



CODESRIA



CODESRIA

13

èmè

**Assemblée générale
General Assembly
Assembleia Geral
الجمع العام الثالث عشر**

**L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين**

**Sudan at another Turning Point;
Federalism and the New Constitution:
The Challenge of Diversity and the Need
for Genuine Participatory Democracy**

**Khalid Ali El Amin
University of Khartoum**

5 - 9 / 12 / 2011

Rabat Maroc / Morocco

Abstract

Drawing on the literature on national and sub-national government levels relations (decentralization and federalism), plus that on African and other countries' experiences, this paper intends to examine Sudan's current federal system, initially, with the following main queries in mind; i) the extent to which the federal structure that has pursued in Sudan since the 1990s allows for the accommodation of the country's ethnic, cultural and religious diversities, provides for multiple identities and addresses regional grievances ; ii) the extent to which Sudan's federal arrangements fulfill good governance criteria of responsiveness and accountability to grassroots; iii) the extent to which it promotes effective grassroots participation in the decision making process to meet their need for effective service delivery. Using data to be extracted from reports, newspaper cuttings as well as secondary material, the intention is to critically examine the current Sudanese institutional (constitutional) arrangement in federalism, on paper and in practice, from the broader development perspective and not just from the fiscal decentralization viewpoint prevalent in the literature, to draw insights and conclusions on whether the Sudanese experience promotes genuine decentralization rather than centralization, inclusion rather exclusion, participation rather than mobilization and investigate the reasons for its eventual outcome.

The paper is expected to fulfill three major objectives necessary for improved governance in Sudan and beyond; i) by focusing on the critical examination of Sudanese experience, the exercise would hopefully contribute to the reflection on ways to resolve the issues of friction, violent conflict and fragmentation that afflict the African continent; a result of failures to accommodate diversities, address regional and other sub-national groups' grievances and respond to peoples demands for effective service delivery; ii) to attempt to find answers to the question of how with the mounting tension and widening gulf between governments and those whom they rule (Libya, Sudan and Tunisia are just few cases in point), an institutional framework could be worked that reflects the shifting power balance, opens up the political system and devolves power to grassroots in a multilayered governmental structure that would allow for and enhance effective people's political involvement within a context of flourishing and genuine participatory democracy; iii) to contribute to the current debate in Northern Sudan on the formulation of a new "permanent" constitution in the wake of the secession of the South

when the current constitutional arrangement comes to an end by July 2011. The secession of the South highlights the critical issues of diversity accommodation, the need to address sub-national groups' (regional, ethnic, cultural and identity groups) grievances, authoritarianism and democracy and the need to respond to people's needs as major challenges for the settlement of violent conflicts, political stability and development. While the resolution of these issues still remains a demanding task for the destiny of many African countries, it is particularly so for the Sudan even with the secession of the South. Provisions for the settlement of these issues in the prospective "permanent" constitution would not only be detrimental to peace and stability in what remains of Sudan but also present real risks of more secessionist movements emerging in Northern Sudan.