

المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES
(Doha Institute)



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Research Paper

Sudanese Public Opinion after Secession

Dr. Fares Braizat

Doha, October- 2011

Series (Research Papers)

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Introduction¹

The referendum on the secession of South Sudan was conducted with the exclusion of the Sudanese in the North and as such the people of the South thus expressed their opinion and decided on secession, while the opinions of those of the North were rendered absent. To fill this knowledge gap about public opinion in the North after the referendum, this paper offers an analysis of the data from a field study on Sudanese public opinion that was conducted between February 8 – and February 26, 2011 in all the states of Sudan, and in which 1,200 face-to-face interviews were carried out to explore the reality and the trends of public opinion in the post-secession period.² This paper attempts to identify the reasons behind support for, or opposition to, secession and its implications for the future of both North and South Sudan.

The South Sudanese vote in favor of secession from the North raised new problematic questions about the identity of Sudan in a geographic, economic, social and human context that was imposed on the state rather than being a natural product of its evolution. Perhaps the most important of these questions is the one related to the unity and Arab identity of Sudan, and whether there is a need to reconsider and/or redefine its identity in light of the failure of the experience of a unified Sudan. Questions abound as to the effectiveness of the policies pursued by successive Sudanese governments in the field of social integration (or so-called “nation-building”), policies which, according to the results of the referendum held in January 2011, led 99 percent of South Sudanese to opt for secession. While the referendum made the preferences of South Sudanese available for all to see, there was no way of gauging the thoughts and opinions of the North Sudanese regarding the secession of the South. Who bears responsibility for the secession from the viewpoint of Sudanese public opinion? How does Sudanese public opinion see the future of relations between North and South in the period after secession? These questions need answers in order to explore the shape of Sudan after secession so that we can determine the key issues surrounding the future of the relations between the North and the South. Sudanese society has been marked by the features of a community with a composite identity. The logic of the modern state-building process has been characterized, in its very nature, by the tendency to create a common identity that represents the national content of citizenship in the state. This has raised problems in the relationship between the country’s development, on the one hand, and the various and intersecting ethnic groupings in Sudan, on the other. This is in addition to the problems associated with Sudan’s political and cultural identity since its independence on

¹ I would like to thank all of Dr. Al-Nur Hamad, Dr. Abdullah al-Bashir, Dr. Almughirah al-Sayyid from Sudan for their valuable comments on the paper, and their contributions in its development and their knowledgeable insights and suggestions on the specificities of Sudan. I would also like to thank Dr. Abdul Wahab al-Qassab, Dr. Wajih Kawtharani and Mr. Jamal Barout for their comments and suggestions on the initial version of this paper.

² The field study was conducted in Sudan as part of the Arab Public Opinion Index Project of the Public Opinion Program at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. The study was carried out on a stratified multistage probability sample cluster of 1,200 households in the six major provinces of Sudan, including 12 states and 39 districts distributed between rural and urban areas in accordance with the country’s population census in the year 2008. The sample included 226 face to face interviews in the province of Khartoum, 290 in the central province, 72 in the Northern Province, 173 in the Eastern province, 167 in the Kordofan province and 271 in the Darfur province. As a quality control measure, ten percent of the survey sample was re-interviewed. The margin of error in this study is about ± 2.4 percent.

January 1, 1956. Since independence, successive Sudanese governments have failed to build a modern state in which the fundamental unity of the country would be based on a common citizenship in which everyone enjoyed equality regardless of their ethnic, linguistic or cultural affiliation. Nor were these governments able to formulate a composite identity in which each group could see its particular identity as part of a collective Sudanese one. Poverty rates³ and economic and age dependency ratios have remained elevated because the country's gross domestic product GDP has failed to keep up with its high population growth which requires a GDP three times higher than what it has already achieved. These and other factors, prominent among which were low literacy rates and poor infrastructure, formed major challenges to the planning and development policies of Sudanese governments, and this in the context of a chronic and desperate war in the South that drained the country's resources and capabilities. The war also worked to militarize Sudanese society, engaging this society in a protracted and exhausting period marked by a sense of insecurity and political and social instability. Security and stability are the essential prerequisites for the success of development plans. Coinciding with these challenges were the emergence of armed insurrectionary movements in several other provinces of the country as reactions against ethnic and developmental discrimination. This further contributed to the political and developmental failures of the modern Sudanese state, eating away at the relative achievements of the modernization process in which Sudan, as with all other newly independent countries, had engaged after the end of colonialism. These factors contributed to the creation of local, regional and international political environments that were not just conducive to the secession of the South but also encouraged other regional rebellions as well, such as the one in Darfur.

Since these issues relate primarily to Sudanese individuals, their hopes, aspirations and visions for the society and the world around them, the perspectives and opinions of these individuals regarding the present and the future are the ones that need to be understood and made public in order to paint a picture of Sudanese public opinion in the post-secession period.

Sudan's Problem or the Problem of the Arabs?

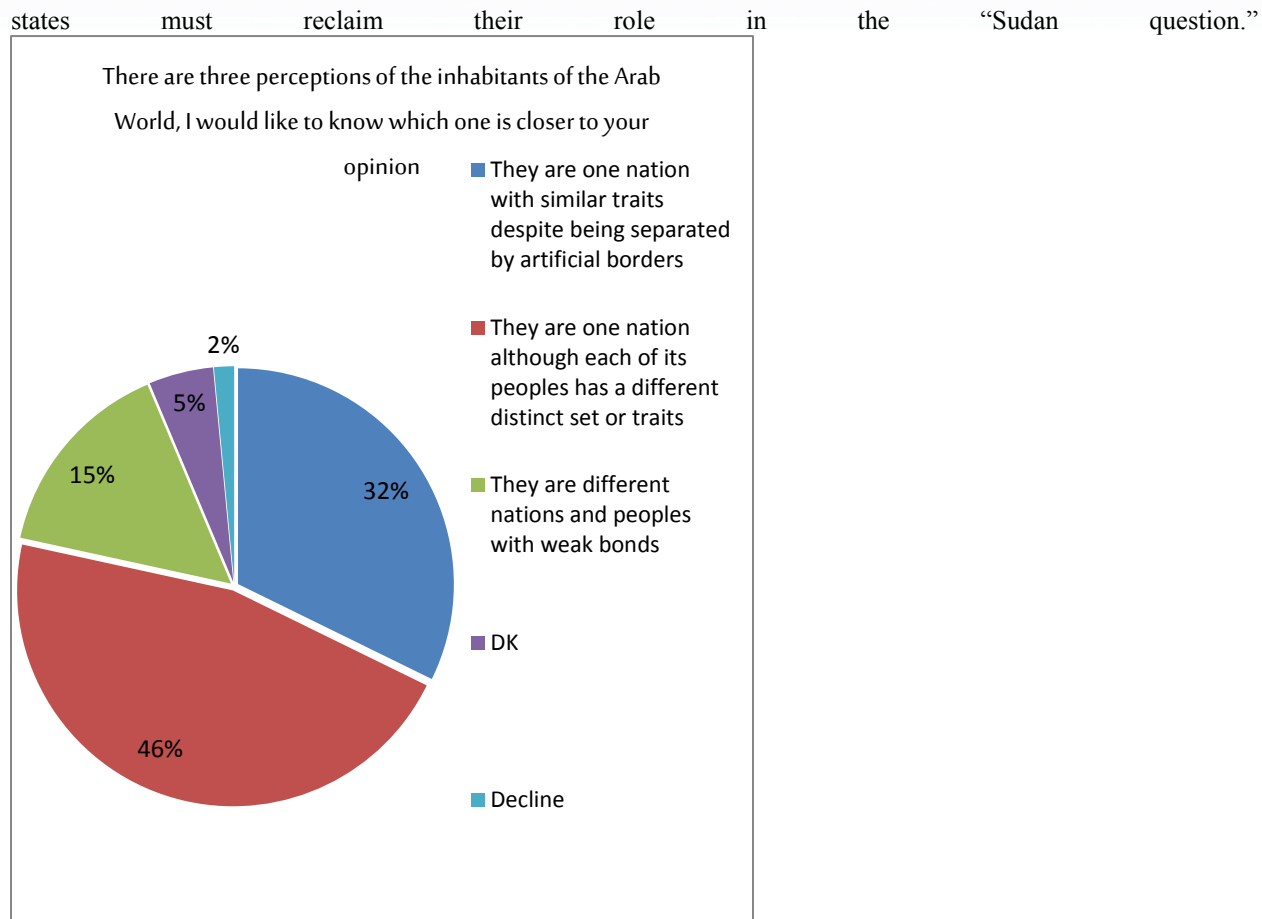
Attempts to deal with Sudan's multiple crises have been made at several local, regional and international levels. Sudan became a global issue, deemed a threat to international peace and security, eliciting United Nations involvement (under Security Council resolutions 1591 and 1593), and the intervention of the African Union due to the Sudanese government's insistence that the international forces sent to the country be African troops. The United States played a decisive part in the internationalization process as a result of Africa's new and increasingly important position in Washington's global strategy. This has enabled lobby groups in the U.S. – such as the fundamentalist Christian movement, which adopted the issue of South Sudan on religious grounds – to play a major role. The Arab League's Council of Foreign Ministers decided to launch peace negotiations on Darfur in a resolution adopted at its meeting in Cairo on September 9, 2008. The resolution called on Qatar to host these negotiations under the auspices of an Arab ministerial committee comprising Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and

³ See Shafie Khadr Said, "The Future of Sudan after the Secession" in this volume.

Syria, and headed by a tripartite committee composed of the Qatari prime minister (also the country's foreign minister), the secretary general of the Arab League, and the chairperson of the African Union Commission. This committee was entrusted with the task of arranging peace talks between the Sudanese government and the armed movements in Darfur. The goal was to reach a comprehensive peace agreement for the settlement of the crisis. On February 9, 2009, the Qatari capital witnessed the opening of the first round of Darfur peace talks with the participation of a large number of influential figures from both parties. The Sudanese government delegation was led by Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie, vice president of the Republic of Sudan, while the rebel Justice and Equality Movement delegation was headed by the organization's leader, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim. In spite of the number and diversity of those involved in these mediation efforts, these efforts were not considered "interference" or "internationalization." Rather, the mediation was conducted with the mutual consent of the government of Sudan and the Darfur movements, with mediation at the African level conducted through the African Union's Djibril Bassolé. The consensus was that a successful outcome of this mediation effort could only result from the mutual consent of the parties. In spite of all these efforts, the problem of Sudan was neither internationalized nor regionalized at an African or Arab level; nor was the problem "Sudanized" as perceived by North Sudanese public opinion. In spite of the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of Sudan, and the multiplicity of overlapping religious and national identities in the country, the majority (60 percent) of Sudanese believe that "the case of Sudan is a cause for all the Arabs and not an issue for the Sudanese alone." Conversely, in the eyes of 37 percent of those polled, "the Sudanese issue is the issue of the Sudanese alone, and it is up to them to work to solve it." This reveals implicit differences in the conceptions of identity and the state at the level of North Sudan.

The data also confirm the need for an expansion of the Arab role in Sudan, as Sudanese public opinion has formed a welcoming environment for this Arab presence. Increased and more effective Arab involvement in Sudan may lead to an increase in the proportion of Sudanese who believe the Sudanese cause is an Arab cause. Although there have been positive beginnings towards the development of a strategic relationship between Egypt and Sudan in the wake of the Egyptian Revolution,⁴ the regression that typified relations between the two countries over the past two decades has cast a shadow on Arab-Sudanese ties, particularly as a result of the "reshaping the Middle East" process and the creation of what has been called the "axis of moderation". To overcome this atrophy in Sudan's relations with its Arab surroundings, the Arab

⁴ Omar Hassan Ahmed Bashir, President of the Republic of Sudan, was the first Arab leader to visit Cairo after the revolution of January 25, 2011. Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf visited Khartoum in March 2011 and was accompanied by eight ministers. Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi also visited Khartoum at the beginning of June 2011, and there was an agreement that the two governments would exchange monthly visits. Sudan's Foreign Minister Ali Karti visited Cairo twice in a two month period.



One factor that enhances the potential success of an Arab reclamation of a role in the Sudan question is that Sudanese public opinion believes there is a common identity between Sudan and the Arab world. One third of the Sudanese people believe that the “Arabs are one nation with common attributes despite the nation’s separation by artificial borders.” Another 46 percent of the Sudanese believe that the Arabs are “one nation, comprising several peoples each of which are characterized by particular traits.” Thus, more than three-quarters of the Sudanese agree on the idea of Pan-Arabism as a collective identity, despite the presence of 15 percent of Sudanese who believe that the Arabs are “different nations and peoples connected by nothing more than weak ties.”

Sudanese public opinion’s position towards the idea of an “Arab host environment” is not confined to the defining of Sudan as having an Arab dimension; rather, it also extends to taking positions supporting practical measures that can transform this Arab dimension into a lived reality. Eighty percent of Sudanese support “the removal of all obstacles imposed on the travel of Arab citizens between Arab states,” and a similar proportion of Sudanese support “allowing Arab products and goods to move between the Arab countries without tariff and non-tariff barriers.” This includes the implicit suggestion that the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) be

expanded into an Arab customs union to pave the way for a comprehensive economic union. Nor is the favor of Sudanese public opinion limited to strong support for the free movement of people and goods among the Arab countries: indeed, some 77 percent of Sudanese support “the establishment of a joint Arab military force in addition to the existing national armies”, and 70 percent of Sudanese also support “the creation a unified Arab monetary regime that leads to a common Arab unit of currency”. With such strong popular support for Arabism, what have been noticeably absent are the practical measures that could transform these attitudes into action in response to the aspirations of the majority of Sudanese, those who consider their country’s wellbeing a cause for all Arabs and not for the Sudanese alone.

Determinants of Sudanese Public Opinion on the Issue of the South’s Secession

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (or CPA, also known as the Naivasha Agreement) of January 2005 not only ended the North-South civil war, but also codified respect for self-determination by placing the right to decide the future of Sudan in the hands of the South in terms of whether the country would remain united or see the South vote for secession and declare independence. Nonetheless, public opinion in the North of the country has been greatly affected by several factors as they pertain to calculations of support or opposition regarding the secession of the South. Several of these factors stand out, such as disputed border areas like Abyei,⁵ the distribution of common oil and water resources, and the impact of secession on other regions with popular movements calling for secession. In addition to this, the war between the North and the South created a state of total developmental, human and security exhaustion for both parties, prompting them to expedite the process of reaching a solution. However, all of these factors did not create the conditions for a confluence of positions among the publics of North and South; instead, they led to fundamental differences between them on the issue of secession.

These fundamental differences are strongly apparent insofar as the vast majority of Southerners (99 percent) voted in favor of secession, while 50 percent of Northerners expressed their opposition to secession in a study conducted as part of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies’ Arab Public Opinion Index program (February 2011), with 48 percent supporting it. This data means that Sudanese society in the North is almost equally divided on this issue. Perhaps the most important of the factors determining North Sudanese citizens’ position towards

⁵ The Abyei area is located in the state of West Kordofan, stretching from the northern border of the state of Bahr el Ghazal to latitude 11° 50’ north. The most important geographical feature in the region is Bahr al-Arab, which the Misseriya call al-Jurf (the Shelf), and the Ngok Dinka call Kiir River (the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka are the largest population groups in the area). The Abyei region is in the center of a belt of intertwined and overlapping areas extending for over 640 kilometers that starts at the southern end of Sudan’s western borders with Central Africa, passing through Kafir **Kanji**, North Awil, south of Abyei and Bentiu to the south of Malakal, and continuing to Sudan’s eastern borders with Ethiopia. The northern part of it runs from Sudan’s western border with Chad through Tlis, Bram, Kadugli, Klogi and Vamaka at Sudan’s eastern border with Ethiopia. This belt contains most of the current oil production (the Defra, Heglig, Bentiu and Odaril fields), and is known for its abundant rainfall, fertile soil and the diversity of its natural wealth. This area is also home to most of Sudan’s large agricultural projects and much of its best livestock. Furthermore, most of Sudan’s tribes overlap in this area. Source: Suleiman Mohammed Aldbelo, *Abyei from Chukudum to The Hague*, (Arabic), Vol. 1, (Khartoum: Khartoum Institute for Press and Publication, 2010), pp. 25, 26, 47.

the secession of the South is the relationship between the citizen in the North and the Sudanese state.

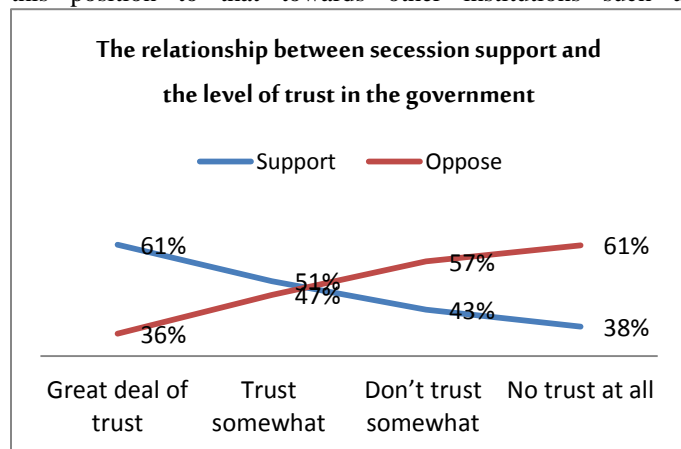
The Failure of the State and the Critical Citizen

An analysis of the relations among different variables reveals a general trend of public opinion in North Sudan to the effect that a citizen's perspective on the secession of the South is heavily influenced by his or her individual relationship with the state. This relationship is both evident and critical at the same time; the proportion of those opposing secession increases among those with lower assessments of the state's performance in the provision of basic services for which it is responsible and less confidence in the state's main institutions. A sharp increase in opposition to secession correlates with low evaluations of the economic situation in general, public school and public university education, the security situation, health services, roads, security and police, Parliament, the government and political parties, security and intelligence services and the state's ability to enforce the law without bias. It is clear that this view combines citizen's political rights with their social and economic rights, and assumes an active and interventionist role for the state in the development process in light of the fragility of economic structures, revenue generating resources and the acute conflict over these resources. In contrast to this relationship, the analysis of the data reveals that those who positively evaluated the performance of the state and its institutions are those most inclined to support secession. In the following paragraphs, we will examine examples of these relations.

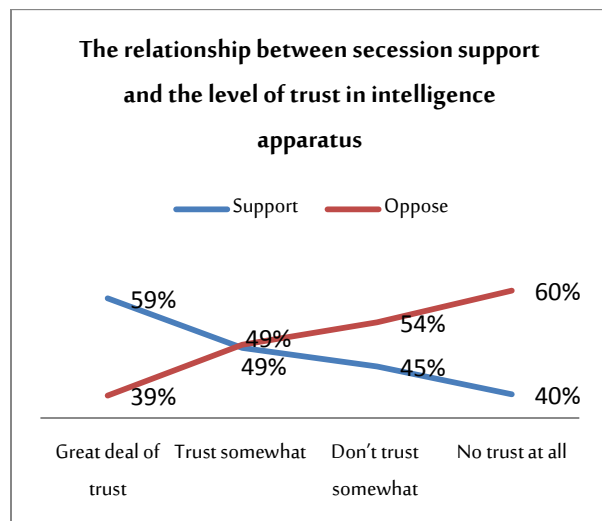
Secession and Confidence in Political and Security Institutions

Sudan's government is at the forefront of the political institutions bearing responsibility for the management of the South Sudan issue that ultimately led to the secession of the South and the introduction of new arenas of conflict over such matters as Abyei, water and natural resources. These conflicts surfaced even before the secession was officially recognized in July 2011. As such, the relationship between the extent of Sudanese citizens' confidence in their government on the one hand, and their position towards the partition of their country on the other, takes on added importance in light of the direct political responsibility that lies on the government's shoulders. The data shows that higher degrees of polarization in public opinion around the South's secession become apparent when compared with the degree of citizens' confidence in the Sudanese government. Attitudes rejecting secession exhibit a tendency to increase in correlation with the decrease in levels of trust in government: we find that 61 percent of those who "do not trust the government at all" also reject secession. As for those who have "great confidence" in the government, those among them who opposed secession were approximately 36 percent. Since the government is the institution with symbolic power and responsibility, it is only logical that the relationship between confidence in the government and one's position towards secession exhibits a correlation that is more pronounced than what we find in comparing

this position to that towards other institutions such as the security apparatuses and the Parliament.

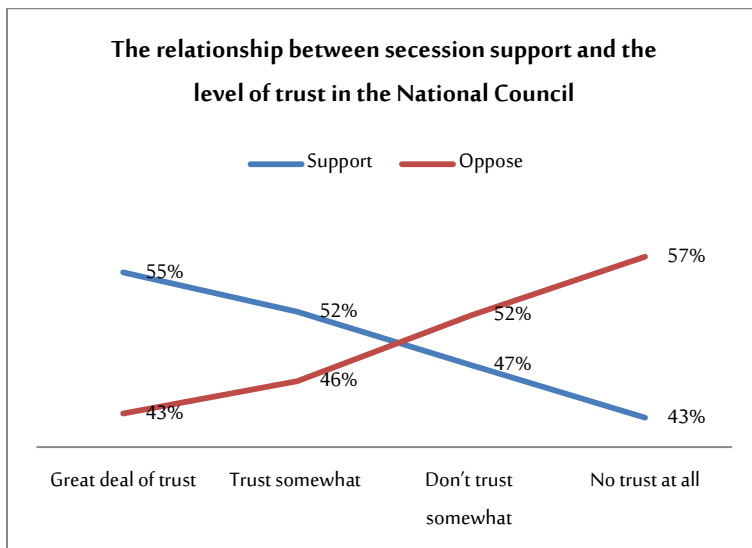
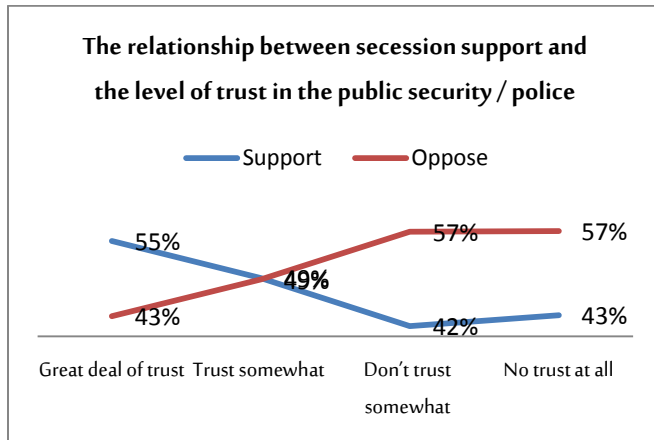


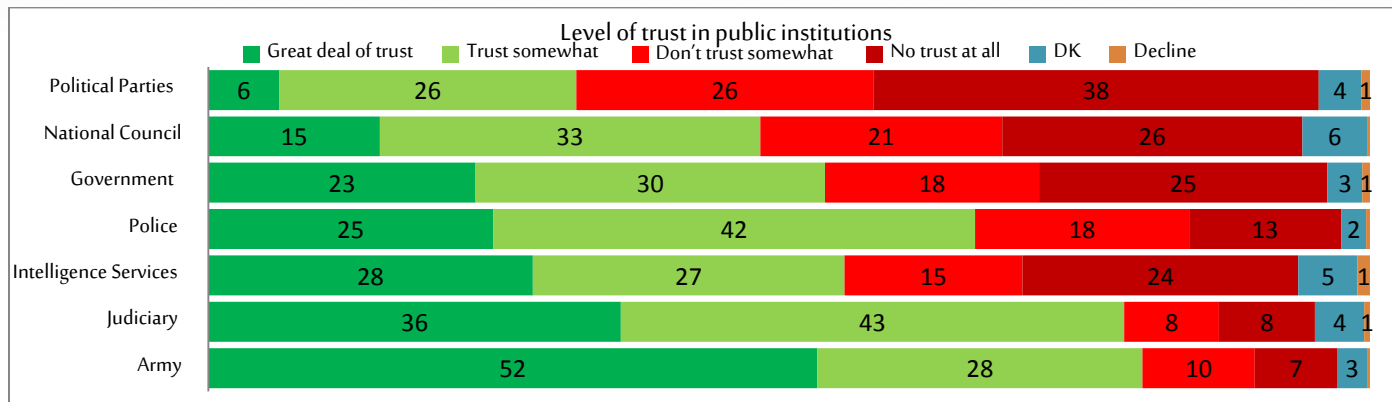
The correlations between views on secession and trust in various state apparatuses exhibit a confirmation of the pattern described above, even if the polarization in this case is of a lesser degree. In analyzing positions towards secession and their correlation with the degree of confidence in the intelligence services, the degree of polarization in the attitudes take a direction that is consistent with the correlation of lack of trust in the government and opposition to secession. The proportion of those opposing secession who stated that they completely distrusted the intelligence services was 60 percent, compared to the approximately 39 percent of secession supporters who have great confidence in the



intelligence apparatus. A comparison between degree of confidence in the General Security service and position towards secession exhibited a similar trend; those who “do not trust” the General Security service exhibit more opposition to secession than those who have some or great

confidence in it, while there is increasing correlation with support for secession the higher one's level of confidence in General Security.





We would expect that the correlation between the position towards secession and confidence in Sudan’s parliament, the National Assembly, to differ from the pattern of relationships described above, since this body is supposed to be representative of the entirety of the political spectrum. The pattern that we find, however, is consistent with the pattern in the type of relationship with other state institutions. This indicates that the National Assembly is no different from the rest of the governing regime’s institutions. Based on this data, it is clear that the representativeness of the institutions that should speak for citizens is in doubt among citizens themselves, regardless of how convinced the regime is of the efficacy of these bodies. Indeed, this trend of limited confidence extends not only to the National Assembly, but also to political parties, which in theory should be representative of society’s aspirations and enjoy public confidence. Indeed, the highest percentage (38 percent) said that they “absolutely do not trust” political parties. This clearly shows that people’s confidence in the “state” and its institutions, despite their perceived failure, is greater than the trust placed in representative institutions, including active political parties. This raises a more particular question: does one’s view of the ruling National Congress Party has any relation to one’s positions towards secession?

The National Congress Party and Secession

Before beginning an examination of the relationship between the popular position towards political parties and the position towards secession, it is necessary to identify the extent to which Sudanese parties generally represent the ideas and interests of Sudan’s citizens. Forty percent of Sudanese say that there is no political party that expresses their ideas and interests, while 31 percent say the National Congress Party is the one that expresses their interests and ideas, followed by the National Umma Party (5.1 percent), the Popular Congress Party (3.3 percent), and the Democratic Union (3.1 percent). The rest of the parties received even less. As such, the ruling National Congress Party takes precedence and we must therefore examine the relationship between the position towards this party on the one hand, and the position towards secession on the other.

Upon analysis, it becomes clear that one of the most prominent characteristic elements of this relationship is “suspicion”. The data indicates that 56 percent of respondents who said the National Congress Party is the party that “most expressed their ideas and interests” favor secession, while 42 percent of them were opposed. Furthermore, a majority (57 percent) of those

who said there is no political party in Sudan that expressed their ideas and interests reject secession, while only 41 percent of this group supported secession. In addition, a majority (57 percent) of the supporters of the Popular Congress Party were in favor of secession. A noteworthy relationship is at play here, as there is a striking similarity between the positions of National Congress supporters and those of the Popular Congress. Indeed, they are almost identical, and both parties have Islamic backgrounds. The two parties were in the same coalition at one point, before Hassan Turabi split the coalition to form the Popular Congress Party. We also find that most supporters of the National Umma Party (57 percent) and of the Democratic Union (54 percent) – both viewed traditional political parties – are opposed to the South’s secession. These views on secession can be understood in light of the parties’ intellectual formation and inclinations, as well as their political visions and the historical experiences accumulated by the parties in dealing with the issue of South Sudan. The National Umma Party’s connections with the South Sudanese population date back to the 1881 Mahdi Revolution, led by Imam Mohammed Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahdi (1884-1885). When the revolution broke out, the South Sudanese welcomed the Mahdi and supported his revolution against Turkish/Egyptian rule. The Dinka tribe, the largest of the South Sudanese tribes, feted the Mahdi as a religious personage to whom the tribe looked for leadership and guidance, incorporating him into its particular local religious traditions. The Mahdi came to be seen as a “holy spirit”, the son of Deng, the Great Spirit that sanctifies all members of the tribe.⁶

The Democratic Unionist Party’s intellectual formation centers around Sufi Islam. The Khatmiyya Sufi order is the main foundation upon which the party’s inception and leadership have been based, and the Khatmiyya order’s *Murshid* (guide and leader) in Sudan, Mohamed Osman Mirghani, is the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. The Democratic Unionist Party also enjoys the support of most Sufi orders in Sudan. Sufi Islam is marked by realism and pragmatism, traits that it shares with many African traditions and beliefs; it is thus more accepting of multiplicity and diversity.⁷ We can hence understand – even if only partially – the fact that a majority of this party’s supporters have expressed opposition to secession. One of the clearest instances in which Sufi influence in the country was weakened came with the onset of joint Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1898. From its inception, this joint regime worked to strengthen *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) scholars at the expense of the Sufi orders, thereby working to undermine and reduce the influence of Sufi leaders in Sudan.⁸ Thus, the fact that the Democratic Unionist Party’s intellectual structure and social background emerged out of Sufi Islam has, at the theoretical level, rendered the party more receptive and supportive of a cultural diversity that the

⁶ Francis Deng, *The Dynamics of Identity as the Basis for National Integration in Sudan*, translated by Muhammad Ali Jadin, Vol. 1, (Cairo: Center for Sudanese Studies, 1999), p. 38.

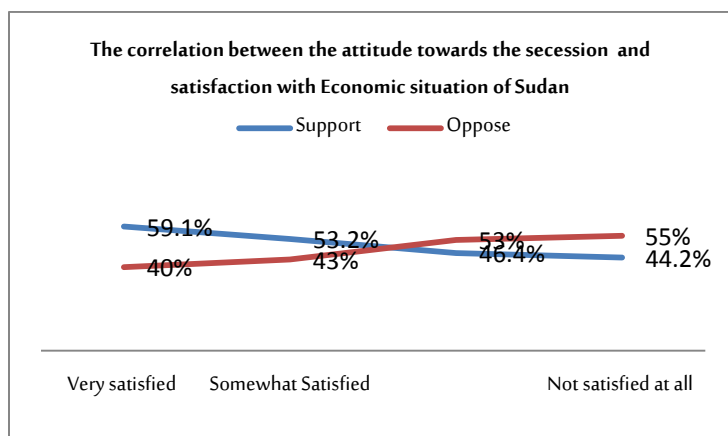
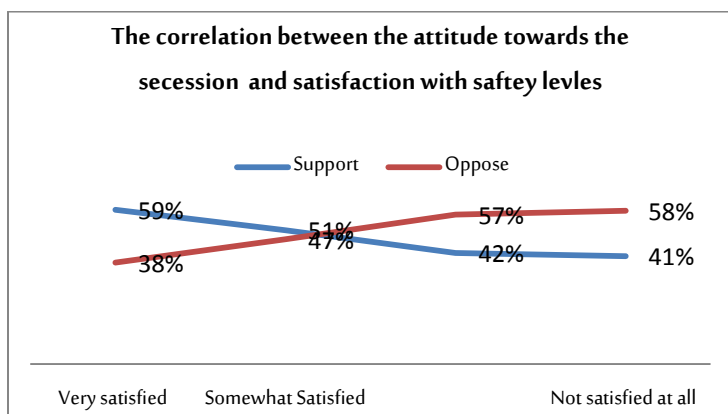
⁷ Many Sudanese researchers agree with the view of Professor Francis Deng on Sufi Islam. Deng states that “... Sufi Islam is realistic and pragmatic as are African traditions and beliefs. It is also more flexible in its acceptance of diversity in religious expression as compared with the official fundamental Islam that has worked to gradually weaken the leaders of Sufi orders in Sudan.” See: Francis Deng, *Conflicting Visions: The Struggle of Identities in Sudan*, translated by Hassan Awad, (Khartoum: Sudanese Studies Center, 1999), p. 60.

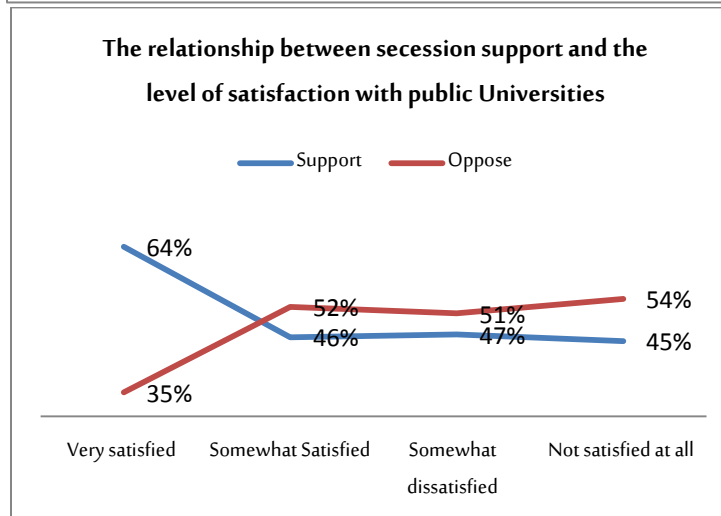
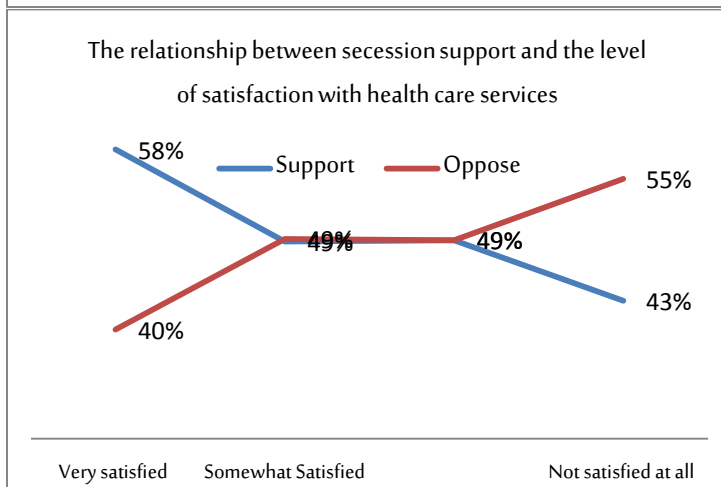
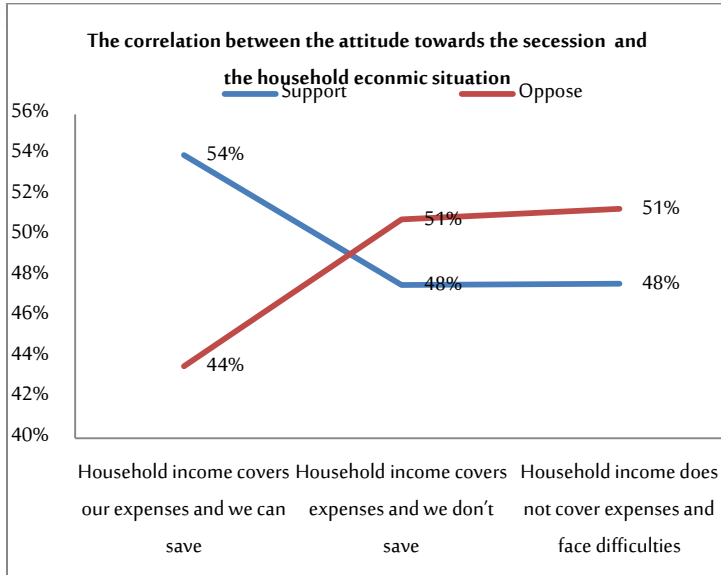
⁸ Mohammad Abulqasim Haj Hamad, *Sudan: The Historical Impasse and the Prospects for the Future, A Dialectical Synthesis*, (Arabic), Vol. 1, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1996), pp. 98-99.

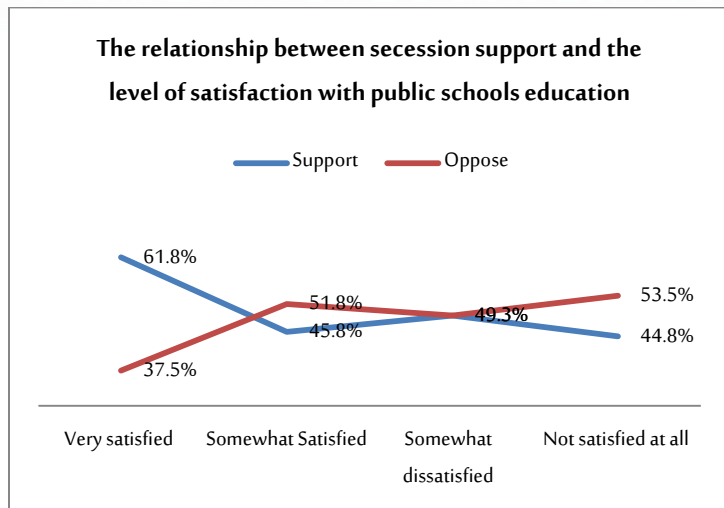
party is passionate about enriching. At the practical level, the party has adopted political positions that have demonstrated its seriousness in the quest to resolve the issue of South Sudan within the framework of a unified Sudan. One of the clearest of these political positions was the peace agreement known as the Mirghani-Garang Accord of 1988.

Safety, the Economy and Secession

We would expect to find a close relationship between how satisfied people are with security in their communities and with the economic situation in the country – major pillars in the framework of overall stability – on the one hand, and people’s attitudes towards secession on the other. Presumably, this relationship should be an inverse one, that is that the higher the levels of satisfaction with safety and the economy, the lower the relative number of those supporting secession and the higher the relative number of people opposing secession. The logical foundations of this relationship assume that people’s desire for safety and higher living standards conflicts with the separatist tendencies that usually lead to tensions, security instability and a decline in economic performance.







In analyzing the relationship between safety and one’s position towards secession, it becomes clear that the relative number of those opposing the South’s secession **increases** in proportion to the rate of those who are “not satisfied” with the level of safety in Sudan. In parallel, the proportion of those supporting secession is lower the higher the rates of those expressing dissatisfaction with the level of safety. The percentage of those expressing opposition to secession among those who stated that they are “completely not satisfied” about the level of safety is 58 percent, while the percentage of those opposing secession among those who stated that they were “very satisfied” was 38 percent.

Turning to the issue of macroeconomics, we find a similar pattern. When analyzing the relationship between the degree of satisfaction with the economy in Sudan and the position towards secession, it becomes clear that the relative number of those opposing the South’s secession **increases** in proportion to the rate of those who are “not satisfied” with the level of Sudan’s general economic performance. In parallel, the proportion of those supporting secession is lower the higher the rates of those expressing dissatisfaction with the country’s economy in general. The percentage of those expressing opposition to secession among respondents who stated that they are “completely not satisfied” with the country’s economic situation is 55 percent, while the percentage of those opposing secession among those who stated that they were “very satisfied” with the economic situation was 40 percent.

Is the relationship different when we move from Sudan’s macroeconomic situation to its microeconomic one? Here we would expect a repetition in the pattern discovered between positions on secession and evaluations of the country’s macroeconomic situation when comparing the attitude towards secession and evaluations of the smaller units of the microeconomic picture – namely family income, which is ultimately linked to macroeconomic determinants. Changes at the microeconomic level reflect the effects of macroeconomic imbalances (exchange rate stability, inflation, etc.) at the household level, its lifestyle, and the indicators of its human development (health, income, education). The analysis of the data shows that the relation is steady at both the microeconomic and the macroeconomic levels. Those who

opposed secession formed the highest proportion of families (51 percent) indicating that their income “does not cover the family’s expenses for their needs and the family faces difficulties in covering these expenses,” while the families with the highest rates in favor of secession were those indicating that their income “covers the expenses for their needs with enough to put some of the income away as savings,” 54 percent of whom support secession.

Given that the state plays the most prominent role in the provision of basic social services such as health, education and higher education (which are the most important areas in terms of human development), popular assessments as to the state’s performance in these sectors provides a strong indication of the relationship between citizens’ perceptions of the state and its role on the one hand, and how that relates to citizens’ positions towards secession on the other. The data indicates that 55 percent of those “not satisfied at all” regarding the level of health services oppose secession, while 43 percent support it. To shed more light on this relationship and confirm its verity, we should compare these results with those who stated that they were “very satisfied” with the state’s provision of health services. It turns out that 58 percent of the citizens who expressed a high level of satisfaction with health services are in favor of secession, while 40 percent oppose it.

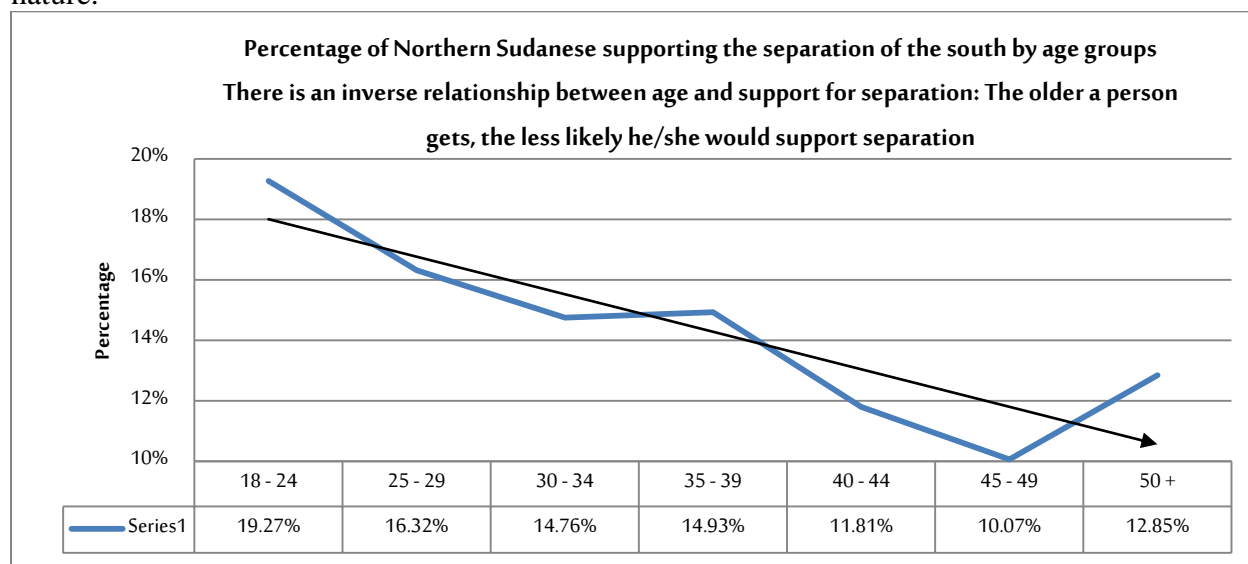
The correlations between citizens’ attitudes towards secession and their level of satisfaction with the state’s provision of primary, secondary and university education does not differ from that between attitudes towards secession and levels of satisfaction with state health services. The data confirms that those “not satisfied at all” about the state’s performance with regard to education are more opposed to secession; the percentage of those opposing secession among the group “not satisfied at all” with the level of education in public schools is 54 percent, and the same ratio indicated that they are “not satisfied at all” with the level of higher education. We find a continuation of the same pattern of correlations between positions towards secession and those “not satisfied at all” about the quality of public roads.

The analysis of the correlations outlined above confirms the logical expectation that the link between the basics of life (safety and decent living standards) and the factors that destabilize it is an inverse relationship. However, this logic does not provide a complete explanation for the positions of all Sudanese towards secession. We find that high proportions of the Sudanese people who enjoy good economic conditions relative to their compatriots are those most in favor of secession, a phenomenon that has its own explanations. Perhaps the most prominent of these reasons is the connection that generally exists between those in a better economic situation and the state’s institutions, as well as its contracts; thus this group provides more support for the political system that is responsible for its economic advantage, the same system that is responsible for the secession of the South. Due to the small size of the Sudanese economy’s private sector, Sudanese who are worse off economically are the most opposed to secession because it could undermine whatever modest economic stability and security the country currently enjoys.

Effects of Age and Education Level

Opinions vary as to the relationships between an individual’s age and his or her attitudes towards various issues, whether these pertain to the conditions of one’s daily life or political matters that affect them. The issue of the secession of the South is perhaps the one that has had the most

impact on Sudanese citizens during the first half of 2011. Furthermore, the position towards secession is linked to conditions associated with it; it is also affected by the experiences of individuals, especially in an environment of war, poverty, economic vulnerability and the erosion of resources, as is the case of Sudan. It is interesting to note here that there is an inverse relationship between age and support for the South’s secession. The data highlight the general trend that the older an individual gets, the less their support for secession in spite of the slight exception (one that does not affect the general trend) of those aged 50 years or more. It is clear that people in the 18-24 age group are most in favor of the secession. This is due to several reasons, including the fact that the lives of Sudanese youth have been disrupted because of the war in the South, and that those killed in the conflict have been mostly young soldiers brought in by compulsory military service. Furthermore, by virtue of the sensitivity of their age group, young people are the most susceptible and responsive to the discourse of incitement when it is coated with high nationalist, Islamic or other religious values during periods in which their societies are undergoing major upheavals or processes of social change. The 18-24 year age group is one that was born or grew up during the rule of the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation (1989-1993) and the National Congress Party, and is therefore the group most affected by discourses aimed at mobilization and incitement in schools and in the Sudanese media. In the war declared by the Council against the South near the beginning of the 1990s, youth have been rallied to its cause through the use of slogans that took on a decidedly religious nature.



The data also indicates that the majority (54 percent) of those with higher education (i.e., post-secondary education) oppose secession, while 45 percent support it. It is clear that these two formative factors – namely age and education level – strongly affect attitudes towards. Perhaps they also have a role in Sudanese assessments of the impact of secession on the North, whether this impact is negative or positive.

On another level of analysis, the data shows that the proportion of those opposing the secession of the South is higher in urban areas (with populations over 5,000 people) with 54 percent of the urban population opposed, while 44 percent in favor. In rural areas, the proportion of secession supporters stood at 51 percent, with 47 percent opposed. This data confirms that the tendency to prefer stability and economic security is an essential factor in determining the position towards secession, and is more pronounced in urban areas than it is in rural areas.

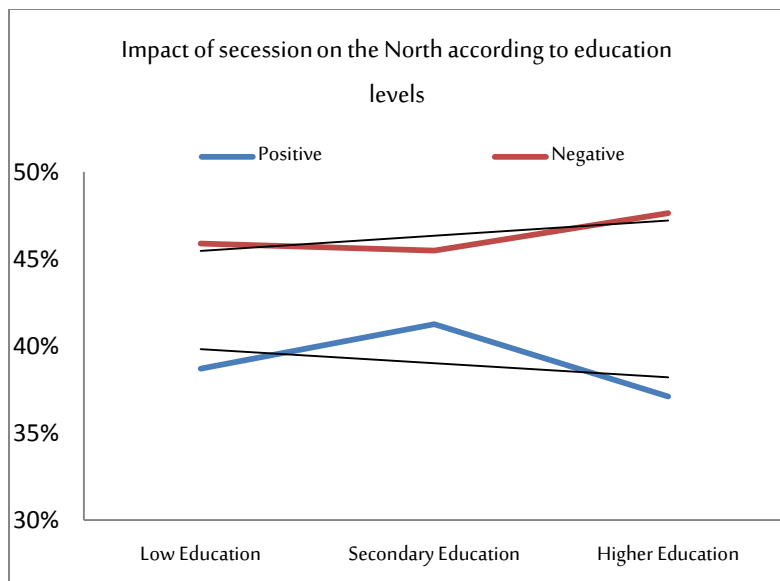
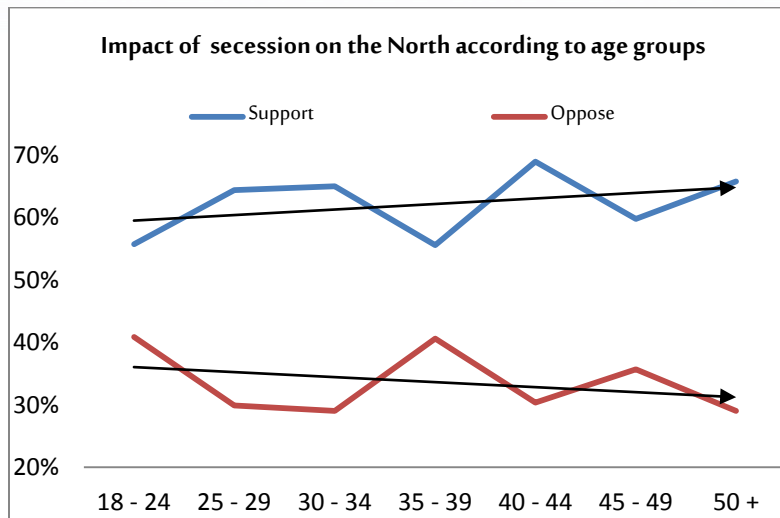
Urban	Rural	
44	51	Supporting secession
54	47	Opposed to secession
2	2	No opinion
100	100	Total%

The Impact of Secession on the North

Just as Sudanese citizens are divided over secession, they also are divided in their assessment of the impact of secession on North Sudan. Forty seven percent of Northerners consider that the secession will have a negative impact on the North. The two main aspects of the perceived negative impact are the foreseen effect on the economy and the strengthening of separatist tendencies in other parts of the country. Secession is expected to lead to the loss of oil revenues, which have financed the bulk of Sudan’s national budget and its foreign currency assets. Oil also forms the largest portion of the country’s gross domestic product. Furthermore, the secession may lead to the promotion and fostering of secessionist ideas in the other regions. On the other hand, we find that 39 percent of North Sudanese believe the secession will have a positive impact on the North, while about 10 percent predict neither a positive nor a negative effect. About three-quarters of those opposing the secession consider it as having a negative impact on North Sudan, while 13 percent predict that the impact will be positive. Conversely, 67 percent of supporters of the secession consider its impact as being positive on the North, while 19 think its effect will be negative. The data show that Sudanese citizen’s decisions to support or oppose secession are largely devoid of exaggeration and hyperbole in their attitudes, pointing to the existence of an effective mass within the citizenry, even if it is not a majority, that can affect the course of events in the event that the possibility of a union between North and South is raised in the future.

Percent of North Sudanese supporting and opposing secession according to their assessment of the impact of the South’s secession upon the North

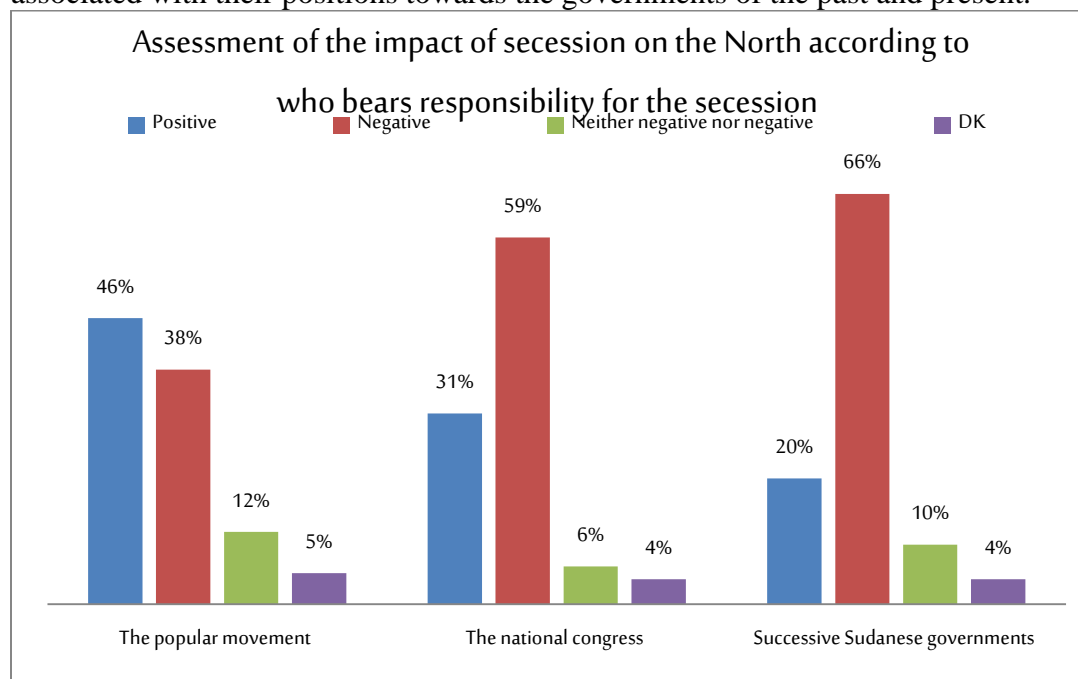
The impact of secession	% support	% oppose
Positive impact	67	13
Negative impact	19	75
Neither negative nor positive	11	8
No opinion	3	4
Total	100	100



Consistent with the results established above – i.e., that the older an individual is, the less inclined he or she is to support the secession of the South – we find that the relationship between age and assessments of the impact of secession on the North follows a similar trend, but from a different angle. The analysis shows that in the relationship between a citizen’s age and their assessment of the secession’s impact, the general trend is that the higher the age of a North Sudanese, the more likely he or she is to believe that the secession will have a negative impact on the future of the North. In parallel with this trend, but less clearly, the greater the age of Sudanese citizens in general, the less likely they are to expect the impact of secession on the North to be positive.

In the same way that the variable of age was consistent in its correlation with citizens' assessments of the impact of the South's secession on the North, the data also shows that a similarly clear consistency exists in the correlation with the education level variable. The data indicate that the probability of a Sudanese citizen's assessing the impact of the South's secession on the North as positive decreases as the citizen's level of education rises. This shows that education creates an appreciation for the country's unity and complementary integration, entrenching these values among the citizenry. Furthermore, citizens' assessments that secession will probably have an impact on the North increases as the level of education rises. This is the general trend among Sudanese citizens despite the slightness of the differences among people in different education level brackets as to their assessments of the impact of the South's secession on the North. The general trend, however, is consistent. This analysis confirms what we found elsewhere in this paper; that a higher level of education is more of a unifying factor than one that encourages the country's partition. The higher a Northern citizen's levels of education and age, the less likely he or she is to support secession, and to consider secession as having a negative impact on the North.

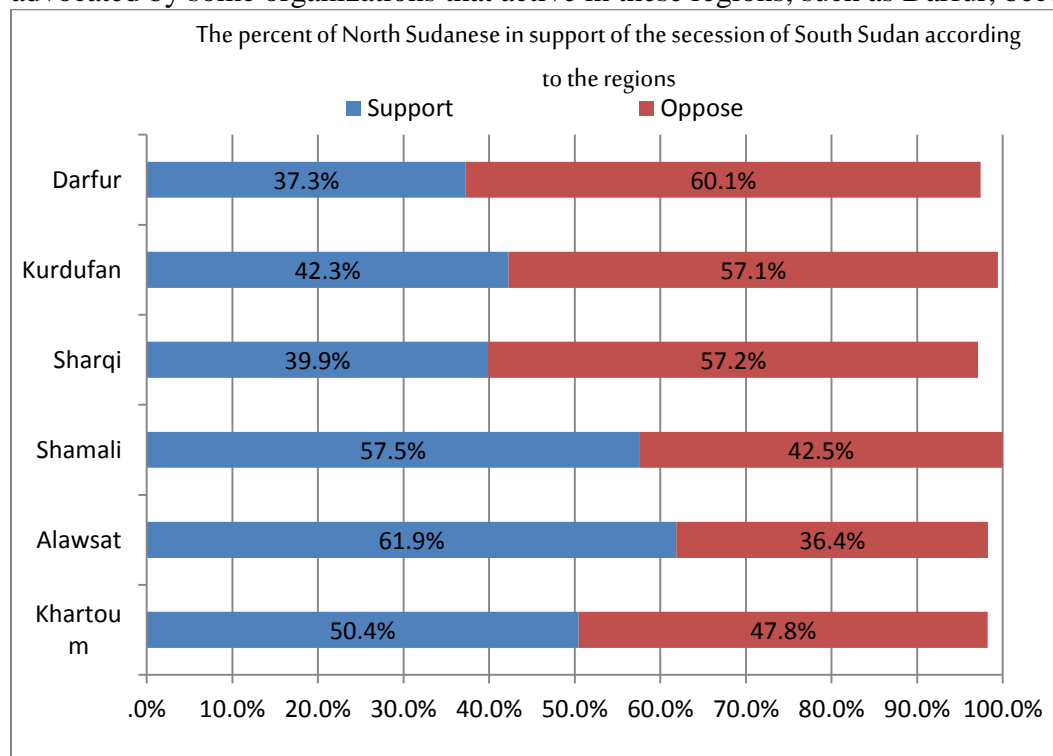
When we add the variable of responsibility into the field of analysis, we find that about two-thirds of those who see the successive Sudanese governments as the ones responsible for the secession also see that this secession will have a negative impact on the North. Among those who hold the ruling National Congress Party responsible for the secession, 59 percent consider that the impact of the secession on the North will be negative. Among those who hold the **Sudan** People's Liberation Movement responsible, 38 percent see that the impact of secession will be negative on the North. The data indicates that the assessments of Sudanese citizens regarding their position towards secession and its consequences are directly and largely associated with their positions towards the governments of the past and present.



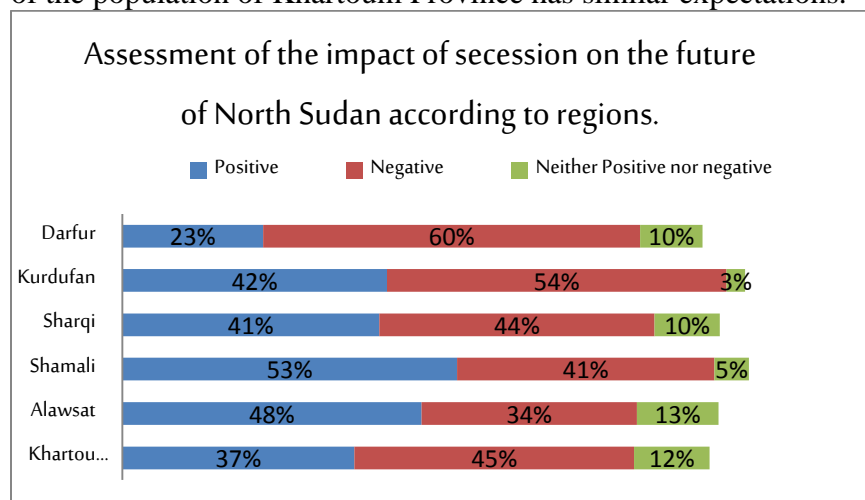
In assessing the secession’s role in encouraging other regions’ separatist movements, we find that 60 percent of those who expect that “secession will encourage separatism in other regions” also believe that the impact of the South’s secession on the North will be negative. This position of the majority of citizens in North Sudan indicates that there exists an actual fear that the South’s secession will have a snowball effect that will engulf the country’s other troubled regions, raising the intensity of separatist movements despite majorities in these regions opposing secession. It is notable that the tumult in these regions arises from distortions in the development process and these regions’ marginal status within this process rather than from a vertical social stratification, as is the case between the North and the South. It thus appears that Sudanese public opinion is passing through a process of sharp polarization regarding the secession of the South, a process that is unlikely to stabilize and unite around a clear shared opinion before the dust on the secession process settles and the resulting relations between South and North become clear, whether they are complementary relations or otherwise.

Geography and Positions towards Secession

Majorities in three out of Sudan’s six provinces (Khartoum, Central and Northern) support the secession, while majorities in the other three provinces (Darfur, Kordofan and Eastern) oppose it. It is interesting to note that the provinces in which majorities oppose the secession of the South are those experiencing varying degrees of turmoil and instability. Perhaps the position of the majority of these regions’ inhabitants reflects their fears of a future in which the secession advocated by some organizations that active in these regions, such as Darfur, becomes reality.



In terms of assessments of the potential impact of the South’s secession on the North, the results do not vary significantly by region. It seems that the provinces where majorities oppose the secession (Darfur, Kordofan and Eastern) are the ones in which a majority of the population expect the South’s secession to have a negative effect on the future of North Sudan. The data shows that 60 percent of the population of Darfur, 54 percent in Kordofan and 44 in Eastern Province expect the South’s secession to have a negative impact on the North. Forty five percent of the population of Khartoum Province has similar expectations.



It is notable here that the so-called marginalized regions – namely Kordofan, Darfur and the Eastern Province, regions that are characterized by the presence of communities that do not self-identify as Arab – are the regions that see secession as having a negative impact, while the citizens of the Northern and Central provinces – those that do consider themselves to be Arab regions – see the South’s secession as having a potentially positive impact on the North. Also noteworthy is that a majority in the province of Khartoum believes that the impact of the secession will be negative on the North, despite the fact that Khartoum lies between the Northern and Central provinces. Perhaps the reason for this is that Khartoum’s population is diverse and composed of several ethnic and tribal communities from all regions of Sudan, forming the destination point for the country’s very high volume of internal migration, rendering Khartoum society more complex. Furthermore, the poverty belt surrounding the city of Khartoum includes the bulk of the people who have internally migrated from the most marginalized regions, particularly Kordofan and Darfur. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that points of view in Khartoum are similar to those of the populations of Kordofan and Darfur.

Dangers of Secession

The secession of the South has raised a great deal of speculation about the ways in which the process might operate as a precedent, an example that might be followed by other regions of Sudan with separatist tendencies or problems with the central government in Khartoum. The

secession has strengthened the motives of some separatist organizations, such as the rebel groups in Darfur, as these movements have now broadened their demands and now perceive that their bargaining power vis à vis the central government has been enhanced. Some movements in the regions, such as those in Darfur, South Kordofan and Eastern Sudan, have initiated demands for a degree of autonomy and even separation. These movements have not strayed too far from the expectations of public opinion in North Sudan, the majority (58 percent) of which sees that the South's secession will encourage other provinces to demand secession. Disagreeing with this majority are approximately 37 percent of North Sudanese. If we look at the positions of the supporters and opponents of secession, we find that 72 percent of the opponents say it will encourage other regions to follow in the same direction. Among the secession's supporters, 44 percent see it as having this effect on other regions. This data indicates that the fears that are widespread among Sudanese public opinion seem more obvious to the opponents of secession. But the question is: how can one explain the position of 44 percent of secession supporters who see the move as encouraging other regions to follow in the South's footsteps? Are these people living in a state of denial? Or perhaps it is because the National Congress Party has substantial popularity compared to the other parties, and it was the one that led the way to the referendum on the fate of the South.

Another factor that could help in understanding this issue is that those who support secession in spite of their view that it will lead other regions to demand separation may be among the current that believes in what is known in Sudan as the "Hamdi Triangle" – a triangle that includes only Central and North Sudan. This option was promoted by the prominent Islamic leader Dr. Abdul-Rahim Hamdi, a former finance minister. Indeed, the Sudanese government has demonstrated its practical acceptance of the "Hamdi Triangle" option as a last resort by concentrating development efforts on the Northern region. In other words, and as stated by the Sudanese government's official organ: yes, the secession of the South will lead to the secession of other territories, but let them all go and let us keep only the "Hamdi Triangle" as it is (as they claim) the only homogeneous entity.⁹

A Secure State in the South

In the period leading up to the referendum, several important questions were raised about the ability of the South, in the event of its secession, to build a state with a stable security situation and a prosperous economy. The controversy continued in the post-referendum period when signs of instability began to emerge with the military skirmishes that took place in the Abyei area, which has become a source of ongoing tension in the relations between North and South. This tension has elicited Western criticism of the North and sympathy with the nascent state of the South. Instability in Abyei does not occur in isolation from what is happening in Sudanese public opinion in general, and it is affected by the extent of the South's stability. The instability in the security situation in the South is an obsession that worries the state in the North and other regions, as well as the population in the North. Around 48 percent of Northerners expect that secession will not lead to the establishment of a stable and secure state in the South, while 45

⁹ We have benefitted from the observations of Dr. Al-Nur Hamad for suggesting this interpretation.

percent have the opposite opinion. This division in Sudanese public opinion reflects the anxiety about the future that is felt by around half of the Sudanese population. The comparison between supporters and opponents of secession in terms of their expectations for the stability of South Sudan indicates that the proportion of supporters of secession who believe that the secession will not lead to the stability of South Sudan is 50 percent, compared to 41 percent of secession supporters who believe that it will lead to stability.

When we compare this with North Sudanese expectations for the economic future of the South, Sudanese public opinion seems to be more confident in the South’s economic future than in its security and stability. Seventy one percent of Northerners expect that “the secession will lead to a flourishing of economic conditions in the South more so than in the North,” while 25 percent hold the opposite view. It thus seems that the majority of North Sudanese, whether they are supporters or opponents of the secession, are optimistic regarding the economic future of the South. Among supporters of secession, 74 percent believe the South’s economic future will be more prosperous than the North’s, while around 69 percent of the opponents of secession hold the same view. It seems that in people’s minds, economic prosperity is linked to the presence of oil. Perhaps the experience of the Gulf Arab states has entrenched this concept in the minds of Arabs in non-oil countries. As far as such thinking is concerned, so long as the South has the greatest share of the oil, it necessarily has the possibility for economic prosperity. Such keys to economic prosperity, however, must be supplemented by political and security stability as well as reduced corruption. Nigeria, for example, has been exporting oil for more than four decades, but without economic prosperity. This perhaps also applies to Yemen and Iraq after the occupation as well as Libya.

A Future Union?

The political environment in which Sudanese public opinion towards the South was formed was not an ordinary one, having been characterized by polarization, armed violence, foreign interference and pressures stemming from social problems. This, however, has not made Sudanese public opinion tend towards exaggeration or excess in the wake of the South’s secession. This demonstrates the rationality of the positions taken by Sudanese public opinion, whereby 62 percent of the Northerners are in favor of “a future union between the state of the South and the state of the North,” as opposed to 34 percent who oppose such a union. We find that 80 percent of those who opposed secession are in favor of a union between North and South. The proportion of those who supported the secession who also want a future union was around 45 percent. At its core, the union is a question of integration around common interests.

Proportion of Northerners supporting and opposing secession according to their support and opposition to reunification in the future

Unification	Secession		
	Support	Oppose	
Support Unification	45	80	
Oppose Unification	52	17	
No opinion	2	2	
Total%	100	100	

In spite of the differences between the various main political parties in Sudan (the National Congress Party, the Democratic Union Party, the National Umma Party and the Popular Congress Party) towards the issue of secession, and the deployment of secession as an issue for competition and bickering among parties and other political currents, the majority of those supporting the secession are in favor of a union between North and South in the future. It is also interesting to note that the majority of those who do not see the political parties as representing their ideas and interests are also in favor of a union in the future. It is not surprising that among political party supporters, the lowest rate of support for a future union is among those who see the National Congress Party as expressing their ideas and interests (58 percent) compared to about 65 percent of Democratic Union Party supporters, 64 percent of National Umma Party supporters and 60 percent of Popular Congress Party supporters.

Position towards future unification	Which of the existing political parties or trends best expresses your ideas and your interests?				
	None of the parties	National Congress Party	Democratic Union Party	National Umma Party	Popular Congress Party
Support	65	58	65	64	60
Oppose	31	39	30	33	38
No Opinion	4	3	5	3	2
Total %	100	100	100	100	100

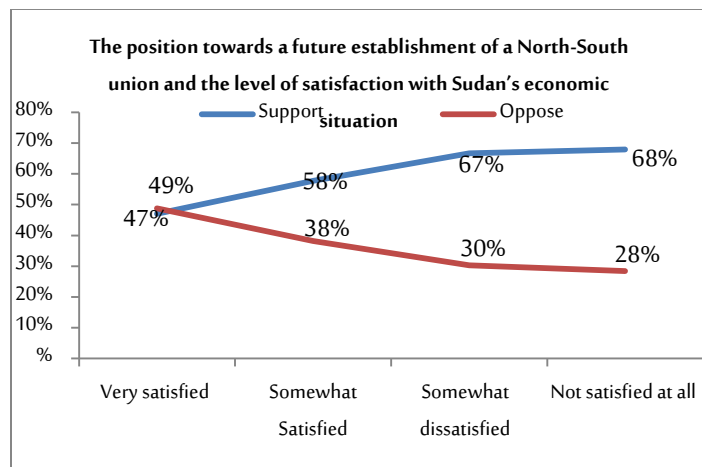
It seems clear that the majority (56 percent) of the opponents of a future North-South union are those who expect secession to have a positive impact on North Sudan. On the other hand, we find that the majority (57 percent) of the supporters of a union expect the secession to have a negative impact on North Sudan. Here we find that the respondents are largely realistic in their linking of the union between North and South with the expected impact of secession on the North.

Northerners’ assessment of the impact of secession according to the position towards a future union between the states of the North and South

Assessment of Secession’s impact	Future Union?	
	Support Union	Oppose Union
Positive	30	56
Negative	57	30
No Opinion	13	14
Total %	100	100

Consistent with the logic of maturity with age, we find that the relationship between age and one’s position towards a North-South union is one of direct correlation for supporters and of inverse correlation among opponents. This means that the general trend, despite some

differences, is that the older the person is, the more likely they are to favor a union, and that the older the person is, the lower the intensity of their opposition to the establishment of such a union in the future. The data shows, for example, that 66 percent of those aged 50 years and older support the establishment of a union in the future, with 29 percent of this age group opposed. Among the 18-24 age group, 56 percent support the establishment of a union in the future and 41 percent oppose it.



The clearest positions are those set against the backdrop of people’s economic perceptions, in which a very clear relationship is evident between people’s assessments of Sudan’s economic situation and their desire for the establishment of a North-South union in the future. The percentage of those who support the establishment of a union **increases** in proportion to the rate of those who are unhappy with Sudan’s economic situation. The percentage of those opposing a future union rises in proportion to the rate of those satisfied with Sudan’s economic situation. Those who are satisfied with the country’s economic performance are mostly those for whom the governing regime established a system of preferential treatment: members of the popular committees affiliated with the National Congress Party and the original membership of the Islamist groups that form the hard core of that Party are the ones with more opportunities for higher income through various mechanisms such as the facilitation of bank loans, the securing of commercial licenses, and inroads for the acquisition of land.¹⁰ The data highlights, for example, that 68 percent of those who are “totally unsatisfied” with the economic conditions in Sudan support a union, compared to 28 percent who oppose it. Among those who are very satisfied with the economic conditions in the country, there is an almost even split between those who support a union (47 percent) and its opponents (49 percent).

Conclusion

The opinions of the people of North Sudan regarding self-determination for the South were absent because they were not consulted on the decision or included in the referendum on

¹⁰ We have benefitted from the observations of Dr. Al-Nur Hamad for suggesting this interpretation.

secession. Analyses based on analysts' impressions and ideological inclinations were the most prevalent in terms of approaching an understanding of North Sudanese citizens' opinions on the secession. From this perspective, this study provides a qualitative addition, based as it is on a field survey of views held in the North, thereby filling the gap in our knowledge on the subject, which continues to drive people to take differing positions on a series of issues related to the secession. The study showed that the majority of North Sudanese see Sudan's problem as an Arab problem more than they see it as a solely Sudanese one. On this basis, the Arab role in solving Sudan's problems is seen as welcome despite its absence in the period before the secession. This environment views the Arabs as a nation to a greater degree than it sees them as a variety of incompatible peoples. The study showed that the North Sudanese are divided almost equally between supporters (48 percent) and opponents (50 percent) regarding the secession of the South.

This study revealed that basically, citizens' positions towards secession are directly related to their positions towards the effectiveness of the Sudanese state and their confidence in this state and its various institutions. The study showed that the lower the citizens' assessment of the performance of the state and the lower their general confidence in its institutions, the more inclined they were to oppose the South's secession. Perhaps the best example of this trend is that the majority of those who do not trust the government at all opposed secession. This highlights the notion of the critical citizen, one who bases his or her position on the variables of the state's performance more than any other information.

The study also showed that the positions towards secession of those citizens who support the Sudanese political parties are related to the social and ideological backgrounds of these parties. Indeed, majorities of the supporters of the Islamic-oriented political parties support the secession, particularly the supporters of the ruling National Congress Party and the Popular Congress Party, while majorities of independents and supporters of the other parties, such as the National Umma Party and the Democratic Union, opposed the South's secession.

The study concluded that the determinants of Sudanese public opinion towards the South's secession go beyond geographical factors and are associated with a number of social and political factors. Geographically, the study found that the majority of the inhabitants of the regions that share borders with the South, or that have been subject to turmoil like the South, opposed the secession and – generally speaking – felt that its impact on the North would be negative. It also showed that the older the citizen, the less likely he or she was to support secession. Citizens with higher levels of education were found to show less support for secession as well. In terms of political responsibility, the study revealed that the majority of those who hold the successive Sudanese governments and the ruling National Congress Party responsible for the secession of the South expect the secession to have a negative impact on North Sudan. Despite this, we found that the majority of the supporters of Sudan's larger political parties, as well as independents, support the establishment of a future union between North and South, with the least enthusiasm coming from the supporters of the National Congress Party.

In conclusion, Sudanese public opinion in the North of the country is divided on the issue of secession, and sees the Arabs as the natural host environment for Sudan and its problems. We also have found that the citizens opposing secession are those with higher levels of education, more maturity in terms of age, and more critical views of the state and its performance. Despite

the sharp differences as to secession and its impact on both the North and the South, the majority of North Sudanese – regardless of their views, their social and economic standing and their geographical distribution – are in favor of the future establishment of a union between North and South.