging by what I read from other South Sudanese commentators, combined with my own personal analysis of Dr. John Garang's political evolution, Dr. John Garang might be compare to Simon Peter—that biblical disciple to Jesus of Nazareth, the first century Jewish teacher of morality believe by some people to be a god. Simon Peter was first the leading apostle of Christ; then he stumbled and retreated when he denied Jesus at the hour of reckoning, only later to emerge as the first successor to Jesus Christ. Similarly, Dr. John Garang, as an Anyanya One freedom fighter, could be considered to have started out as a separatist (how else could he have joined a separatist movement of Anyanya One if he was not a party to their ideology). This is where [Dr. John Garang's letter to Gen. Joseph Lagu](#) comes in as a certification of this stance though that letter does not triumph the fact that Dr. John Garang was a member of Anyanya One, a separatist Movement. His mere present and full participation in Anyanya One Movement is more of a solid proof than any written letter: action speaks louder than words.

Nonetheless, by the time the SPLM/A was founded in Ethiopia, Dr. John Garang seemed to have renounced separatism and adopted New United Sudan as a vision for the Party, either as a strategy as some people argue or as his core absolute belief as others presume. The Garang of Ethiopia—1980s—is the one boasting of having shot the first bullets at the separatists. That statement itself though, subject to critical analysis, is mistaken unless we want to believe that May 16, 1983—when Kerubino Kunayin Bol in Bor and William Nyuon Bany in Ayod started the revolution by shooting the first bullets at Arab officers and soldiers—was not the date the Revolution began. The fighting did rage on for days in Bor town and William Nyuon murdered almost an entire squad of Arab soldiers till the well was filled to the brim. Were those Arabs separatists? Of course not and so Dr. John Garang's statement might be tempting at face value but it is erroneous per se. The first bullet was shot at the Arabs in Bor town! Whatever that Dr. John Garang was talking about might have been his propaganda war—one that erupted over power struggle—against Akuot-Gai's group to boost the morale among his troops.

And while it is veritably true that Samuel Gai Tut died at the hand of the SPLM/A, it is not the case that Akuot Atem was killed by the SPLM/A as Mr. Elhaq Paul appears to be professing. In

reality, he was murdered in cold blood by Abdalla Chuol, his minister of defense and commander-in-chief, either because of internal disagreement amongst themselves over proposed collaboration with the Arabs or because Abdalla Chuol wanted to avenge Gai Tut whom he believed to have been killed, and publicly humiliated, by the Dinkas (read Kerubino Kunayin). From what has been written about the death of Gai Tut, the Adura Camp of SPLM/A were enraged by two main factors: (1) the interception and killing of SPLM/A new unsuspecting recruits coming from Bhar el Ghazel and Abyei by the Bukteng camp of Akuot Atem and Gai Tut and (2) the killing of 24 senior SPLM/A officers, among them Francis Ngor who was only next to Dr. Garang in seniority. The officers and Ngor were killed when Akuot and Gai Tut camp attacked and overran SPLM/A headquarters of Adura camp in Ethiopia. The SPLM/A soldiers, led by Kerubino Kuanyin, went on the revenge spree, tricked/pre-empted (there are two version to his death) Gai Tut into/before peace talk and fatally wounded him in the ambush. Then, unfortunately, he was humiliated (his dead-decomposing body was whipped by Kuanyin Bol). The public humiliation, it is deemed, might have led Nuer soldiers under Abdalla Chuol to kill Akuot Atem, a Dinka, as a revenge for Gai Tut's killing and public humiliation by what they (the Gai-Chuol's soldiers) considered as a rerun of Dinka-Nuer's old tribal rivalry.

Indubitably, Akuot Atem and Gai Tut, being former members of Anyanya One, were strong advocates for South Sudan independence. What is disputable though is the claim that their public stance on separation, of which they were not the exception as most Anyanya One leaders would attest—uncle Joseph Oduho, for example—was the main cause of contention between them, and the Garang-led group of Adura camp. Be informed that by this time in the Movement, as it was later the case with the Nasir group, both Akuot-Gai group and Garang-Kuanyin-Nyuon-Kiir group considered themselves as SPLM/A. It was not about the name or the objectives or the manifesto of the party, but rather who should be the leader of the Movement. That does not mean that the call for self-determination was discarded; rather it was not the main issue because both Adura and Bukteng camps were conscious of the non-viability of forming a separatist movement in Ethiopia. It was a non-starter for the Ethiopian Dergue regime, the only lifeline for the revolution in those days.

As Dr. Majak argues in his response to Mr. Elhaq Paul's article, Both Akuot and Gai Tut were there when the manifesto was drafted and signed and they never objected or chose to leave the party. In fact, Akuot was temporarily appointed (force himself upon the group) as the chairperson, and he appointed his longtime friend, Gai Tut, as his deputy and the head of the army, with Dr. John Garang as the chief of staff. As for the prefer ideology of the new rebel group, it was forced upon the group by their host—the Ethiopian government through General Masfin and President Mengistu who were fighting a separatist rebellion and would not have entertained hosting a separatist movement. The mere business of writing the first statement of the movement attest to this fact because it had to be drafted, rewritten and revised many times in order to make it acceptable to the Ethiopian government. That arduous process of writing, redrafting and revising the Manifesto to satisfy Ethiopian's stern demand was overseen by none

other than Akuot Atem as the self-appointed Chairperson and Samuel Gai Tut as his deputy and commander of the armed forces.

Akuot Atem and Gai Tut never objected to the proposal—or rather order—from the Mengistu government about the nature and direction of the movement. They were contented so long as they were leading the new Movement. Trouble started only when Kerubino Kuanyin and William Nyuon arrived in Ethiopia—accompanied by larger army than that of Akuot and Gai Tut. Both Kerubino and William Nyuon (they were late because Kerubino was still recuperating from the wound he had sustained in Bortown while William Nyuon was reportedly amassing wealth and money on the way to Ethiopia) were horrified to discover that they were being led by Akuot and Gai Tut. Added to this internal leadership wrangling was the external pressure from the Ethiopian government which was openly demanding Dr. John Garang to be the leader of the new rebel. (Interestingly, the Ethiopian are said to have been advised by Dr. Lam and others to settle on Dr. Garang as the leader) Outsmarted by Dr. Garang alliance with the Ethiopian government and outnumbered in army to army numbers and strength because of the arrival of William Nyuon with larger army, Akuot Atem and Gai Tut stormed out of the Adura camp and moved to Bukteng Village which was inside Sudan. It was from Bukteng camp that they started sabotaging the SPLM/A by intercepting and murdering new recruits joining the Movement from around the country.

While we may never know the real truth as to whether Dr. John Garang was just a separatist by heart and a unionist by strategy as some people do rationalize, there is no doubt that the event of 1990s did compel him to revisit and to revise his ideology. First, the demise of the Soviet Union led to the sudden fall of the Dergue Regime in Ethiopia which deprived the SPLM/A of their sanctuary and ready supply of arms and material supports. Then came the August 28, 1991 Nasir coup led by Dr. Lam and Dr. Riek Machar, cutting SPLM/A forces in half; hence, reducing their numerical and military strengths as well as demoralizing them. The resurgence of emboldened Jallaba under the new leadership of an Islamist party of NIF headed by Bashir and Hassan El Turabi took advantage of the mayhem within the SPLM/A that was first initiated by the fall of Mengistu's government and then worsened by the Nasir coup plotters.

The subsequent humiliating defeats that SPLM/A suffered at the hand of a rejuvenated Arabs Mujadeens in the earlier 1990s, might have been enough to tilt the balance of discussion within the SPLM/A ranks about the questions of separation. After all, there was no more Ethiopian government to be appeased. As the SPLM/A was teetering on the verge of defeat, the 1994 SPLM/A Convention in Chukudum decided to adopt self-determination as an option in addition to the New Sudan Vision. The Dr. Garang that was reborn by circumstances or who, as some people have argued, re-assumed his true colors during 1994 Chukudum Convention is the same one talking in Rumbek, May 2005, lecturing about the choice between being a second class

citizens in the old Sudan or opting to be a first class citizen in your own country. It is reminiscence of the one we initially found in the bushes of Anyanya One war.

Given that kind of declarations from Dr. John Garang of Rumbek, 2005, what do you think he would have voted for if he was there to cast his vote on referendum day? To Mr. Elhaq Paul, Dr. John Garang would have voted for unity because he was, in his word, an “avowed unionist.” But as Brian Adeba noted, the shortcomings of that argument is that it deliberately or inadvertently overlook the “evolution of these stances over a period of time.” Dr. John Garang, unquestionably supported the killing of Gai Tut, just as Gai Tut did wish the same to him, and I think he was also exultant to learn about the death of Akuot at the hand of his own soldiers. But this was justified because Akuot and Gai Tut intercepted and killed innocent recruits who left their beloved families and cattle to join the movement to fight for their rights. Whoever whose conscience is dark enough to murder such kind of selfless individuals, according to the rule of the jungle (the SPLM/A was a rebel movement, not a liberal democratic party in Western Europe) must be brought to justice and that is exactly what the SPLM/A did. It is not, and will never be, immoral to kill a killer. It was just a matter of who kill who first between the two warring camps. That Akuot Atem and Gai Tut were unlucky to get kill in a competitive war could not possibly be a logical ground to turn their death into martyrdom.

Another aspect that I would like to address here is the insinuation in Mr. Elhaq Paul argument that SPLM/A killed or imprisoned some leaders just because of their ethnicity. Mr. Elhaq Paul mentioned the imprisonment of freedom fighters whose identities (read ethnicities) or ideas (read separatism) were not entertained by the movement leaders. However, historical accounts point to the fact that most leaders detained by the SPLM/A under Dr. Garang were arrested, chiefly, due to power struggle, not ideological differences and not ethnicity either because among them were Dinkas i.e Akuot Mayen (Dinka Bor), Arok Thon (Dinka Bor), Majier Gai (Dinka Bor), Kuanyin Bol (Dinka Bahr el Ghazel) among others. In fact, it was only after the elimination of these leaders by the SPLM/A under Dr. Garang that Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar emerged to fill the vacuum, a position that they later use to instigate the coup. Even the SPLM-Nasir had many Dinkas among them, the detainees for instance, who were freed by William Nyuon. Interestingly, among the freed detainees—the so called progressive officers like Alfred Lado, Chol Deng Alaak, Wantok Ammon, Dhol Acuil, etc—were arrested by William Nyuon, Arok Thon and Kerubino in their internal struggle against Dr. Garang and Salva Kiir.

To articulate that ethnicity was given strong consideration is to overlook the conspicuous fact that most of the power struggle and tragedies within the SPLM/A were, at first, mostly between Dinkas. Akuot Atem, who sided with Gai Tut, was not only a Dinka like Dr. John Garang but they were both from Dinka Bor. And even within Dinka Bor, they came from the same Twic East, or what was formerly referred to as Kongor. To talk of ethnicity there is not only outlandish but it is just pure ignorance. While Akuot and Gai Tut, a Dinka and Nuer, were in one camp, Dr.

John Garang, Kerubino kuanyin and William Nyuon etc were on the other camp, a mixture of different tribes. The internal power struggle among the SPLM/A leaders affected and victimized people of all tribes and regions. It started with Garang vs Akuot in the 1980s and ended with Garang vs Salva Kiir in Rumbek, 2004. And if revelations from Wikileaks are to be believed and taken seriously, then power Ping-Pong is still going on since President Kiir is suspicious of Madam Nyandeng whom he believes to be planning a coup to ouster him from power (a hallmark of gender equality when men genuinely feel threatened by women?).

The second contestation of power was between the less educated (Kuanyin Bol and William Nyuon) on the one hand and the progressive group (Dr. John Garang and Salva Kiir) on the other hand. Arok Thon Arok was pitting the two groups against each other in the hope of reaping from the self-destructive fallout of the two groups (Arok was enraged for having been placed under Salva Kiir, his junior officer in the Sudanese intelligence, in the SPLM/A ranking. He also used to consider himself too smart and too qualified to be under any of those guys). It has to be recalled that by this time, Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar were junior officers with no voice. If tribalism was the determining factor, then (1) the Dinkas—Dr. John Garang, Salva Kiir and Kuanyin Bol would have ganged up against William Nyuon, the sole Nuer among the high ranking officers, or (2) Kuanyin Bol and Salva Kiir, being not only from Bahr el Ghazal but from the same Twic of Gogrial, would have joined hand against either Dr. John Garang and Arok Thon, who were not only from Dinka Bor but from the same Twic East. Moreover, Arok Thon was Garang's maternal uncle since Garang's mother is from Kongor where Arok hailed from. But that was never the case, Dr. Garang teamed up with Salva Kiir instead while Arok Thon despised them all, including William Nyuon and Kerubino Kuanyin. Arok's arrogance and defiance and Kuanyin's rebelliousness and belligerence, not their ethnicity, later led to their eventual arrests and detention.

What I am trying to say is that pure power struggle over leadership, and possibly a little dosage of dictatorship from Dr. John Garang, was the sole reason for all the squabbling, detentions and the unfortunate killings. It had little to do with either ideology or ethnicity because the alliances were never delineated along tribal groupings; and nor did the SPLM/A ever attack a party formed by secessionists that was fighting the Arabs on the frontlines. The separatists, that ever were, chose to ally themselves with the Arabs where they became a mere tool used to fight the SPLM/A. Take for example the case of the remnants of Gai-Akuot groups under Abdalla Chuol, who relocated to the outskirts of Malakal near the Arabs. The question becomes, how do you purport to fight for the separation of South Sudan when you are in bed with the enemy? Must SPLM/A cease to exist before they could have commenced fighting the real enemy?

But then again, if it is the case that Dr. John Garang was first a separatist, then a Unionist and then again reverted back to separatism; somebody may wonder: don't the Nasir coup makers have a valid point when they claim that they re-introduced the call for self-determination into the

debate and hence compelled SPLM/A to adopt it? My response is that it is true. It is true because without the 1991 Nasir coup, the SPLM/A might have toppled the central government with Dr. Garang as the president. It is hard to see and argue how SPLM/A could have reversed gear from there to embrace separation. And even if the SPLM/A would have not succeeded in an outright military victory; they would have still been strong enough, without the coup, to force the Khartoum government to negotiate on their terms. Both scenarios point to one fact: the SPLM/A under Dr. John Garang was a real force to reckon with in the pre-coup days in Sudanese political arena and it was not prepared to settle on the moon when it believed itself to have sufficient fuel to reach the star.

In the post-coup day, however, the SPLM/A was weakened internally, having been violently uprooted from its bases in Ethiopia and heavily pounded and hotly pursued by the resurging Arabs invigorated by the coup. Therefore, the coup makers, deliberately or inadvertently (I believe this) killed the SPLM/A's goal of ever dislodging the Khartoum government from power. Face with little room to maneuver around, The SPLM/A under Dr. John Garang, switched or rather expanded their objectives of the war and adopted self-determination as one of their objectives in the 1994 Chukudum Convention. And even though Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar publicly adopted the call for self-determination as the centerpiece of their missions, there is little of it that had appeared from their writings before the coup. The writings of Dr. Lam, who did almost all the writings, were mostly about Dr. Garang's alleged dictatorship—what he termed as one-man show—lack of democracy, dysfunctional party institutions and human rights abuses. The same accusations were later labeled against both Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar when they themselves became party leaders.

But the trouble of claiming absolute ownership of the demand for South Sudan self-determination by the Nasir coup makers is the glaring disparity between their public declarations and public actions. Like the Anyanya Two of Akuot Atem, Gai Tut and Abdalla Chuol, they were separatists by proclamations and collaborators by deeds. As if by fate, neither the Anyanya Two Movement nor the SPLM/A-Nasir fought the real enemy—the Arabs. In the words of Dr. Majak D'Agoot, South Sudan's self-determination and the present-day independence was not won on “empty proclamations, sloganeering, or even through nonviolent means—read Khartoum and Fashoda Peace Accord of 1997” but rather “through a protracted struggle that took many lives and eventually weakened the resolve of the most determined and even fanatic opponent that Khartoum was.” Both the Anyanya Two and SPLM/A-Nasir collapsed and disintegrated. Had SPLM/A been defeated by the NIF/NCP during the dark trying days of the 1990s, Mr. Elhaq Paul would not have been talking today about whether or not Dr. John is the founding father of the nation because that nation wouldn't have existed. The Nasir camp has nothing—but their collaborations with the Arabs—to show for their public adoption of the call for self-determination.

Therefore, while Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar might be right (the idea was already there) to talk about the re-introduction of the demand for South Sudan self-determination into the debate, they should show South Sudanese what they did to realize their dreams. The coup did change the SPLM/A not because of what they were saying about the separation of South Sudan but because the coup divided and weakened the SPLM rendering the goal of deposing the Khartoum government impossible. And so the SPLM/A had to settle for the moon rather than longing for a star whose reach was evidently beyond their military and political capacity.

Even after the 1994 Chukudum resolution, the SPLM/A was not yet officially done with the New Sudan Vision. For example, the SPLM/A went to the peace talk (the CPA) with the agenda of a “New Sudan which would be multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural,” and secular but the NCP’s adamant insistence on retaining an Islamic law in the country change the course of the peace talks. Self-determination clause was arrived at as a political compromise: the NCP getting to keep Sharia law in all Northern Sudan except in Khartoum and the SPLM/A got the option to secede under the self-determination clause. That is why it is incorrect for some people to argue that the signing of Khartoum Peace Agreement had made South Sudan’s self-determination a foregone conclusion. If it was the case, then the reverse would have been true: SPLM/A tabling and insistence on self-determination for South Sudan forcing the NCP to trade it for an Islamic north. But we know that was not what actually happened; it was the other way round.

When self-determination clause was being worked out, the Khartoum and the Fashoda peace accords provided the framework for the clause. Of course, that does not mean that the “the right of self-determination of the people of South Sudan to determine their future status through a referendum” came from Khartoum and Fashoda peace accords; it was arrived at as a political compromise between the SPLM/A and the NCP—the two parties who signed the CPA. In his article [“South Sudan Referendum: First Thing First”](#) Dr. Lam reports thus: “the self-determination in the CPA was an attempt to break the deadlock over the issue of separation of religion from the state and the relation between the religion and the state. So the CPA stipulated that Northerners shall have the right to apply Islamic Sharia in the North provided that Southerners shall have the right to self-determination” in the South. So it was not because Anyanya Two or the Nasir group had championed it, but because of the political deadlock over the preservation and application of Sharia law!

While Dr. Lam was not actually making this argument to show the origin of self-determination as a compromise between the two negotiating parties, it does however show the fluidity of the demand for and the attaining of the right to self-determination by South Sudanese. (Let me clarify here that Dr. Lam was advancing the argument that Northerners have the full right to apply sharia law in the North because it was stipulated in the CPA and so for the SPLM/A to deny them that right during the GoNU period was to call for the renegotiation of the CPA). As commonly known by most South Sudanese, the first time it was demanded or made was in the

1947 Juba Conference by the likes of Uncle Both Diw. The 1960s also saw the re-emergence of the call for self-determination and that continued till the days of both Anyanya One and Two and then the Nasir group. It is as old as South Sudanese struggle itself.

Astoundingly, by the time the CPA negotiation started, many people apparently assumed that the SPLM/A and NCP went into the Peace Talk on the basis of self-determination stipulated in both the Khartoum and the Fashoda peace agreements. That was never the case because as Dr. Lam observed above, the only time the idea of self-determination was brought on the negotiating table was when the NCP refuses to accept the basis of a Secular Sudan where religion would be separated from the state. Had the NCP agreed to a non-religious state, self-determination might not have been part of the deal. Unless there was a clear connection between NCP's refusal to abandon an Islamic-Sharia state and the 1991 Nasir coup, there is no direct relationship between the inclusions of the self-determination clause and Dr. Lam's claim of being the father of South Sudan self-determination. Oddly, it may sound funny but the NCP may actually be the real father because it was only due to their dogmatic insistence to part way with Sharia law that the SPLM/A settled for a self-determination which was not their first priority though it was part of their adopted official agenda.

Alternatively, the Anyanya Two may lay a better claim to the call for self-determination more than the Nasir guys. After all, there was hardly any difference between the two camps. They both fought the SPLM/A, allied themselves with the Arabs and both espoused South Sudan separation. Although Anyanya Two was a hired-to-kill machine by the Arabs, they never abandoned their call for South Sudan separation till 1991 when the coup occurred. So what does re-introduction of self-determination into South Sudan official debate mean if it has been there all along? If Dr. Machar and Dr. Lam were still part of the SPLM/A, then it would be meaningful to talk of re-introduction. But since they were no longer members of the SPLM/A, they neither re-introduced the idea into the party nor into South Sudan national's debate because it was already there through the call made by, and Arabs' promises to, Anyanya Two Movement.

As a matter of fact, I do not agree with those who champion the idea that Dr. John Garang was a separatist from the beginning but decided to "employ the Machiavellian intelligence----to achieve the independence of South Sudan" or that he was, to rephrase it differently, a unionist by day and a separatist by night. The notion that the SPLM/A under Dr. John Garang employed "the Machiavellian intelligence----to achieve the independence of South Sudan" is appalling because it could, among other things, suggest that the SPLM/A under Dr. John Garang intentionally misled, used and dumped people of Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and other northern states. That would be a cantankerous claim to make about Dr. John Garang and the vision he gave up his life for. It would be as insulting as Mr. Elhaq Paul's allegation. He pursued the New Sudan Vision because he had believed in its attainment as it was within reach before the demise of Mengistu

regime and the 1991 coup. He later adopted separation when the chances of removing a regime “too deformed to be reformed” from power become hardly feasible.

Simply, he changed and adapted and rebranded the vision based on the prevailing political and military circumstances. Dr. John Garang underwent various ideological and strategic metamorphoses through which he responded and adjusted his vision to achieve the best he could given the realities of the situation he was confronted with to realized the goal of liberation. Thus there are two main reasons why he revised his stance: (1) the military weakening of the SPLM/A by the 1991 coup, not the hollow proclamations of those who were with the Arabs; and (2) the adamant persistence of the NCP to retain a religious state during the CPA negotiation. History will testify that those are the main factors that change the course of SPLM/A ideology. Of course, other South Sudanese have their own version of events and claims to truth, but unless those claims combined and reconciled words and actions, they are baseless and hubristic.

To say that Dr. John Garang was indeed influenced, negatively, by the actions of the Nasir coup may sound as if I am conceding a point to the supporters of Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar. Quite to the contrary, the changes I am talking about happened across the political divides. For example, Dr. Majak mentioned the fact that Dr. Machar and his colleagues in London had formed another unionist party—Sudan Congress Front?—in October 1983. This party, that never saw the light of the day, was co-chaired by Dr. Riek Machar and Benjamin Bol Akook. People like Dr. Chol Dau, Dr. Marial Benjamin, Dr. Thomas Gordon, Justice Mabil Anyieth, Justice John Luk, John Roach, among others, were confirmed members.

When Dr. Machar went to Libya to solicit for military support, he was told by Muamar Ghadhafi, who was already supply arms to the SPLM/A, to join the SPLM/A since they was no difference between the two. Not only had Dr. Machar, the champion of the Nasir coup, formed a unionist party, he went ahead and willingly joined SPLM/A which was a unionist party instead of Anyanya Two, the separatist. The same logic applies to Dr. Lam Akol: not only did he officially recommend Dr. John Garang, a unionist against the separatists of Akuot and Gai Tut, to the Ethiopian government, he also freely participated in the founding of, and later officially joined, the SPLM/A, the unionist party. Both Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar, if truly they had never been unionists like Dr. John Garang, would have comfortably joined Anyanya Two whose official policy was separation. Simply put, they just changed their ideologies depending on the circumstances as much and often as Dr. John Garang did change his. This is equally applicable to Akuot Atem and Gai Tut of Anyanya Two because they would have remained in the SPLM/A had they been offered those positions they demanded.

That is the kind of ideological transmutation I believe Dr. John Garang did undergo through. It is meaningless and unrealistic to place him under one category as being a unionist or a separatist. He was everything that could have worked for him to achieve the goal of liberation, which, in the heydays of the SPLM/A, was the liberation of the whole Sudan, while, in the darkest days of the SPLM/A, became the separation of South Sudan. By everything I am not thinking of the so called “Peace from within” which was, and still remain, a gentleman term—a psychological euphemism—for surrendering oneself to the Arabs in a gentleman agreement with nothing to guarantee its implementation. It was just signed on paper to save faces while the two parties are/were cognizance of the fact that the document will have no bearings whatsoever on realities. That was the fate that doomed both the Khartoum and the Fashoda Peace Agreements. The CPA, because it was backed up and protected by the SPLA, was able to see the light of the day—and now millennia to come.

While “Dr. John Garang is unquestionably the father of South Sudan, the champion of its independence and its greatest hero” the fact of the matter is that Kuanyin Bol, William Nyuon, Arok Thon, Joseph Oduho, Justice Martin Majier, Dr. Lam Akol, Dr. Riek Machar, Nyacigak Nyaciluk etc were among the founding members of the SPLM/A and they will always be remembered for their sacrifices. Moreover, Dr. Machar, as the first vice president of the republic of South Sudan, and Dr. Lam, as the first official opposition leader of an independent South Sudan, would be remembered among the founding fathers of the republic of South Sudan.

And this need to extent the horizon of national recognition, as Dr. Okuk rightly argues, is the reason why we are having this debate. It is not that Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar want to introduce a law barring Dr. John Garang from being considered as the leading founding father and the champion of South Sudan independence; the debate gyrates around the call to have more than one person recognizes as the champion of South Sudan independence. It is about the need to have other people recognize too for their contributions to the liberation of South Sudan. I do suppose that Dr. Lam and Dr. Machar’s reason for glorifying the 1991 coup which ushered in division, misery, death and had almost led to the extinction of the Movement, could be because of the way they are labelled as traitors and collaborators. If only people let bygones be bygones, I surmise that this debate about “founding fathers/mothers” would die a natural death in the next few years to come.

Conclusion

Amidst all the tribulations South Sudan is undergoing today, there are so many opportunities for those who wanna be considered founding fathers/mothers or heroes/heroines or the champion of so and so. Let’s have the founding father of long lasting peace and sustainable development and

the mother of national integration, harmony, and mutual co-existences in South Sudan. Let's have the hero of political stability and the heroines of democracy and the rule of law. Let's have the champion of anti-illiteracy, anti-corruptions, anti-tribalism and anti-tribal conflicts campaign in South Sudan. There are as many opportunities in South Sudan to be great as there are many willing hearts and minds, ready to pay the cost and reap the benefits. Who is heeding the call?

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(1) SPLM and mass media: Promoting history on falsity

By Elhag Paul

Sudan Tribune: September 28, 2011 — The late John Garang De Mabior would have certainly objected to being projected as a separatist by his widow Rebecca Nyandeng, close relatives, the Dinka community and the SPLM in their never ending quest to use his formidable life story to promote him as the person who brought the independence to South Sudan and by implication Dinka superiority.

Recently, having personally attended the shameful and shambolic celebration of independence of the republic of South Sudan on 9 July 2011 in Juba, it was asphyxiating to witness the promotion of Garang as the father of the nation and the hero of independence of South Sudan. Large electronically refined coloured adverts on giant billboards around Juba's main streets showing pictures of Garang walking into freedom with masses of followers. This story is a fabricated lie and had Garang been alive, he certainly would have objected to it.

Garang was very honest with his political beliefs. He made it absolutely clear in various fora and writings that he was an avowed unionist and this gained him respect in North Sudan, Arab world, Africa and the west.

Garang in his book, titled 'John Garang Speaks' published in London in 1987 by KPI on pages 253 and 254 writes that:

"Our believe in the Sudanese Unity and territorial integrity is axiomatic, that is, it is principled position. In our Manifesto published 31 July 1983 we said in very unequivocal terms, and I quote, It must be reiterated that the principle objective of the SPLM/SPLA is not separation for the South. The South is an integral and inseparable part of the Sudan. Africa has been fragmented sufficiently enough by colonialism and neo-colonialism and its further fragmentation can only be in the interest of her enemies. The separatist attitude that has developed in the South since 1955 has caught the imagination of the backward areas in Northern Sudan. Separatists Movements have already emerged with guerrillas fighting in Western and Eastern Sudan. If left unchecked

these separatist Movements in the South, East, West coupled with stubborn determination of repressive minority clique regime in Khartoum to hang onto power at all costs will lead to the total disintegration of the Sudan. The imminent, latent and impending disintegration and fragmentation of the Sudan is what the SPLM/A aims to stop by developing and implementing a consistent democratic solution to both the nationality and religious questions within the context of a United New Sudan. This was in 1983. Our position remains the same.”

There you are. This is from the horse's mouth. To refuse to believe it is to make a fool of oneself.

Unity has always been the official policy of SPLM/A. It did not remain in the files as a redundant or dormant policy but it was operationised and put into practice with devastating consequences on the separatists. Garang did not hesitate to kill any separatist who make his case.

Among the prominent separatists who paid dearly with their lives were Samuel Gai Tut and Akot Atem. The atmosphere in SPLM/A controlled areas at the time was akin to that of the communists during Nimeiri's era in the Sudan. The words associated with secession were considered treasonable and the consequences were dire for anyone who dared to invoke them.

At the apex of Garang's power towards the end of 1980s and beginning 1990 he had become so arrogant to the extent that he freely rubs salt on the wounds of the separatists at every occasion the subject came up. He haughtily proclaimed that 'our first bullets were fired against the separatists.' Anybody doubting should research the barbaric murder of Samuel Gai Tut and Akot Atem.

Peter Nyaba in his book, titled 'The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider's View' published by Fountain Publishers in 1997 in Kampala, Uganda on page 45 writes that after Kerubino's forces ambushed and murdered Gai Tut, he (Kerubino) refused 'the burial of the remains of Mr Samuel Gai Tut and to have his corpse given eighty lashes daily until it decomposed.' From this act alone, one can imagine the raw emotions of hatred towards the separatists.

What kind of people are these who engage in such a wanton brutality to the extent that they could not respect the dead? These dead brave South Sudanese spoke and died for separation. Paradoxically, today, the very people who killed them are enjoying the fruits of these separatists' foresight. So far, the SPLM has not shown any remorse or decency to say sorry for their heinous acts and their divisive policy of 'New Sudan'. What a shame on SPLM/A.

In the House of Commons in UK, the then secretary for International Development Claire Short used to dismiss us the South Sudanese pressing for support of secession. Her argument was that she had no misgiving about South Sudanese aspiration to secede. Her own visits to the refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda, Congo and the liberated areas in the Sudan proved to her beyond doubt that the overwhelming majority of South Sudanese wished to secede. However, what confused her was that also the majority of South Sudanese supported SPLM/A and its objective of united Sudan. Garang and SPLM, she asserted, were adamant about unity and so it was up to us the South Sudanese to speak with one voice of what we wanted. Because SPLM/A represented the majority of South Sudanese she would promote unity of the Sudan. With this, the separatists melted away like 'Halawa Goton'. Or should I say with tails in between legs. Such was the hullabaloo SPLM/A created.

With the above, Garang has abundantly made his case loud and clear. What baffles people like me is the mendacity of Garang's family and the SPLM to assert forcefully that Garang is the father and champion of South Sudan's independence. How could this be when Garang put his policy of unionism in practice by killing separatists? The fact is that the separatist victims of Garang's policy are well known and well documented. These should be the true champions of South Sudan independence and not Garang. To be fair to Garang, he was a revolutionary who worked hard to transform the Sudan. He fought tooth and nail to realise his objective but unfortunately this has not materialised. May be the SPLM/A North in the Sudan will succeed to implement the project of 'New Sudan' in that country. But it must be emphasised: Garang was not a separatist. He was a unionist to his core.

SPLM/A knows that to promote the lie that Garang is the hero of South Sudan's independence, it has to use all means available to it regardless of the cost. Hence, it is now engaged in deploying the arsenals of mass media in the form of advertisement, SSTV and the radio service to bludgeon South Sudan psychologically. By bombarding the South Sudanese masses on a daily basis with the lie, it will not be before long when the young generation and the South Sudanese masses succumb to the story of the masters resulting into ecstatic triumph of the rulers in establishing themselves as the elites of South Sudanese society.

This is on one front of the media war. On the other, the heavy use of advertisement to promote Garang as the champion of South Sudan independence although it is costing GOSS a fortune is not for nothing, it has a strategic meaning. The purpose of advertisement is to create fantasy and illusions in the mind of the watchers to promote craving for the product – in this case, the story of the 'hero' of South Sudan's liberation. As this kind of product is not for purchase pecuniarily, it is specifically designed to influence thoughts and the mind to cultivate a hyperreal history of the struggle. The consumer (you, me and others) if not critical minded and well informed inevitably end up by believing what is shown on these giant billboards as the truth and reality.

Once this is achieved, history is distorted and re-written in favour of the agents beautifully portrayed in the adverts.

To buttress this fabricated story, SPLM has blended Kiir in. During the independence celebration an interesting poster was displayed around Juba. This poster presenting sergeant Kiir in long white Jallabia sitting amongst a group of senior SPLA officers in military uniform wearing red epaulets. The writing on the poster congratulated sergeant Kiir for liberating the country. Like those posters of Garang, it not only buttresses the fabricated story but elevates the social status of these actors.

In this particular poster, Kiir's dress indirectly appears to be designed to present him as a benign, intelligent, and caring leader protected by the might of SPLA. Here is one man the country cannot afford to lose. Therefore, he must be protected like the queen ant. Looking at this poster subliminally draws one attention to the well circulated picture of Jesus in Jallabia carrying a lamb and followed by sheep. Now Kiir is being presented as the caring saviour and shepherd. While in reality, this is the man who was Garang's Rottweiler for 22 years. He supervised the despatch of hundreds of innocent people to death. Kiir was responsible for the suffocating poorly aerated prison containers.

Do you remember the story of John Nambu who was imprisoned in a container until he turned yellow before his death due to lack of aeration? Nambu's crime was only because he hailed from the wrong ethnicity and wanted to join the SPLM. This was only one horrible way of violating human rights in SPLM/A. The other was the imprisonment of freedom fighters whose identities or ideas were not entertained by the movement leaders in 10 meters deep holes where the unfortunate prisoners occasionally were visited by all sorts of deadly snakes and creatures. During the rainy season prisoners got drowned in these prison holes. The master supervisor of these horrendous joints was none other than Kiir himself. Please note that most of these victims were separatists.

This benign supposedly caring leader has now been in power for six years and what has he done for the people of South Sudan. Nothing at all, apart from presiding over orgies of looting and massive corruption. His lack of due diligence in running and protecting the country is breathtaking. Yet SPLM is squandering massive resources on media to promote him and re-write our history. Come to us here in Juba and visit any office, you will not miss seeing Garang and Kiir looking at you from hanging photographs strategically positioned.

The work of Jean Baudrillard (1929 – 2007), the French philosopher and sociologist on the influence of mass media techniques and especially of images on human beings shows that the use of images create its own reality divorced from original facts or truth of what is being represented. It paints its own reality constructed by values and stories attached to the images displayed. This is politics at its most psychologically dangerous, because it is not only the blatant promotion of crude tribalism, but it is also the sowing of seeds of discord for future conflict.

SPLM as an instrument of the masters of South Sudan is using massive resource of the country to promote a big lie with implication for history and future generations.

The question to ask is: why is the SPLM deploying expensive mass media techniques to promote a fabricated story of one section of our community to distort our history? Whose interest as a minister of information is Mr Barnaba Marial serving? Is it serving South Sudan or a specific tribe? I leave the answers to you to work it out for yourself. Why is the true story of the South Sudan not being promoted since 1983? Why is there no reference to Oliver Albino's and other books on the Anya-Nya movement? Why is there no mention to Aggrey Jaden hard work on separation of the south? Why this obsessive promotion of our fresh distorted history which when truly unpacked contains horror stories?

To understand the magnitude of the brutality, inhuman policies and heinous acts of SPLM/A against humanity, it is absolutely necessary to read the work of Garang, Peter Nyaba, Lam Akol, and reports prepared by Human Rights bodies such as Africa Watch, Amnesty International and so on. There is no justification for that kind of behaviour meted out to the South Sudanese people other than from wanton criminals. Hence, the necessity to pursue the establishment of Justice and Reconciliation Commission, as in the case of Rwanda and South Africa to bring Kiir and his cohorts to account. Bringing these people to account might help us even to understand better Kiir's current presiding over the orgies of looting of public resources and corruption by his group. For South Sudan to develop healthily, this deep internal mental injury on its psyche must be addressed and urgently. Glossing over it with mass media tricks is a surest way of returning to mistakes done by the rulers of the Sudan at the time of its independence in 1956.

The self-determination which the South Sudanese had been fighting for since 1947 was forced on SPLM/A by circumstances beyond its control. It first entered into the vocabulary of SPLM/A following the 1991 failed Nasir coup led by Reik Machar, Lam Akol and John Koang. These three, opportunistically calculated that since SPLM/A lost its support base following the overthrow of the Mengistu Dirge regime in Ethiopia the time was ripe to get rid of Garang. As we all know, they failed and they continued to pursue their objective of ousting Garang through alliance with NCP. But the benefit to South Sudan of their unpopular act was to force SPLM/A to accept the principle of self-determination, especially after the talks in Abuja in early 1990s.

This was further advanced in the Khartoum agreement of 1997 with the same group. However, paradoxically this time NCP blundered and included the principle of self-determination into the constitution of the Sudan. When the peace talk under IGAD was first started in early 2000s, self-determination was not on the agenda. SPLM and Rev. John Danforth, the American envoy to the talks were content with the idea of solving the problem of the Sudan within a framework of a united country based on the project of 'New Sudan' which would be multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural etc. It was only when the Diaspora in Europe and North America rose up forcefully and brought pressure to bear on the talks that the principle of self-determination was then included on the agenda. The first protocol on self-determination was won because NCP was cornered by the fact that self-determination was already catered for in the constitution of the Sudan. The rest was history and we had our CPA of 2005.

The provision of the referendum in the CPA allowed each and everyone of us to decide for ourselves what we wanted. We individually (through the power of our votes) chose separation and thus liberated ourselves from the Arabs. It has nothing to do with Garang liberating us to qualify him as the father of the nation. This must be made clear to avoid distortion of our history and construction of a false history. The true separatists are those Garang fired his first bullets of unionism at such as Samuel Gai Tut and Akot Atem.

In light of the above, the minister of Information should desist from promoting one section of our society as being solely responsible for the liberation of South Sudan with Garang as its founding father based on falsity. For this does not bode well for the future.

Elhag Paul lives in South Sudan. He can be reached at elhagpaul@aol.com

(2) Lwal Baguoot

Dear all:

I'm sharing with you the following article published today by the New Sudan Vision newspaper. It rebuts a scathing and misleading article written by Mr. Elhag Paul not long ago, in which he knowingly or unknowing misled the public that **self-determination** and **secession** of South Sudan were altogether foreign and alien objectives and ideas to Dr. John Garang De Mabior prior to the infamous defection of some SPLA/M senior commanders.

Central to Mr. Elhag Paul's argument is that the 1991 disastrous defection, led by Dr. Lam Akol Ajawin and the company, forced Dr. Garang De Mabior to accept and embrace self-determination as a new basis for waging war against the Khartoum rogue regime. Evidently in contrary to Mr. Elhag's misinformation, **Dr. John Garang De Mabior, on January 24, 1972**, wrote a powerful and cautionary letter to the Anyanya Movement leadership articulating and outlining his vision for a peaceful resolution of "Sudan fundamental problems" either through **Southern Sudan separation or United New Sudan**.

Dr. Garang intelligently and cleverly articulated how both options could lead to achieving a permanent peace in Sudan if the parties involved were genuinely committed to reaching PEACE. One can also see in this letter that the seeds for the CPA were planted way before the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord.

Lwal Baguoot

(3) Dr. John Garang, the SPLM and the question of unity: A rebuttal to Mr. Elhag Paul (In response to Elhaq Paul's article above)

Written by Deng A. Dekuek (Perth, Australia)

Saturday, 08 October 2011 02:01

The New Sudan Vision: In the course of human affairs it is a rarity to come across obtuse slanderous remarks from a seemingly learned man of reason. I unequivocally, have no problems whatsoever with a person or people expressing their opinion, however what is outrageous, absurd and warrants universal condemnation is distortion and manufacturing of facts to malign a particular person and or community or communities. Even worse universally, speaking ill of the dead is an abhorrent and a tasteless culture, which is unfortunately condoned, encouraged and has taken root in South Sudan.

In a distasteful disregard for cultural etiquettes, journalistic professionalism and standards, [The Sudan Tribune on the 29th of September 2011 published an opinion piece](#), which was, blatantly aimed at assassinating the character of the late Dr. John Garang. In a rumbling monologue of vengeful, distorted and sugarcoated facts and unsubstantiated allegations, Mr. Elhag Paul accused the late Dr. Garang, his widow Madam Nyandeng, his family, his people the Dinka, the People's Movement, the SPLM and by that extension a significant proportion of South Sudanese of being hypocritical. Mr. Paul's long allegations can be summarised as follows:

“Dr. Garang does not deserve to be called the father of South Sudan nation, because he always was an advocate for a united Sudan. I know this because he said so in ‘John Garang Speakers’. Madame Nyandeng, his family, his people, the SPLM/A and anyone who claims otherwise and mentions him as a hero and champion of South Sudanese independence is a liar because Dr. Garang always advocated for a democratic united secular Sudan. I know this because he wrote about it. He was dead set on unity because he killed all those who advocated for separation like Mr. Samuel Gai Tut and Mr. Akot Atem Mayen because they were separatist. I know this because Dr. Peter Adwok Nyaba wrote about it. Living in Sudan as a communist during Nimeiri's terror was better than living in the liberated areas because Claire Short spoke about it in the British Parliament.”

He further insinuated that the President of the Republic, a Lieutenant General and the

Commander-in-Chief of the Army whom he reduced to a rank of a “Sergeant Kiir” was a murderous dog at the disposal of the late Dr. Garang - “Garang’s Rottweiler.” He went on to question national fidelity of Dr. Benjamin the Minister of Information and hinted that he was serving his tribe and not the nation. Such utter disrespect for the office (I am not saying the individuals but the office) of the President is astonishing. Having said that, I would like to point out and correct some historical fabrications, misconceptions and outright lies in Mr. Paul’s article. I am not going to write in defence of the President or the Honourable Minister but in that of the defenseless Dr. Garang and the People’s Movement, the SPLM.

It appears that Mr. Paul either has selective amnesia or does not want to acknowledge the fact that Dr. Garang was not a village idiot but a cunning political and military tactician who was a master of political games, trickery and theatre. I am wondering whether Mr. Paul knows or has considered the possibility that perhaps Dr. Garang was employing Machiavellian intelligence in his unwavering advocacy of a democratic united secular Sudan to achieve unknown agenda, which has eventuated and has become apparent to some who do not think and see things in plain black and white.

Mr. Paul’s revisionism and negation of history is disturbing. Distorting the writings of the esteemed Dr. Peter Adwok Nyaba is alarming. I do not dispute the facts following the death of Mr. Samuel Gai Tut but I find it preposterous and completely reject in its entirety the insinuation that his death was personally sanctioned by Dr. Garang or SPLM/A because he was an advocate for South Sudan separation. This is a manufactured perception of raved faculties. It was and still is a common knowledge among the rank and file of the People’s Army that in the early days of the People’s Movement in 80s, Anyanya 2, of Commander Gordon Koang Chuol, Mr. Tut and Mr. Mayen was hostile to SPLA/M and that its leadership had ignored repeated warnings from SPLA/M to cease attacks on their recruits. It is highly probable and highly likely that as a consequent Mr. Samuel was killed in one of these confrontations with the SPLA as a result of SPLA feeling its warnings were not being heeded.

Following Mr. Tut’s death nobody knows why Commander Kerubino Kuanyin Bol did what he did notwithstanding the fact that he was a maverick with occasionally deranged tendencies. Whether it was to punish Mr. Tut or whether it was a form of psychological warfare to demoralise Anyanya 2, nobody can answer that except Commander Kerubino but to present mere speculations, fantasies and distortions as facts is unscrupulous. This has been the fundamental foundation of Mr. Paul’s argument that those Southerners who were killed were meted the fate of death because they were separatist or that they were imprisoned because they advocated such ideas.

In addition, a sensationalist claim that living in the Sudan as a communist during Nimeiri's tyranny was of an equal measure to living in the liberated areas is a personal insult to any of the people who lived in Nasir, Kapoeta, Boma and other liberated areas. Although I was a young boy, I never heard then or know of anyone among all those who were executed by firing squads, anyone and I repeat anyone who was executed for being an exponent of an independent Southern Sudan.

Perhaps the most telling and remarkable were the slanderous claims that self-determination was an alien concept to Dr. Garang and the SPLM until 1991 when Nasir plotters forced it upon them. This clearly shows that the author is lacking in capacity and his superficial and crammed understanding of South Sudan's history is illusionary. Thirty years before the landmark Declaration of Principles of 1994, there existed a political party called the Southern Front, which was formed inside Sudan after what was known as the October Revolution of 1964 that toppled military rule of Abud. Late Uncle Clement Umboro led it and the objective of that southern party was SELF DETERMINTION while SANU, the other southern party was aiming at FEDERAL SYSTEM in Sudan, led by late William Deng Nhial and late Joseph Oduho. Southerners in the Round Table Conference of March 1965 presented those two positions, and referendum for Southerners for self-determination was proposed in that Conference. Hence self-determination was never a new notion to Dr. Garang or the SPLM/A to be said to have been invented by Nasir splitters. This is a historical crime to distort facts known to all.

The 1991 failed opportunists, chief among them Dr. Lam Akol who hasn't learned from history, can attest that the [24th of March 1986 Koka Dam Declaration](#) signed by then Lt. Col Kerubino Kuanyin Bol were a culmination of negotiations spanning 1985 to 1986 where SPLA/M was represented by Commander Kerubino and Commander Arok Thon Arok. At the conference self-determination was discussed and this desire for self-determination was clearly demonstrated in the context of **Article 2(d)** which called for the *“adoption of the 1956 Constitution as amended in 1964 with incorporation of ‘Regional Government’ and all other such matters on which a consensus opinion of all the political forces shall be reached.”* In addition the Koka Dam Declaration aimed to (a) repeal September 1983 sharia laws and (b) dissolve the government, and called for new general elections and formation of a coalition government that would include SPLM/A. However, these agreed points were never taken up because Sadiq al-Mahdi took power and was never keen on resolving the war.

Mr. Paul also shamelessly contradicts himself by partially correctly stating that self-determination was discussed at the Abuja 1 and 2 Peace Negotiations but then goes on to say that it was off the agenda in early 2000s until the people in diaspora put pressure on SPLM and the NCP. What a laughable joke! Abuja 1 and 2 Peace Negotiations, which Elijah Malok Aleng and the late Dr. Justin Yac Arop and late Commander William Nyuon Bany were the SPLM

representatives certainly discussed self-determination however, it was not forced upon the People's Movement as insinuated. It was rather because the Southerners felt a need to present a united front and they had nothing in common except to see a free Southern Sudan. Mind you there was still heavy fighting between the SPLM and the Nasir plotters and the NIF at that time. Also the idea that self-determination was off the agenda in early 2000s is a blatant lie. SPLM/A and NIF had already committed themselves to the ["Declaration of Principles" on the 20th of July 1994](#) where the most significant point was **Article 2**. It said:

"the right of self-determination of the people of south Sudan to determine their future status through a referendum must be affirmed."

Dr. Garang is unquestionably the father of South Sudan, the champion of its independence and its greatest hero. His vision and the fundamental pillars of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) were formulated way back before the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement was concluded on the 27th of March 1972. Dr. Garang wrote a remarkable letter to General Joseph Lagu on the 24th of January 1972. The letter is presented here in its entirety to dispel any doubts that I am quoting favorable parts to my argument:

[Click here to read Dr. John Garang letter](#)

[This letter is a proof beyond reasonable doubt that Dr. Garang](#) was an advocate of Southern Sudanese autonomy in whatever form and outlines the critical structures of C.P.A which are (a) separate armies (b) self-government during the interim period (c) referendum for Southerners.

Reflecting on Mr. Paul's article there are few things that indicate the following:

1. Writer's lack of in-depth knowledge of the History of South Sudan which he claims to be defending but is consciously and maliciously distorting.
2. The author thought that by cleverly disguising his anti-SPLM rhetoric and tribalist animosity towards the Dinka he would be taken as a serious intellectual.
3. The author is lacking in critical thinking because of his simplistic interpretation of Dr. Garang and SPLM's political ideology.

If any lessons are to be drawn from this, they would be that Sudan Tribune's editorial and journalistic standards have descended lower into the gutters to allow the publication of an article that insults and calls the President of the Republic, a Rottweiler (that is a breed of a butcher's dog).

It is clear that Mr. Paul needs to read more since he does not understand various tactics including the Machiavellian intelligence employed by Dr. Garang and SPLM/A to achieve the independence of South Sudan. Just because Dr. Garang, SPLM/A or any Southerner advocated for a democratic united secular Sudan does not mean that their minds were set in a perpetual immobile granitic slab and deaf to the manifest calls for separation.

The notion that because Dr. Garang called for a democratic united secular Sudan disqualifies him from his rightful place in our nation is insulting. The man deserves his dignified place as the father of our nation and deserves much more than the respect we are showing his legacy for he went above and beyond the call of duty for his people, the South Sudanese.

Deng Dekuek is a South Sudanese Geologist and can be reached at dengdekuek@gmail.com

(4) Brian Adeba

Dear Lwal,

Thanks for forwarding this note here. It certainly offers a perspective about John Garang's (and the SPLM's) vision for a separate and independent South Sudan. Most significantly, Garang's letter shows that he wasn't opposed to the idea of self-determination. And as a matter of fact, Elhag Paul's article failed to account for Garang's flexible stances on self-determination and the evolution of these stances over a period of time.

In essence, as the records show (and as some of us have argued previously), the Nasir coup plotters CAN'T claim sole ownership of "introducing the self-determination agenda" in the early '90s (This is not to say that they did not play a significant role). This is a fact. (A month prior to the coup, the SPLM had already asked the Nigerian mediator to include self-determination in the agenda of the talks). As well, the argument that Garang was totally opposed to self-determination is spurious.

Brian

twitter.com/kalamashaka

"Chance favours the prepared mind"

(5) Dr. Majak D'Agoot (in response to Alhaq Paul)

Dear Brian & Lwal

It is hard for critics to make a convincing case that Dr. John Garang was an ardent unionist as they try in vain to misrepresent history... The life of Garang - the freedom fighter - since his mundane engagement with the South Sudanese National Liberation Struggle is choke-full of examples of deep-seated belief in South Sudanese nationalism and quest for independence...

The letter just published here in this forum (thanks to late Dr. Akec Mohammed who kept the copy for years even after Garang lost the originals) is one of the few testimonies of his legacy... His only deviation, however, from his predecessors/contemporaries - for example Uncle Joseph Oduho, the late William Deng, Gen. Lagu, Col. Samuel Gai, my own uncle - the late Akuot Atem, Gordon Murtat, Bona Malwal, Abel Alier, Luigi Odwok, Dr. Riek Machar, Dr. Lam Akol, etc. - was that he introduced the most powerful tools of modern politics into the game.

He applied a superb game theory anchored in supreme principles of political and military strategy... He wasn't, however, engaged in an abstract game that our children master on their computer screens these days but in an absolute shooting war overshadowed by complex geo-strategic and geopolitical environments... Dr. Garang understood very well the adage (attributed to Sun Tzu) that "War is a master of great concern to a people/country, a province of life and death, the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be carefully studied." Despite of these boundless challenges, Dr. Garang had a gift of boiling hard problems in political calculus down to simple and manageable proportions in addition to his unmatched will-power... For those of us who were closely associated with him during the war, we simply clang to him because he was patriotic, consistent, and focused... He was perhaps complex and hard to pin down in certain occasions but that was understandable... For those of us that he trusted absolutely and fought the war together with him, we knew what he wanted; which was, in fact, in perfect fit with what we also wanted...

Self-determination as is always debated on this forum was not to be won on empty proclamations, sloganeering, or even through nonviolent means. Rather, it was to be won through a protracted struggle that took many lives and eventually weakened the resolve of the most determined and even fanatic opponent that Khartoum was...

The chronicles of self-determination teaches us that our Chiefs called for it in the Juba Conference of 1947 in their own expressions before the advent of the political science's parlance into our political vocabulary. At the Malakal's Southern Front Convention of February 1965, part of Southern elites assembled under this political rubric (SF), such as Hilary Lugali, Bona Malwal, Abel Alier, Gordon Abyei, Clement Mboro, Luigi Adwok, etc., called for self-determination and

pursued it through the Round Table Conference... Historically, it derived largely from the early call for self-determination in the 1940s by the Northern elites from the Condominia..

Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol have, however, stayed in the SPLM for almost a decade before the split... Akuot Atem and Samuel Gai even took part in the formation of the SPLM in July 1983 and including the drafting of the first Manifesto which we used till September 1984 and which talked about the Problem of the Sudan... It was reviewed and reprinted in Libya after the First Split in 1984 to suit the new realities... Therefore, what ripped Southerners apart in the two bloody splits (1983 and 1991) that we have seen during the Second War was power struggle and not differences in the objectives of the struggle...

You know my views on this topic as contained in my unpublished piece: "Defying Mao's Archetype: Analysis of the Sluggishness of the Periphery-originated Insurgencies in the Sudan" which I shared with you last year...

At broad brush, Dr. Garang acquired his bearings right through a well-thought-out, diagnostic net assessment of the complex situation in which South Sudanese fought the two protracted liberation wars... He analysed trends and asymmetries in relative strengths and weaknesses of the South as opposed to its adversary(ies)...He also considered broader factors (instruments of power) such as demographics, economy, allies, military capabilities, strategic culture, disruptive phenomena (uncertainty), which may affect the balance of power in the long-term...

My submission (or rather contention), as yours my friend, is to discourage these misrepresentations and misalignments of history which are crafted to fit egocentric discourse that is out-of-path with historical facts... Furthermore, I also concur with you that Dr. John Garang's contribution shouldn't be linked to any particular ethnicity, region or creed... John Garang was an archenemy of sectarianism and would turn manifold in his grave if he were to know that this was what the South Sudan is determined to to become after his death..

Kindest regards

Dr. Majak D'Agoot

(6) Dr. Isaac Gang (in response to Dr. Majak D'Agoot)

Hello all,

I really enjoyed reading the rejoinder from one of my role models, Dr. Majak D' Agoot because it was full of logical arguments despite eventually falling in the same trap as those he was trying to correct. I made it a point to stay away from these type of discussions not because they are not important in shaping the direction of our nascent nation but due the fact that the way we approach them threatens the very existence of the same.

While I generally agree with Brian Adeba that the architects of 1991 cannot be fully credited with the introduction of self-determination into the national consciousness, for national heroes such as Samuel Gai Tut, Hilary Lugali, Joseph Lagu, Akuot Atem, Both Dieu, Luigi Adwok, Biliw Reath Kok, William Deng Nhial, to mention a few, are on the record calling for self-determination (as correctly recalled by Dr. Agoot), dismissing the contribution of Dr. Riek Machar and those who stood with him, such as Dr. Lam Akol, Arok Thon Arok, Joseph Uduho and others, is nothing short of misrepresentation of history.

While my fellow comrade, Dr. Agoot, is correct in asserting that Dr. John Garang was a very shrewd liberator, whose strategic calculations were often concealed from the average man's plain comprehension as circumstances dictated, thinking that this intricate ideology should have been a common knowledge is simply asking for too much from our SPLM/SPLA masses. While I personally believe, based on critical analysis of the historical events, that Dr. John was a unionist by day and a separatist by night, I don't expect everyone to conduct the same analysis in order to come to the same conclusion as my comrade, Dr. Agoot, appears to expect from the average South Sudanese since most people sleep at night. This phenomenon, in my opinion, explains what Dr. Agoot described as discrepancies between the time the manifesto was drafted and the time those who expressed dissatisfaction with the direction of the movement both in 1983 and 1991 make it known.

What a balanced Historian would conclude when analyzing these historical events is that the few analytical thinkers within the SPLM/A leadership wanted, at some points, Dr. John to be a separatist by day, especially when circumstances were conducive, so that the average man in the SPLM/A will know what the heck is going on. When I was a Jesh el Amer in group 3 at Tharpam in Itang, my colleagues and I were just happy to get up early in the morning to attend the parade and sing songs, but I am sure we would eventually want to know what is going on in a

plain language since it was a struggle for us putting a complete sentence together leave alone analyze anything.

The point I am trying to make here is that the events of 1991 opened the eyes of the average South Sudanese given the plain language of the objective. This forced the late Dr. John Garang to be a separatist by day as he called the first SPLM Convention in Chukudum in 1994 making the self-determination a twin objective of the movement. Dr. Agoot knows this very well.

Furthermore, a Jalaba would rather die of thirst rather than drinking from a glass with a 'self-determination' written on it before 1997. After 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement (KPA), this was a forgone conclusion as the precedent was set in that document recognizing the right of self-determination by the people of South Sudan. These are just some of the reasons why it is important for anyone trying to right the wrong to do so without misrepresenting the history, however bitter it maybe.

So just like I believe that those who put Dr. John only in the box of unionist are distorting history either intentionally or otherwise, those like Dr. Agoot, who refute and correct them by dismissing the events of 1983 and 1991 as mere 'power struggle' not deserving of any credit for the achievement of self-determination, are also guilty of the same crime.

The lesson here is to get our history right.

Dr. Isaac Gang

(7) Dr. Majak D'Agoot (in response to Dr. Isaac Gang)

Dear Dr. Kang,

Millions of congratulations on your recent academic achievement. The acquisition of critical skills by individual citizens coupled with nationwide human capital accumulation have a centrality as well as far-reaching consequence on leapfrogging socioeconomic recovery in a post-conflict environment such as the case of South Sudan. Again, accept my congratulations on a persuasive but impressive critique on my 'on-the-ground account' on the thesis and antithesis of the South Sudanese Self-Determination.

This anger-free approach that we adopted, provides a pathfinder to navigate through the labyrinth of distortions of history that have been largely responsible for the 'Dilemma of a Southern Intellectual' to quote the less celebrated son of South Sudan - the late Joseph Garang. These ill-conceived and incoherent accounts appalled our conflict-injured psyche; even generating more intricate lines of traps that are difficult to undo. Put another way, for us to crack the nut of historical mystery that has always shrouded our accounts, we need this kind of sobriety to find answers to plethora questions that are yet to be dissected..

Comparing my rejoinder to the one you posted on this forum, I admit that we have both made a case that epitomises the side of argument that is fundamentally progressive. My contention on the splits of the SPLM by describing them as being power-driven, has provided, in my view, a cure to misrepresentation rather than a mere palliative or exacerbating the phenomenon.

I strongly argued that denying Dr. Garang the glory of our hard-won independence that he led; and that he didn't even live to take a pie, is unpatriotic, shameful, and completely out of synch with the realities that you and I had lived in the bush. For we know that it is a virtue and value for an enlightened mind to be intellectually astute and altruistic but not simply degenerate into entertaining a make-believe that "a glorious history is often a story of the living to the injustice of the dead".

While the SPLM/A and its bush leadership (Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol included) and populations in the rebel-controlled South absorbed the bulk of the costs, other South Sudanese in Khartoum-held towns and Diaspora variedly shared in footing the bill of freedom. Hence, we should equally accept the grades that history has assigned to us during this arduous and daunting historical experience - the war. If Dr. John Garang has stood out of the pack as an outstanding

contributor to our freedom, it doesn't assume away the fact that others too, have made their great and modest contributions...

Indisputably, the call for Self-Determination, as I said, attributes its genesis in South Sudanese political lexicon to the call for the same right by the Northerners from the Condominia in the 1940s. Uncle Both Diew and his colleagues made their first robust call mirrored on Northern demands from the Condominia but building on a solid foundation of the 1947 Juba Conference that carried this aspiration. So, in terms of articulating it, no party has even done better than the elite-based Southern Front (SF) in mid-1960s.. The question is not really about who said it first, last, less, or more than others. Rather, it is about who really fought for it and delivered it in the final analysis...

It is because of this reality of lethality of Khartoum and the fear of becoming pawns in the geopolitics of the Cold War, that our leaders on both sides of the divide (Akuot-Gai politicians' Alliance Versus Garang-Kerubino-Nyuon Militarists' Axis in 1983; Riek - Lam Nasir Alliance Versus Garang-Salva Torit Alliance in 1991) chose this vagueness and obscurity of objective. But this vagueness in what was abandoned to Garang to become his discourse and legacy, drew to the SPLM a large number of combatants from the peripheral North, who during the Anyanya War, were in support of the riparian Arab clientele State..

This strategic correctness is responsible, to greater degree, for the tremendous groundswell of opposition to the regime in Khartoum and which has helped us reaching the referendum during the interim period and may help in shaping the undemarcated border between the Sudan and the South Sudan. **These splits, I contend, were therefore driven by power struggle among the political and military elites of South Sudan.. If this proposition is considered farfetched or admonished by some people, let somebody out there provide a failsafe hypothesis on:**

A) Why did Akuot-Gai Alliance took part in the founding of the SPLM and even participated in outlining its objectives, principles, as well as its political and military structures (The Executive Committee, The Central Committee, The Military High Command; not The Politico-Military High Command that the Militarists constituted out of the two organs after falling out with Akuot-Gai Alliance and subsequently with Joseph Oduho and Justice Martin Majier); and not proclaiming secessionism right away? Why did their call for secession become more pronounced after losing the support of the Ethiopians who lent their full support to the Militarists ostensibly on belief that they would deliver well on the geopolitical/geostrategic duels of the Cold War?

B) Why did Dr. Lam Akol and Edward Lino recommended Dr. Garang - the unionist - to the Ethiopian Ambassador in Khartoum few weeks after the Bor Mutiny as the most promising candidate among other prospective leaders (Dr. Lam and Edward have talked publicly about this meeting)? Why did Dr. Lam followed four years later to join a 'Unionist Organisation'? Why did Dr. Machar join the SPLM/A in 1984 when it was already founded on unionist principles? Do most of our Forum members know that Dr. Machar, Dr. Benjamin Bol Akook, Dr. Chol Dau, Dr. Marial Benjamin, Dr. Thomas Gordon, Justice Mabil Anyieth, Justice John Luk, among others, had set up another unionist movement with Dr. Machar and Dr. Akook as cochairmen and even visited Libya on that political ticket in October 1983? Why did Dr. Machar stayed in a unionist organisation that the SPLM/A was for seven years before splitting in 1991?

Returning to diagnostics of the 1991 split, I dismiss the justification of it on grounds of the call for Self-Determination based on the aforementioned points. However, I reluctantly espouse the justification of the coup on grounds of democracy and human rights even though the Nasir experience did not walk the talk on these principles and values.

But in the interest of fairness and objectivity, by 1991, most SPLA officers had already been alarmed by Dr. Garang's tendency to centralised authority to the detriment of initiative and autonomous action which are both highly required in a Guerrilla organisation. Accusations of autocratic leadership and abuse of human rights were already a talk in the streets/roads of Itang (our then Refugee Capital), our bases inside Ethiopia and liberated areas as good portion of our leaders languished in jail.. When Kerubino challenged Garang in 1987, he premised his justification on account of lack of structures (not democracy and human rights of course)..

Whether or not the split has induced change and democratic reforms in the movement, I submit that it is true. But look at the bigger ballgame: the end of the Call War, the fall of the Mangistu Derg regime, politics of NIF radical Islam, etc as other key variables that have also delivered even the most robust influence on Dr. Garang to make reforms... Additionally, the call for Self-Determination by Nasir Group coincided with the wind of change that blew across the former Soviet Union and the then Eastern Bloc and the Eritrean victory.

This was the era when a call for secession was not any longer a taboo but a celebrated orthodoxy.. As an intellectual, you may be persuaded to accept a proposition that this call was opportunistic given its timing. I would also make a contestation if this claim was genuine why did this call was not made prior to the end of the Cold War; say, in 1988, 1989, or 1990, for instance...

Was this not power struggle sugarcoated in these slogans? If there is another most powerful argument out there than this modest one, I would rest my case; or we should avoid deluding ourselves.

Kindest regards

Dr. Majak

(8) Dr. James Okuk (a rejoinder to Dr. Majak's)

Folks,

The below post from Dr. Majak D' Agoot is more interesting as it confirms my assertion earlier that *"we should write credible history of founding fathers of South Sudan in an inclusive and sincere manner, and without tendency of creating a personality cult for any one particular person or tribe."*

The strong point Dr. Agoot put forward in his latest post is that evolution and change took place within the SPLM/A leaders. These comrades might have appeared unionists institutionally at the start due to geo-political politicking of the time. That is, Dr. John Garang formed a unionist SPLM/A in 1980s together with those of Mr. Salva Kiir, Dr. Riek Machar, Dr. Lam Akol and others. There was no objection raised against SPLM/A unionistic Manifesto by then prior to founding, joining or being in it (SPLM/A).

But later after 1990s, objection popped up as some of these leaders changed to become separatists by proposing institutionalization of the right to self-determination for Southern Sudanese, and with a consequence of secession as opposed to unity of the Sudan. As the demand of the situation became greater, Dr. John Garang changed too and accepted the new move towards self-determination. In 2005 Dr. Garang went as far as telling Southerners to choose between being Second Class Citizen in the Sudan or First Class Citizen in their own South Sudan Republic.

Surely, this suggestive rhetoric shows that Dr. John Garang became a changed man for an independent South Sudan. The same rhetoric was adopted and given more weight by Mr. Salva Kiir, Mr. Pagan Amum and other Southerners later (after the untimely death of Dr. Garang), especially during the campaign for the referendum for self-determination.

Thus, it may be concluded that if being unionist is a political sin in South Sudan, all SPLM/A and other leaders have sinned. No one among them could be clean to take the first separatist stone and throw it at another leader. Also if change makes sense in political

dynamism, all of these leaders should be given credit of having shifted from unionists to separatists, even at the last second of eleven hour.

Having established this understanding of political dynamism in Southern Sudanese politics of liberation, then it could become comfortable to draw the criteria of naming the significant founding fathers of the Republic of South Sudan without biases or prejudices.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Okuk

(9) Dr. James Okuk (a follow up)

Folks,

This is a very interesting exchange of ideas. It is the right path of sifting and finding the real truth from myths. It is the correct way of search for putting records straight (i.e writing credible history of the founding fathers of of South Sudan) to be taught to next generations.

But the core question remains: who is (are) really the founding father(s) of South Sudan Republic?

AlHag Paul refuted the common claims that it is Dr. John Garang who is the founding father of South Sudan. Nonetheless, he did not advance beyond this refutation to tell us exactly who is (are) really the founding father(s) of the new republic by names. Perhaps he found it difficult to pin this down with a simple answer.

Brian Adebe, Dr. Majak D' Agoot, Dr. Isaac K. Geng and others have only reacted to AlHag's critique by refuting his denial that Dr. John Garang is not the founding father of South Sudan. Nevertheless, they did not come out directly to say who (by names) should really be crown with historical honor of founding father(s) of the Republic of South Sudan. Maybe their current positions in the SPLM/A makes it sensitive for them to go specific.

I would have given a competent answer if I were not a student in this field of compiling objective literature of history of the the Republic of South Sudan. This novitiate situation tempts me to lean to the side of AlHag Paul.

I see a separatist as a separatist whether at night time or day time; likewise a unionist. The time (day or night) of practice doesn't matter to me; the practice itself matters.

If Dr. John Garang was both a separatist and a unionist irrespective of time difference, then this dualism puts me into a serious dilemma of specific identification or 'sectionalization'. Hence, it makes it very sophisticated for me to pin him down as a founding father of South Sudan Republic conveniently, far away from propagandist or sympathetic tendency.

But a hard fact remains; SPLM/A Chairman Dr. John Garang negotiated or perhaps accepted the right of self-determination in the CPA to get institutionalized in the Republic of the Sudan (as it was done with Khartoum and Fashoda Peace Agreements), and with a consequence of possible secession for independence of South Sudan.

Dr. Garang ensured that this right was guaranteed internationally by the UN, IGAD, friends of IGAD and other forces. Also he ensured that this right was guaranteed nationally by the SPLA as an independent military force ready to recommence the war in case of violation.

The same situation was accepted by President Omer Al-Bashir and Vice-President Ali Osman Taha until it reached down to the people of Southern Sudan in order to put it into real practice of individual votes (i.e., referendum).

In other word, if the SPLM/A Chairman Dr. Garang and the Sudan President Al-Bashir did not institutionalize the right of self-determination and guaranteed its practice, it wouldn't have been possible for the people of South Sudan to separate from the Sudan peacefully in a democratic manner. Also, if the people of South Sudan did not go out massively to practice the right of their self-determination in the renowned referendum, there wouldn't have been a republic called South Sudan in the World map as we have it today.

That is, ***the decision for the separation of South Sudan was complimentary (i.e., it was not one-way traffic or one-man show)***. Thus, AlHag Paul was partially right that it was the people of South Sudan who who decided to separate and declare their independent state. They are the heroes and founding fathers/mothers of South Sudan. However, this could have not been possible without political will from leaders of the Republic of the Sudan (Southern Sudan included by then).

Can we say here too that Mr. Salva Kiir and other living leaders of South Sudan who ensured (i.e., political will) that the referendum for self-determination took place as agreed in the CPA,

are the founding fathers of the new republic? Partly I can say yes, but with no prejudice to those who cleared the road before them in struggle for separation and independence of South Sudan, whether by military or democracy force.

In a nutshell, we should write credible history of founding fathers of South Sudan in an inclusive and sincere manner, and without tendency of creating a personality cult for any one particular person or tribe.

History should be written fairly that South Sudan has many founding fathers and not one founding father. But we should find a proper criterion of doing this so that we don't flood our history with so many insignificant founding fathers. The core criteria here should be the political contribution of the selected founding fathers and with a clear road-map; not mere military courage or majoritarian tribal backing.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Okuk

(10) By Peter Gatkuoth (in response to the debate)

Dear brothers and sisters,

I came late to realize that the topic is about the vision of the movement. I would respond to you as quickly to give you more medicine and to help you understand what the vision mean. The New Sudan Vision is a life history and it is subject to personal interpretation. It is a Vision rooted in a philosophical design and only few among us know what it really meant.

Although you may not agree with it, it is just a matter of how you interpret it and use it as a daily history to be preached. Yes, I know most of us are not aware of what the Vision aimed at or leaned towards but some people who criticize Dr. John Garang that he is a unionist do not even remember that John Garang was a young frontier of A/A one. If there is anything brought to light by the group of A/A, John Garang would have credit in the part of the phase one of the struggles.

The worse things that caught the man with mental capacity was how to frame the Vision into one with more arrays within it. As I said above that the vision is subject to interpretation is because how you understand it may thus be the way you preach it but the reality is there. It would take thousands of pages to link you with the fact but hatred has gotten rooms in the life of individuals and therefore, they fail to hear the voice of reasoning of how the vision is about.....

First, John Garang himself was a very separatist-minded person, and I am here to preach why but having the mental capability to deceive and bring the Arab alliance inclusive would never be a job of someone with that short mental ability. Dr. Garang preached the separation in his own ways by using the alliance of Southerners and Northerners to fight for the cause of our way to separation.

In the Nuer culture, there was a story of man who was so hungry and need to eat but he cannot find anything to eat. Few hours later, he found a bunch of many young men who killed an ox for certain celebration. He looked at their eyes and concluded that they will not give him the meat he wants to survive quickly. Instead, the guy involves himself in the process of preparing and putting meat together while the young men were chanting.

After few minutes, he was asked "what do you want?" The guy responded that he wanted the whole body of the cow. They young men reacted and said, "just give him one leg of the cow".....you know how big is the part of the leg.The man smiled and said, "okay I will take it, and I am sorry." The groups laughed and just told him to eat and take that part of the cow later when he decided to leave.

This is the same scenario to the vision. The vision of the SPLM/A by Dr. Garang is something he does not wanted to disclose to all members of the SPLM/A. When some commanders asked him as to what the vision meant, he always asked them that when you reach where you think worth more for you, stop right there and I will continue alone.

It is like when people asked Jesus, he always answered them with questions and few are the one to capture the tone of the reasoning and interpret it appropriately.

Take care and expect me to come back or I will try to put something together for readers if I manage to have few hours free later today.

Peter Reat Gatkuoth

Costa Rica, Central America

(11) By Bol Deng (in appreciation of Dr. Majak and Dr. Gannang Arguments)

Dear All,

Now that Dr. Majak D'Agoot and Dr. Isaac Gang have engaged in this epistemologically, high-pitched intellectual debate on the politics of unity and secession as well as the call for self-determination; in addition to factual accounts by Mr. Deng Atem de Garang and Isaiah Abraham on Sudantribune and Newsudanvision, I strongly believe that the key thesis of Mr. Elhag Paul and his apologists has been shattered and put to rest, once and for all.

The second issue of who is the father or are the fathers of the nation is trivial and marginal. I suspect that could be the reason why Dr. Agoot and Dr. Gang focused more on the theme of self-determination, unity and separation and brushed this aside completely. Obviously, it is not Dr. Garang, neither his family nor his so-called tribe/clan who made the decision of being called so. In the interest of fairness, it is the powers that be who proclaimed him as the national hero and father of the nation. What I know, the Committee for the Celebrations of South Sudan Independence were chaired by Dr. Machar. The people who made official statements during the celebrations were President Kiir and Speaker Igga.

If any decision of or any statement 'deifying Dr. Garang' were taken or made, Mr. Alhag and those debating this like Dr. Okuk should ask the powers that be why so. This makes me wonder on why some people on this forum were perplexed on why President Salva, VP Dr. Machar, or Speaker Igga were not the ones proclaimed as fathers of the nation, or among other fathers of the nation. Perhaps they made a deliberate decision to leave it to you and the posterity to judge them when their bones are long interred. Then, how could the dead person build a personality cult as Dr. Okuk claims? I thought what amounts to creating a personality cult is what he is exactly doing by promoting Dr. Lam Akol as a hero in a broad daylight forgery.

Again, this same argument renders the theology and philosophical innuendos of my admirable Professor, Dr. Alfred Lokujji absolutely redundant. As a theologian myself, there was one Virgin Birth that I know and that is of our Lord Jesus Christ. Other births- including our independence are pure natural processes; often, involving political and social intercourse. But like other sacred human activity, are blessed by the Holy Spirit. The blessings that Sarah and Abraham received to have Isaac; or Elizabeth and Zachariah received to have John the Baptism, could be more analogously correct and theologically relevant. South Sudan did not just drop down from the Heaven on the eve of the independence. Rather, it was delivered through a rough intercourse with adverse factors such as war and after stressful years of infertility and stigma.

On intellectual bias, Professor Lokujji is aware, I believe, that viewpoints are not belief-proof. Even in his own academic writings - probably including his doctoral thesis (if read critically) - he must have subtly included a few of his hunches, beliefs or bias. I've experienced this dilemma in writing my two short theses for Master's of Theology and Master's of Business Administration

where I sneaked in a few biased positions about my religion, my country and the struggle of its people. My supervisors noted them but they were not fatally subjective. So, to a certain degree, objectivity is relative.

As for how the nurses run the nursery these days, this is none of Dr. Garang's business as it concerns the living. His mission is accomplished and the rest is left to you and me to fix. In a nutshell, I thought Professor Lokuji could have simply posted a new article on his views on the future of the country than just putting everything together in one lest we digress.

God bless

Bol Deng

(12) Dr. James Okuk (in response to Bol Deng)

Dear Bol Deng,

1. The question of the "Founding Father(s)" of South Sudan is neither trivial nor marginal as you may think. In fact, it is the most important one now as we try to write history of the new republic. That is why it is drawing interest and reactions from Southerners. Of course, this question could be sensitive to Dr. Majak D' Agoot and Dr. Isaac K. Geng due to the positions they are holding now on SPLM ticket. This might be the reason of their tactic of avoidance.

2. Where I disagree with ElHage Paul is when he denies that Dr. John Garang should not be crown with the honour of "Founding Father" of South Sudan. For me, his argument did not consider the aspect of political dynamism in the politics of South Sudan liberation. He failed to notice that Dr. Garang become a changed man later towards separation of South Sudan.

3. Also where I disagree with you is when you try by any means (especially fallacy of appeal to SPLM and RSS authority) to betray the African spirit of solidarity and inclusivity. You seem to endorse the anti-thesis of ElHag Paul that the statue of Dr. Garang should be the only one erected in Juba and other parts of South Sudan. In other word, Dr. Garang has been chosen as the only "Founding Father" of the Republic of South Sudan by crowning him hero of the heroes during the declaration of our independence. Hence, he should remain being so alone as far as the government of the day and the living SPLM leaders are comfortable with this scene.

4. But for me, this is exclusivity and unfair action to history. Yes, Dr. Garang is a "Founding Father" but not him alone. We are proud to have his statue in Juba and other places in South Sudan as well as his head on all specimens of our currency. Nonetheless, this should not be the terminal. We need to go further and crown other "Founding Fathers and Mothers" in accordance with sincere criteria of selection and naming. It will make me more prouder to see statues of other "Founding Fathers and Mothers" of South Sudan being erected side by side with that of Dr. John Garang.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Okuk