Elections in Sudan: Learning from Experience

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Cover A man casts his ballot in a practice vote in Omdurman, 1953. (Sudan Archive, Durham: SAD 674/5/27.)

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Preface

The Sudan Election History Project was initiated by the Rift Valley Institute in mid 2008. At that time a number of international agencies were making plans to support the elections scheduled under the CPA for 2009. Though many had extensive and relevant experience elsewhere in the world, most had little knowledge of the previous electoral history of Sudan. The Election History Project aimed to supply both these international workers and the Sudanese involved in the election with some sense of historical context, in the hope that this would help in the formidable task of preparing for elections.

The project team consisted of Dr Justin Willis, an historian from the University of Durham (currently seconded to the British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi); Dr Atta el-Battahani, a political scientist from the University of Khartoum; and Professor Peter Woodward, a political scientist from the University of Reading. The team undertook archival research at the National Records Office in Khartoum, the Southern Sudan Archives in Juba and the National Archives in the United Kingdom. Members of the team surveyed published work and newspaper coverage on previous elections and conducted a number of interviews with people who had been involved in elections at many levels (as members of former electoral commissions, as candidates or party agents, and as local election officers). Research in Sudan was undertaken in greater Khartoum, Wad Medani, Shendi and Juba.

Executive summary

Argument of the report

In Sudan, an election by secret ballot is currently planned for February 2010. As one of the key elements in a strategy to develop a more equitable, stable and inclusive political settlement in Sudan, the election is central to the timetable of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). It is intended to demonstrate the possibility of a democratic political system in a unified country.

Belief in the transformative power of elections by secret ballot has long been a driving force in the development policy of international agencies and donor governments, both European and North American. In recent years, however, this belief has been questioned. The ballot, it has been argued, has been fetishized, encouraging an empty performance of electoral behaviour that leaves the fundamentals of politics unchanged. It is possible, according to this argument, to have a ballot yet still deny the population the essentials of democracy: access to justice, governmental transparency, and freedom of expression and association.

In the light of such criticism, it may be asked: do elections actually matter? This report argues that they do. Sudan's forthcoming election is not simply a post-conflict imposition by the international community. An election can be an authentic moment of national cohesion and participation. This idea has roots in Sudanese political experience, most notably in the 1953 'self-government' election. The election of 1953 was held under difficult circumstances, with much suspicion and tension and limited time and resources, but it confounded sceptics by its peaceful, orderly nature and by the level of participation by voters. It laid the basis for Sudanese independence in 1956. Today it still offers an inspiring model of national participation; it gave voters a new sense of citizenship, and gave to the many public servants who were involved in running it an experience of working together in the interest of a new nation.

The 1953 election realized at least some of the ambitions that drove the adoption of election by secret ballot in Europe and the United States from the nineteenth century onwards. This innovation in the politics of these countries was inspired by the idea that secret ballot would create a new, direct relationship between citizen and state. It would free the individual from improper influence and intimidation, and allow him or her to make a rational choice; it would create responsible citizens. Election by secret ballot, properly conducted, is a complex process, including registration of voters – with appeals and objections – nominations of candidates, the organization of the ballot and the count itself. It offers an opportunity to involve both public servants and the public in a performance of the processes of democratic open government.

Elections in Sudan: Learning from experience examines Sudan's considerable history of elections, and asks why it was that despite the apparent success of 1953, multi-party elections have not so far produced the kind of stable yet dynamic government in Sudan that the secret ballot is intended to encourage. The report argues that failures of government should not be construed as evidence of any fundamental unsuitability of elections to Sudanese circumstances. Sudan's political instability has many causes. Shortcomings of leadership, a difficult colonial inheritance and complex regional politics have all played a part. That elections have not fulfilled their promise of remaking political culture has been partly a result of the sheer size of these challenges. But it has also been a consequence of problems in the electoral process, which have undermined the possibility that elections might create a new relationship between citizen and state.

These problems have been of two kinds. The first has been malpractice. This has been widespread and massive under authoritarian regimes, ranging from the stuffing of ballot boxes by election staff and the switching of boxes after voting has taken place, to less flagrant but equally problematic forms such as intimidation, the use of government resources in campaigning, interference in news media, and the deliberate exclusion of candidates deemed unsuitable by the ruling party. The scale and pervasiveness of these abuses has created widespread public scepticism about all electoral exercises. Malpractice has also been significant – though much less flagrant – in multi-party elections. Multiple registration and voting, registration and voting by unqualified persons, vote-buying and the improper use of influence and resources by public servants have all occurred in all elections. Comments from interviewees, and statistical anomalies, suggest that these malpractices may have become more common as a result of a decline in ethics and professionalism in the public service since the 1970s. On the whole, however, this report suggests that in multi-party elections malpractice was normally the work of candidates and their agents, not of officials.

Alongside these malpractices, Sudan's elections have also been undermined by problems of resources. The analysis of these problems has a number of implications for the organization of elections today. The Sudanese state has never been strong, though it has often – in the colonial period and subsequently – been violent. Elections by secret ballot are a very complex logistical exercise. Challenges include the size of the country, wide variations in levels of education among the population, and widespread suspicion of government. Most officials involved in running multi-party elections tried to do their jobs properly, following complex – and sometimes impracticable – directives from their superiors. But all these elections were held with insufficient time and insufficient resources.

There have been two principal deficiencies in administration: a serious shortfall of trained staff, and an insufficiency of transport. Some potential voters lived far from registration or

polling centres; others were reluctant to register, or even fearful of any dealings with officials. Where registration and polling officers were not able to reach people, or persuade them to be involved, the agents of candidates sometimes stepped in to register voters and to transport and process voters; but their presence too was very uneven across the country. So some people have found it much easier to register and vote than have others. Levels of participation in multi-party elections have, as a result, been low in the south, west and east of Sudan, that is, in parts of the country outside the central riverain area.

Since 1953, then, elections have fallen far short of the ideal of a national moment, bringing together citizen and state. The difference in experience can be simply expressed by looking at attitudes to the 1986 election. In the space of a single day, we heard one educated Sudanese, a Northerner, enthuse about the multi-party election of 1986, describing it as a genuine moment of democratic participation for all Sudanese; and an equally educated Sudanese, a Southerner, say, 'Was there an election in 1986? Yes, yes, there was an election! But it was run by the army! It was not an election. It was run by the army.'[1]

The report argues that Sudan's history shows the potential role that elections may have in political life, as genuine moments of participation that evoke the idea of a democratic Sudan. But they have not realized this potential, and there is a strong possibility that the forthcoming election will suffer from a combination of all the weaknesses that have undermined previous elections. There is widespread public scepticism and suspicion of possible malpractice, based on people's experience in previous authoritarian elections; and there are immense logistical challenges. An additional challenge is the additional complexity of the election planned for 2010: it is more elaborate than any previously attempted, with multiple ballots and a combination of systems.

The stakes are very high. If the election should lack credibility, it is hard to see how the Comprehensive Peace Agreement can survive. Recent experience in Kenya has shown how a combination of failure of process and suspicion of malpractice can lead to a rapid loss of public confidence in the whole electoral procedure, with immediate violent consequences. Transparency and inclusivity are thus key areas of support for the electoral process. The key recommendation of this report is that in order to ensure popular participation, and overcome popular scepticism, the coming elections must be organized in ways that are, first, seen to be transparent and, second, ensure the inclusion of all kinds of voters in all regions.

Routine election monitoring -- monitoring of the poll for malpractice -- is certainly desirable. But the report argues that this is not enough. Much more extensive support for the electoral process is necessary. Elections are not magic, and in so far as they have a special power to

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[1] David Koak, 4 February 2009.

propel political change this relies on the shared experience of a predictable and transparent process. Commitment of resources at an early stage in the process is necessary to achieve this. Informed and consistent disposition of such resources, the report concludes, may allow the proper performance of the secret ballot and thus enable the election to be inclusive enough – and fair enough – to give a real impetus to a peaceful future for Sudan.

Summary recommendations on transparency and prevention of malpractice

Those who drafted the new Elections Act of 2008 were very aware of the possibility of malpractice. The provisions for single-day ballots and counting at polling stations, for example, are aimed at forestalling ballot-box stuffing and switching. But there are many other kinds of malpractice, and in the light of previous experience the report draws attention to the need to support the following areas in particular:

- Ensuring press freedom and equal media access.
- Ensuring freedom of movement and association to allow proper campaigning.
- Preventing improper use of government resources in campaigning.
- Monitoring campaign spending as the campaign proceeds, rather than afterwards.

Summary recommendations on inclusivity

Ensuring a high participation rate in a genuinely free poll is of vital importance. Previous elections have seen a heavy reliance on candidates, political parties and their agents for key aspects of the electoral process (including registration, voter education and mobilization and processing of voters on polling day). Such dependence on candidates and parties raises serious questions about equality of participation. Given the chronic internal disorganization of most of the major parties it seems clear that their role will be at best patchy in the coming elections. The report recommends that the international community prioritise support in these areas, focussing on:

- Provision of transport and training for election staff.
- Production of voters' cards and rolls.
- Ensuring that sufficient election materials are available at all polling stations.
- Training of candidates' agents at a constituency level. (Organization of this training should not be reliant on the parties.)
- Innovative use of new communications technologies – internet and mobile telephones – to reach potential voters directly.

I. Introduction

In 1996 Sudan's General Elections Authority arranged a drawing of lots to allocate visual symbols that would be used by the candidates in the forthcoming presidential election. There were a very large number of candidates – 52 in all – and the chairman of the General Elections Authority described the care taken to ensure that the process was equitable and fair, and emphasised their refusal to accept any interference in the process:

> … we put about 60 symbols, known to everybody in the Sudan, it was difficult. The maximum number we managed in previous elections was about 40 symbols, agreed upon as known all over Sudan. And not irritating, not causing difficulties, not leading to hatred and so on. But in the first presidential election we find difficulty. To agree on 60 symbols. And some were not well known. And Beshir's symbol was what we call clippers. We were criticised, we said to them, this is by toss, and each agent of the candidate will come and pick a paper. Simple. So al Beshir's agent chose a paper which was a clipper. Lots of them said to me, this symbol is not known all over the Sudan! But we insisted on it.[2]

The election – in which the presidential vote was combined with the election of a new National Assembly – saw much activity of this kind. Foreign journalists and observers were invited; ballot boxes were sealed; ballot papers were printed and marked and put into boxes; the boxes were demonstratively unsealed and the papers counted.[3] The 1996 election, in short, saw many apparent processes that are associated with free and fair elections. But the election was widely seen at the time as a travesty. There were no political parties, and while the candidates were given the opportunity to speak on television and radio they were unable to travel in most of the country. Voters were bullied into voting by local officials.[4] One of the principle architects of the election later announced that there had been widespread rigging, and there were rumours that special registers of military and police voters were doctored to include many false names, and that millions of spoilt votes, cast as a protest against the whole process, had been surreptitiously destroyed.[5]

The 1996 election was an extreme example of electoral pretence. However, it illustrates how it is possible to go through some of the motions of free and fair elections without actually offering any significant degree of choice or ensuring any substantial popular participation. And it is a reminder of how much elections are a matter of show. This kind of

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[2] Abdel Moneim en Nahas, 20 January 2009.

[3] See, for example, *Al Sudan al Hadith*, 29 February 1996, 2 and 13 March 1996.

[4] Atta el-Battahani (2002) 'Multi-party elections and the predicament of northern hegemony in Sudan', in Michael Cowan and Liisa Laakso (eds.) *Multi-party Elections in Africa* (New York, Palgrave), pp. 251–77.

[5] Shendi group interview, 29 February 2009; *As Sahafa*, 9 and 18 December 2000; Ann Mosely Lesch (1998) *Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Oxford and Bloomington, James Currey), pp. 124–5.

electoral performance may be intended for an external audience, to demonstrate the legitimacy and competence of the government; it may be aimed at the ruling group themselves, as they try to persuade themselves that they enjoy at least some popular support (as when Gaafar Nimeiri described himself as 'installed by the people'[6]); or it may be directed at the population at large, as an assertion of the government's logistical capacity and control. An awareness that elections are a significant show has been widely apparent in Sudan, during both multi-party elections and those organized by authoritarian regimes: a 1953 newspaper editorial suggested that the successful performance of an election demonstrated 'our qualifications to rule our country'; the head of the Election Commission in 1958 admitted that 'the eyes of the world are upon us'; and in 1986 there was a sense that an orderly election was a sign of how 'civilised' Sudan was.[7] The same idea is implicit in the comments of non-Sudanese observers on Sudan's multi-party elections of the 1950s and 1960s – Peter Bechtold's praise of the 'remarkable performance of the Sudanese in staging open and fair parliamentary elections'; Harold Gosnell's remark on the 'great efficiency' of the 1958 election; the comments of a British diplomat in 1968 that 'the Sudanese are, with justification, congratulating themselves on the success of the exercise'[8] – all made clear the extent to which elections were considered a measure of administrative competence and civic maturity.

Unfortunately, in Sudan's elections the concern for show has sometimes taken precedence over the need to ensure genuine electoral participation, particularly by those on Sudan's multiple margins – in south, west and east – and, since the early 1980s, among the displaced people who have come to greater Khartoum itself. Nevertheless, Sudan has held many national elections in the last six decades, and the electoral principle has manifested itself in many areas of society.[9] Alongside the national elections there have been local government elections, trade union elections and student union elections. The multi-party national elections, in particular, have been striking moments of popular mobilisation, and many of those who were involved still look on them with pride as manifestations of a democratic, popular idea of Sudanese identity. Yet no multi-party election has ever produced a stable government, and this abundance of elections has not generated any kind of political consensus or a generally shared sense of national identity. Nor has it ensured popular

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[6] In his speech on the '4th anniversary of the presidency', 12 October 1975, TNA FCO 93/720.

[7] *Al Rai al 'Amm*, 24 November 1953; *As Sahafa*, 15 April 1986.

[8] Peter Bechtold (1976) *Politics in the Sudan* (New York, Praeger), p. 172; Harold Gosnell (1958) 'The 1958 election in the Sudan', *Middle East Journal,* 12 (4), pp. 409–17; Griffith to Sindall, NENAD, 4 May 1968, National Archives (TNA) FCO 39/185.

[9] el-Battahani (2002).

support for parliamentary rule. Elected governments have been removed three times 'without a murmur of public protest'.[10]

This is a profound failure. Election – used in the sense of the choice of a representative by common consent or agreement – is an old idea, common to many cultures. Implicit in the idea of election is a deal that offers some measure of accountability to the electors, and a degree of legitimacy to the elected. The secret ballot, however, is a relative novelty, and carries further implications. Known in the UK as the 'Australian ballot', it did not become widely established in Europe until the later nineteenth century. In the UK it replaced a much more chaotic, open system of election to parliament that had sometimes spread over many days and involved much 'treating' of voters. The secret ballot was intended to stand as both a symbol and instrument of a new kind of political relationship between people and government: one in which the individual, temporarily freed from the scrutiny of family, friends, landlord, priest and all others, would make a rational, considered decision about political representation.[11] People would be able to make such a decision because an efficient bureaucratic state would create the means to verify their identity and then to provide them with privacy from all others while they cast their ballot. The process itself was intended as an education for a new kind of responsible citizen, who saw his or her relationship with the state as a personal and direct one, of rights and obligations. The secret ballot stands as an expression of – and as a means to achieve – an ideal relationship between the responsible citizen and the modern ordering state. In the industrializing societies of the late nineteenth century, and in the new societies emerging to political independence in the mid-twentieth century, it was seen as the way to create a new political order, and a new legitimacy for the state.

Sudan's multiple political failures are not, of course, solely to do with elections, and it would be deeply unwise to assume that a single election, however well-conducted, could magically transform the whole political culture of the country. Such fetishization of the ballot has come in for cogent criticism in recent work by Paul Collier.[12] But to conclude from this that elections are simply inappropriate to such societies would be as fallacious as the assumption that an election alone is enough to remake politics, and it leaves no obvious alternative strategy for many states except prolonged international tutelage. Elections have the ability to manage political change, to inspire participation, to provide legitimacy and to offer a

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[10] The description is Leo Silberman's (1958) ('The rise and fall of democracy in the Sudan', *Parliamentary Affairs,* 12, pp. 349–76).

[11] Romain Bertrand, Jean-Louis Briquet and Peter Pels (2007) 'Introduction: towards a historical ethnography of voting', in Romain Bertrand, Jean-Louis Briquet and Peter Pels (eds.) *Cultures of Voting: The Hidden History of the Secret Ballot* (London, Hurst), pp. 1–15.

[12] Paul Collier (2009) *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (New York and London, Harper).

model of a relationship between the individual subject and the state which, at the most basic level, embodies the idea of equal political participation for all. There are, of course, other kinds of political relationship and other forms of legitimacy. But for a state governing a complex multi-ethnic society, and organized at least notionally on rational-bureaucratic lines, universal suffrage with a secret ballot holds out the possibility of widespread participation and of remaking people's subjectivity in ways that control but also sustain the state. Elections cannot do this alone: as has been argued repeatedly, many other structures of participation and equality of access – to information, to justice – as well as some kind of public scrutiny of the workings of government, are necessary elements of a participatory political system. The election by secret ballot, however, is a dramatic (in every sense) moment that actually brings together many desiderata of good governance: it requires efficiency, transparency and impartiality of administration, and rapid access to justice; in return, it demands public acceptance of the procedures of the bureaucratic state. It is not by itself enough to transform politics, but it is, potentially, the single most potent performance of the political relationship between the bureaucratic state and the participating citizen.

The history of Sudan shows both the potential power of elections as dramatic performances of the political relationship, and the ways in which they can fall short of realizing this potential. But repeated elections have not succeeded in remaking politics because – despite the energy and enthusiasm that both the people and administrators have brought to some them – the process itself has repeatedly been flawed. These flaws derive partly from malpractice: flagrant stuffing of ballot boxes by officials in some single-party elections; less obvious gerrymandering by politicians; and a widespread if generally modest level of multiple-voting, influence-peddling and vote-buying by candidates and their agents in the multi-party elections. But the flaws also derive more straightforwardly from problems of resources and organization, which have repeatedly been compounded by haste, since Sudan's multi-party elections, in particular, have often been conducted with tight deadlines. Hampered by a shortage of staff, transport and time, the state has generally been unable to ensure the smooth and consistent performance across the whole country of the multiple procedures of the secret ballot. Because of the widespread feeling that elections are a test of national competence, these problems have often been masked in official reports: local officials cover up local problems, exaggerate the smoothness of the poll and conceal deficiencies in the process; more senior officials insist that all procedures have been followed according to their instructions; sympathetic observers emphasise the positive aspects.

The consequence is that in elections, as in so much else, Sudan has seen substantial disparities in experience. Where the state has been at its strongest – where its resources of transport and personnel are concentrated – local election officials have mostly been able to follow the detailed instructions passed down to them, and participation in elections has been

reasonably strong. In such areas – generally in central riverain Sudan – the efforts of the state have been routinely supplemented by the work of candidates and their agents, who have borne at least some of the burden of registration, voter education and ensuring that voters reach the polling stations. In other parts of the country, shortages of staff and transport have combined with local suspicion or fear of government, and uncertainty over the purpose of the process, with the result that participation has been much less consistent. Registration has been dependent partly on lists supplied by traditional leaders; voter education has been almost non-existent (and even training for electoral officials has been limited); polling stations have been distant for many voters. Staff with limited training have struggled to find the names of illiterate voters on lists, which are not always well-printed or properly arranged; prospective voters have been faced with long journeys and long queues. In a number of elections, polling has also been severely affected by conflict. Those who have been most likely to vote are those best able to overcome these challenges: thus in the south in the 1960s, the main body of voters in some constituencies was composed of civil servants, soldiers and police, many of northern Sudanese origin. Their familiarity with bureaucracy, and with the fellow-officials who ran the elections, meant that they could overcome problems with registration or deficiencies in the printed voters roll. In a slightly different way, the followers of some traditional leaders – who submitted lists of voters names for registering, and who marshalled people to go to the polling station – will have found it easier to vote than those whose sheikhs and chiefs were less active, or less favoured.

It should be emphasised that the administrators who ran Sudan's multi-party elections prided themselves on their integrity and professionalism. While their sense of themselves as a professional and elite group was undoubtedly dented by the Nimeiri period (1969–85), it still survived into the 1980s. That this commitment and pride might coexist with a degree of electoral pretence might seem surprising. The men who served as Executive Officers in local government in the 1950s and 1960s – who were the key personnel in these elections – were a close-knit group, wearing their semi-military uniforms with considerable pride. Most of them had attended the same few schools, most shared a roughly similar cultural background in the riverain centre of northern Sudan. And many of them combined a belief in progress and the role of the bureaucratic state in bringing progress with a (generally well-meaning) elitism and a belief in their duty to lead, which was associated with a sense that the majority of Sudan's rural populace were ill-fitted for real political participation. This sense was very apparent in interviews, both with former election officials and with other educated Sudanese:

> One man one vote here is not one man one vote in a tribal or sectarian society. It means millions of votes for the head of the sect or the head of the tribe. Just by lifting their hand they say, go, vote for that.[13]

This concern over the political backwardness of the rural populace also inspired the repeated experiments with special representation that have characterised Sudan's electoral system since independence. The graduates' seats, created in 1953, recreated in 1965 and again in 1986 (which drew on John Stuart Mill's ideas of plural voting for the better educated, and on the former UK practice of 'university constituencies'), were the most obvious manifestation of this concern that special political influence should lie with those who were considered educated and civilized. Similarly, Nimeiri's schemes for sectoral representation rested explicitly on the notion that society as a whole needed to be led by modern productive forces – with the implicit corollary that those who had mastered the skills of bureaucratic organization would best represent those forces. More recent experiments with women's representation, premised on the idea that traditional cultural practices have disadvantaged women in political participation, have tended to favour educated women who occupy positions in women's organizations that exist on the edge of the state's bureaucratic structures. Again and again the backwardness of Sudan's rural populace has been advanced as a justification for these systems of preferential representation. It is this sense that many people are not ready for participation that has encouraged administrators to concentrate at times on the show, rather than on the actual performance of the processes of election. The consequence is not simply that some people's votes are not cast or counted: it is that those people do not go through the whole experience of the election process, which develops a relationship between individual and state.

There is no doubt that persistent malpractice by candidates and parties in multi-party elections, and the extreme malpractice pursued by authoritarian regimes, have been corrosive of popular belief in elections, leaving people with the sense that there may be little point in participating. But this is not the sole cause of the very uneven participation rates in Sudan's previous elections, and the consequent lack of popular commitment to the parliamentary system. Elections by secret ballot pose an immense challenge in Sudan, and the state has not been able to meet this challenge in a consistent way across the country. There has never been enough time, nor have there been enough staff or enough transport to overcome the difficulties inherent in registering and taking a poll amongst a large population, many of them profoundly suspicious of government and with little experience of bureaucratic process, scattered over a huge country. At a local level, officials have often

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[13] Mahgoub Mohammed Salih, 17 January 2009.

compensated for this inability by reliance on candidates and their agents and/or on traditional authorities. However, this reliance on intermediaries has opened up more space for malpractice, and has meant that local experience of elections has been very varied. Aware of the overriding importance of presenting a good show, and informed by a fundamental sense that the 'backward' rural populace are incapable of full political participation anyway, officials at all levels – who have often had a sincere commitment to their work – have tended to gloss over local problems with participation and process. This concealment and pretence has been most extreme, even verging on the absurd, under authoritarian regimes, but it has also been a feature of Sudan's multi-party elections.

Box 2	Periodization of Sudanese politics since 1953
1953	Self-government election
1956	Independence
1956–58	First parliamentary period
1958–64	Military government of Ibrahim Abboud
1964	'October revolution'; fall of Abboud government
1964–69	Second parliamentary period
1969	'May revolution'; military officers led by Nimeiri seize power
1969–85	Military/one-party rule under Nimeiri
1973	Addis Ababa accord; peace settlement in Southern Sudan
1983	Bor mutiny; large-scale violence resumes in Southern Sudan
1985	'Intifada': fall of Nimeiri regime
1985–89	Third parliamentary period
1989	'Salvation Revolution', the *Ingaz*; military officers led by Omer el Beshir seize power
1989–2005	Authoritarian rule under the NIF, then the NCP
2005–	Government of National Unity under Comprehensive Peace Agreement

II. Background political history

The first multi-party period: 1953–58

Sudan held its first national election in November 1953. Overseen by an international Mixed Electoral Commission, the election was intended to elect a parliament under which Sudan would achieve self-government, prior to deciding whether it should become independent or be united with Egypt.

The election was the result of a treaty between the two powers that ruled the Condominium, Britain and Egypt, and the events of the election reflected the intense rivalry between these two countries, and amongst Sudanese themselves. There were widespread and persistent allegations that British officials – who still ran the administration of Sudan at the time of the election – were using their influence, and government resources, in favour of candidates of the Umma Party (which opposed union with Egypt) and of the Socialist Republican Party (an entirely misnamed party that favoured prolonged self-government under British tutelage). There were also allegations that Egyptian officials and agents were using substantial bribery to secure support for the National Unionist Party (NUP), which at that point favoured union with Egypt.[14]

There seems little doubt that many of the allegations made against both sides were true, and the election offered some lessons in electoral manipulation which were to be followed in later years. But it was an organizational success: 'a model of its kind', according to Sukumar Sen, head of the Mixed International Commission that supervised it. Despite the fears of many British officials that the logistical difficulties would be insurmountable, and that rural Sudanese would be unable to comprehend the idea of voting, there was a large turnout in many areas and the election passed off peacefully. This in itself was seen inside and outside Sudan as a remarkable success for the Sudanese officials who ran the election, and as a demonstration of the country's political maturity. Although the election was won by the NUP – Umma having lost partly because of a chronic lack of internal discipline, producing multiple Umma candidates in a number of constituencies – the sense of national success that some Sudanese derived from the election helped inspire the decision to choose independence, rather than union with Egypt, in 1956. The influence of the election on the consciousness of those who actually ran it was particularly marked. Though the administration of Sudan was still largely in British hands, the election was run entirely by Sudanese under the supervision of the Mixed Electoral Commission. Service on the electoral

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[14] Justin Willis (2007) '"A model of its kind": the Sudan self-government election of 1953', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35 (3), pp. 485–502

committees – one in each constituency – was a powerful bonding experience. Led by the most senior Sudanese administrator available and composed of civil servants, teachers, merchants and local men of influence, each committee became a local demonstration of the idea of a viable, bureaucratic Sudanese state built around the administration. Even those who served as temporary registration clerks, not formally part of the committees, were caught up in this spirit: 'We were young nationalists, and this was our first task for the nation.'[15]

Alongside the 92 geographical constituencies, there was in this election a 'graduates' constituency', with five seats. All those who had completed secondary education qualified to vote in this constituency, which operated on a single transferable vote system. The principle behind this was that education gave people a better ability to make political judgments and to participate in the running of the country, but that the educated – the Arabic term used was often *muthaqqafin*, with the broader implication of civilization or sophistication – were a small minority who stood little chance of effective representation under a straightforward adult suffrage. As one supporter of this principle explained, 'These are the people who are supposed to build the new Sudan. And they are completely detribalised, so that they have no roots in the provinces, and if you go on the geographic constituencies it will deprive them, and it will deprive the legislature of their influence'.[16] A more critical commentator observed that:

> The educated lot in the Sudan think that they should lead the Sudan. And if you don't lead through the electoral process, they should lead by a device which will give them leadership! And they invented this question of graduates' constituencies.[17]

This principle, and the debate over it, has been a recurring influence in Sudanese elections.

The parliamentary government created by the 1953 election was unstable, being undermined by changes in party allegiance and by an uneasy awareness that the NUP majority in parliament had been won with a minority of the popular vote. By 1957 there was an Umma prime minister; after some hesitation he called an election, which was organized in a hurry and held in early 1958. As in 1953, there was a near total mobilization of state resources for the election. It relied particularly on the use of staff from local government and from the Ministry of Education; almost all government vehicles were committed to the process as well. Again, the event was seen as an opportunity for the Sudanese state to demonstrate its efficiency, and for the Sudanese as a whole to show their political maturity

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[15] Ibrahim Moniem Mansour, 7 October 2008.

[16] Mahgoub Mohammed Salih, 17 January 2009.

[17] Ibrahim Moniem Mansour, 24 February 2009.

to a wider world. There is a substantial archival record of this election, which suggests that in some rural areas, in particular, election officials found it hard to meet the ambitions of senior officials – a lack of resources, especially staff, made some of the directives issued on registering, education and polling impracticable. Voter turnout was below average in most of the south and in parts of the west. The credibility of the election was, anyway, undermined by some flagrant gerrymandering of constituencies, apparently intended to help Umma secure a clear majority. The NUP was weakened by the rift between Ismail al-Azhari, its secular leader, and the Khatmiyya sect, which had previously supported it. Despite this, however, the election again failed to produce a strong Umma government. Abdullah Khalil, as prime minister, struggled on for a few months after the election until he was removed in a coup – widely believed to be organized by members of the government itself, who saw a military takeover as preferable to parliamentary defeat – in November 1958.

Table 1 **Results of the 1953 and 1958 elections**[18]

Party	1953	1958
	Number of geographical seats	Number of geographical seats
Umma	23	63
NUP	46	45
PDP	–	27
Southern	9	38
Other	11	–

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[18] From Bechtold (1976), pages 181 and 190

The second multi-party period: 1964–69

After the overthrow of the Abboud regime in the 1964 October revolution, there was a rush to hold elections to create a new parliamentary government, and a brief, intense debate over both the form and timing of the elections. The Communist Party and other radical groups argued for a move away from first-past-the-post parliamentary elections in geographical constituencies, which they argued had given excessive influence to sectarian and tribal sentiment. The Popular Democratic Party (PDP; in effect the political face of the Khatmiyya) wanted to delay elections until there was a peaceful settlement in the south. But in each case the preference of the Umma Party, in particular, for immediate elections on a largely geographical basis prevailed. A graduate constituency with 15 seats was created as a partial concession to the radical demand for more representation for those with more secondary education: at the same time the franchise in the geographical constituencies was opened to all adults over the age of 18. The PDP boycotted the elections and there was some violence in areas of Khatmiyya influence. In the south, an initial attempt at registration went very poorly, and the elections were almost entirely abandoned. With the main rival vote split between the NUP and PDP, Umma won the largest number of seats in the parliament. Both Umma and the NUP, however, were shocked by the success of the Communist Party and by the emergence of regional parties in eastern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. The Communists won 11 of the 15 graduate seats and polled a substantial proportion of the geographical vote in greater Khartoum, though it won no geographical seats. In an apparently direct response to this shock, the Umma government declared in late 1965 that the Communist Party was dissolved and its members were expelled from parliament. Sadiq al-Mahdi, as prime minister, ignored a court ruling that this decision was unconstitutional.

By-elections were held in the south in 1967 to complete the parliament. It seems that Sadiq was anxious to hold these by-elections as he believed it would improve the Umma position in parliament against the NUP. This was not because the population of Southern Sudan was generally supportive of Umma, but because so few people would register and vote that a number of constituencies could be won just by mobilising a small number of supporters in any constituency. If this was Sadiq's intention, his calculation proved reasonably accurate: this was a 'tiny poll', especially in Equatoria (the province most affected by the civil war at that time), but Umma picked up more seats than did the NUP, winning some with extremely low turnouts.[19] It seems likely that in a good many constituencies voters were mainly

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[19] John Howell (1973) 'Politics in the Southern Sudan', *African Affairs* 72 (287), pp. 163–78; Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and al Fatih Abdullah Abdelsalam (2008) *Al Intikhabat al Barlamaniyya fi as Sudan* (Omdurman), p. 184.

northern officials and merchants. The extra seats were not, however, enough to save Sadiq's government; shortly after the by-elections he lost a crucial parliamentary vote (possibly because a number of Umma members were offered money to vote against him) and an NUP government was formed. In 1968 there were further elections, again held in a rush, due to the chronic instability of the government. This time it was the Umma Party that was split, between the two factions led by Sadiq al-Mahdi and Imam al-Hadi. By contrast, the NUP and PDP had made up their differences and come together within the new Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). While registration and voting levels in the north were generally better than they had been in 1967, there was still very limited participation in Upper Nile and Equatoria, where:

> The simple explanation why a large number of Northerners were elected was that in many constituencies the army and the police were virtually the only people on the electoral rolls. In other areas, e.g. government resettlement schemes, the Southern voters were so dependent on the security forces for protection, food etc. that they voted in the way they were told.[20]

Party discipline had always been a problem for Umma and the NUP, with multiple candidates in a single seat all claiming to have the support of the party. The split at the top of Umma made this problem worse, and the number of seats won by the party fell dramatically in 1968. The graduate constituency had been abolished again at the insistence of Umma. The new DUP government struggled on unsteadily until May 1969.

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[20] 'Discussion with Sayed Hilary Logali', August 1968, TNA FCO 39/185.

Table 2 **Multi-party elections, 1965–68**[21]

Party	1965/7		1968	
	No. of geographical seats (number of graduates seats in parentheses)	No. of votes (northern provinces only)	No. of geographical seats	No. of votes
Umma	92	510,182	36 (Sadiq) 30 (Imam) 6 (Umma)	384,986 (Sadiq) 329,952 (Imam) 43,288 (Umma)
NUP/DUP	68 (2)	390,801	101	742,236
PDP	3	16,893	–	–
Southern	12	–	15 (SANU) 10 (Southern Front)	60,493 (SANU) 39,822 (Southern Front)
ICF	5 (2)	57,438	3	44,552
Communists	0 (11)	29,398	–	–
Other	37	127,264	17	174,443

One-party elections under Nimeiri: 1969–85

When Nimeiri seized power from the DUP he (unsurprisingly) condemned multi-party elections, and for the first two years of his rule he showed no enthusiasm for any kind of election. After the attempted coup of 1971, however, he turned to the ballot in an attempt to demonstrate – to those inside and outside the Sudan – the popularity of his rule. Using Nasser's Egypt as an explicit model, he created a system of one-party government with national elections (in 1972, 1974, 1978, 1980 and 1984) and regional elections in the south (in 1973, 1980 and 1981. There were also national referenda (in 1971, 1977 and 1983) on his own position as president, and Abel Alier, chair of the current National Election Commission, organized the 1971 referendum in Southern Sudan. Elections also took place within the governing party – the Sudan Socialist Union – and for the Southern Region after the 1973 Addis Ababa accord.

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[21] From Bechtold (1976), Tables 7.2, 7.4, 7.6.

Nimeiri made much of the outcome of these referenda in speaking to his own subjects and internationally. As he put in a radio broadcast (helpfully translated into English for international distribution):

> The rush of our people to the registration centres for the Presidential Referendum, regardless of the results, represents an appreciated enlightenment which we receive with pride and gratitude.
>
> The millions of people all over the country who were keen to perform their right in saying 'yes' or 'no' were actually expressing the finest accomplishments of these people and their victories. They were representing national unity and confirming the commitment towards the one country.
>
> The millions who were practising their right were actually announcing their new belief in the unity of leadership.[22]

These elections offered, in the words of a key ideologue of the regime, 'a new and current form of democracy free from the comedy of party politics… taking people away from their traditional links and opening them up to a new world and new political relationships'.[23] While these elections still revolved around the secret ballot, and careful instructions insisted that 'neutrality and honesty are fundamental requirements of election work' and set out the rituals of checking the ballot boxes and so on, they brought together the criticism of 'liberal democracy', which had characterised the early period of Nimeiri's regime, with the principle of special representation for particular groups, which had been established by the graduates' constituencies.[24] This special representation was now intended to embrace both 'popular' groups whose representation had previously been inadequate (women, youth, cooperative societies) and 'sectoral' groups whose professionalism and productive role gave them the right to special representation.[25] Like the graduates' constituencies, the sectoral seats were an assertion of the superior political rights of the educated:

> That system gave all the sectors of Sudanese society a way to represent themselves in the parliament. Especially those who are much needed to participate in the government, the more enlightened class. The more educated people.[26]

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[22] SUNA text of Nimeiri's monthly 'Face the Nation' radio broadcast, 29 April 1977, TNA FCO 93/1184.

[23] Gaafar Bakheit, quoted in *As Sahafa*, 4 October 1972.

[24] For a particularly lengthy exposition of this critique, see 'Sudan Socialist Union. Document of the national founding congress. Draft of the charter for National Action, 2nd Jan 1972', in TNA FCO 39/1150.

[25] Directive No. 1, 26 February 1974, NRO ELECOM (5) 14/1/5; 'Regulations for the People's Council elections', 1972, NRO ELECOM (5) 9/1/6.

[26] Mukhtar el Assam, 18 January 2009.

There was also some use of the principle of electoral colleges and delegation, rather than universal suffrage: the first People's Assembly was elected entirely by members of existing local councils, or of organizations representing women, youth and the sectoral groups.[27] Later elections mixed this with geographical constituencies and a suffrage that was in some cases universal and in other cases limited to members of the Sudan Socialist Union. The geographical constituencies were in some elections multiple-member constituencies with multiple votes. The press had been entirely taken under the control of the regime – establishing a pattern of press control that was to recur after 1989 – and turnout in the referenda was reported in appropriately extravagant terms, with Nimeiri securing 99 per cent of the vote in a 98 per cent turnout.[28] Such categorical figures are harder to find for the Assembly elections. These were run by a national Technical Election Committee, but this did not publish comprehensive reports of the kind that appeared after each multi-party election, and the statistical record recoverable from its archives is by no means complete.

At the time, the referenda were, according to one observer, 'regarded at best with apathy and at worst with cynicism'.[29] They are widely remembered now as entirely sham affairs, in which local officials competed to ensure the highest turnout and the highest 'yes' vote; the press dutifully reported these results.[30] Though the Election Technical Committee sent out the usual string of directives setting out procedures for the secret ballot, there were multiple violations of these procedures.[31] Voters were bullied into turning out, the ballot was not secret, and – when all else failed – the ballot boxes were simply stuffed. There was a curious morality to the rigging however: figures were not simply invented, but instead local electoral officials felt it their duty to fill in blank ballot papers and put these in the box. This was part of the multiple layers of pretence involved in these elections:

> They were forged, not by adding figures but by filling blank ballot papers. In most instances during the referenda you had competition between different states, each state would try to prove to Nimeiri that they are supporting him and that their record is higher! They are very active, very good, they provided more supporters, more votes. So, in the absence of monitoring or supervision, if the turnout became very very modest, the committees would themselves fill the remaining ballot papers. This was a well-known practice. The governor of the state would tell them to do that, otherwise Nimeiri will be angry because the performance of this state is very poor, and this will affect the governor's political future... if

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[27] 'Final report on elections to the First People's Council', NRO ELECOM (5) 11/1/3.

[28] *As Sahafa*, 25 September 1971; *Al Ayyam,* 21 April 1977.

[29] Palmer, Khartoum to Woods, FCO, 24 May 1977, TNA FCO 93/1184.

[30] For example, *As Sahafa*, 30 April 1983.

[31] The directives for the 1983 referendum are preserved in ELECOM (5) 14/1/4.

there were 1,000 registered voters at a certain polling station and only 200 came, then the remaining papers would be filled by the committee.[32]

These votes were preceded and concluded by organized victory processions.[33] The press coverage of the 1983 referendum – 'an epic among the many great epics of the May revolution', as one regime supporter put it – cast the process very much as a popular expression of allegiance, using the term *bai'a*, and as an opportunity to show a popular consensus, *'ijma*, on the choice of national leader.[34]

The assembly elections by contrast, saw some real competition at a local level. While the first assembly was a result of nomination and indirect election, later assemblies were elected largely by secret ballot. Competition might be based on tribal sentiment or personal loyalties: one interviewee insisted that, 'Nimeiri made sure that each local constituency has elections that are free and fair, without any interference. So you find democracy at the local level, full-fledged democracy.'[35] The press at the time insisted that there was almost universal participation in these elections too,[36] but published accounts suggest that turnouts were low, and the archival record is uncertain.[37] In 1973, 914,000 voters were registered in Southern Sudan – a considerable increase on the 551,294 registered in 1968. However, turnout figures are not available for that election; for the geographical seats in the 1980 elections to the Third Regional People's Council for the south, only 27 per cent of registered voters turned out.[38] One seasoned politician and former administrator complained at length of the multiple failures of procedure in one southern constituency in this election:

> Election in Wau West constituency not proceeding smoothly. Polling in out-stations held up frequently due to unreliability of polling teams caused by lack of transport and polling programme well behind schedule by five days in some cases. Many voters turned up once or twice at the station and did not find the team and have returned home without coming back. The most serious aspect of the election is the failure of the returning officer to publish the electoral rolls on time. In fact some rolls were published on the very day of the start of the election and others on the seventh instant, and in many cases names of thousands are omitted. One graphic example is in one of the polling stations in town where staff and employees of most government departments were registered to vote totalling over four thousand, but names have totally disappeared from the rolls in many cases and some

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[32] Mohammed Ahmed Salim, 1 March 2009.

[33] *Al Ayyam,* 4 and 9 April 1977.

[34] Musa Bakheit, quoted in *As Sahafa*, 9 April 1983; *As Sahafa,* 10 April 1983; *As Sahafa*, 12 April 1983.

[35] Mukhtar el Assam, 18 January 2009.

[36] *As Sahafa*, 29 April 1974.

[37] el-Battahani (2002), pp. 259–60.

[38] Figures in NRO ELECOM (5) 6/2/13.

departments are completely omitted and not even the registers containing the draft can be traced.[39]

Turnout for the sectoral and popular seats may have been even worse: a fairly representative report came from the election officer in Wau, in elections for the Fourth People's Council (also in 1980): 'No voters registered nor votes case for engineer seat. Also neither voters registered nor votes cast for administrative and professional posts seat'.[40] Nationally, the voting for the seat for the 'economists/finance officers' in the same election saw a turnout of nil in six of the 18 states which then made up Sudan; in the other 12 states a total of 801 people voted, 651 of them in Khartoum.[41]

The third multi-party period: 1985–89

The overthrow of Nimeiri in the popular insurrection of 1985 led – like the October revolution 20 years earlier – to a return to multi-party parliamentary politics. Again, there was some haste in the process, as Umma and the DUP in particular rushed to find support at the ballot box for their claim to dominate political life. As in 1964, they rejected the suggestion by some more radical groups that a delay in elections, or a new kind of system, might be appropriate, and the election was held largely on a first-past-the-post geographical constituency basis.[42] There were, however, 28 graduates' seats in constituencies that were organized on a provincial rather than national basis. The definition of 'graduate' had been changed, and now meant any person with at least two years' post-secondary education. Umma won the majority of seats; the DUP, weakened by particularly poor party discipline, polled nearly as many votes but won far fewer seats. The National Islamic Front (NIF) – the group previously known as the Islamic Charter Front (ICF) – also took a significant number of seats. Commentators generally attribute this to their superior organization. This was evidently a factor, most notably in the graduates' constituencies, where the NIF total of 21 out of 28 seats resulted partly from their astute exploitation of a provision allowing expatriate graduate voters to register to vote (by post) in any region. Since there were few registered graduate voters in the seats for the southern provinces, the NIF encouraged expatriate voters to register there – and so won a number of seats very cheaply.[43] But more

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[39] Clement Mboro, c/o Election Office Wau to Election Committee Juba, copied Chairman Election Commission Khartoum, 9 April 1980, NRO ELECOM (5) 13/1/4.

[40] 'Elections Wau to Election Commission', Khartoum, 24 May 1980, NRO ELECOM (5) 4/3/22.

[41] Figures in NRO ELECOM (5) 4/3/20.

[42] James L. Chiriyankandath (1987) '1986 elections in the Sudan: tradition, ideology, ethnicity – and class?', *Review of African Political Economy*, 14 (38), pp. 96–102.

[43] *As Sahafa,* 30 April 1986.

generally, the ratio of total votes cast nationally to the number of seats actually secured by the NIF was slightly worse than that for Umma and DUP: quite simply, the NIF won so many seats because a lot of people voted for them. The distribution of their vote suggests that NIF attracted many votes from serving soldiers, among others.[44]

A senior administrator who was recalled from retirement to serve on the Election Commission in 1986 remarked on the way in which the culture of the civil service had changed as a result of the Nimeiri years; he suggested that there had been a decline in professionalism and the sense of public service. It is noticeable that some informants suggested there were new kinds of malpractice in the 1986 election and that both the press at the time and the published report on that election reported some unexplained anomalies in the statistics.[45]

Large-scale war had broken out again in the south in 1983, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the political wing of the rebel movement, refused to take part in the elections, as did most of the older southern parties. There were no polls at all in many southern constituencies; where polls were held, both registration and turnout were low, despite claims to the contrary by the Election Commission.[46] As in the 1960s, some geographical seats were won by the candidates of northern parties on very low turnouts. It is striking that while many northern Sudanese still talk of the 1986 election as a great moment of democratic participation, as an example of what is possible, southern Sudanese remember it very differently. When asked about it, one senior local government official responded, 'Was there an election in 1986? Yes, yes, there was an election! But it was run by the army! It was not an election. It was run by the army.'[47]

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[44] Chiriyankandath (1987), p. 100.

[45] *Al Ayyam,* 11 April 1986.

[46] *As Sahafa*, 12 April 1986.

[47] David Koak, 4 February 2009.

Table 3 **Results of the 1986 election**[48]

Party	No. of votes	Seats
Umma	1,531,216	100
DUP	1,166,434	63
NIF	733,034	28
NSP	88,329	8
SCP	62,617	2
URF	38,892	0
Ba'ath	35,502	0
National Unity	33,344	0
PPP	30,917	0
Umma Imam	30,227	0
SAPC	27,311	7
SPA	23,188	7
SAC	4,416	1
Beja Congress	14,291	1
FPP	5,042	1
Independent	95,532	6

Elections since 1989

Like their predecessors in 1969, the military men who seized power in 1989 in what they called the 'Salvation Revolution', the *Ingaz*, had little initial interest in elections. But, also like their predecessors, they turned to elections to provide a show of popular support for their programmes. Considerable energy was put into locating this electoral practice in the context of Islam, presenting the election as the occasion for the populace to pledge *ba'ia* – 'an agreement on obedience', as one scholar put it.[49] As in the Nimeiri period, considerable importance came to be attached to the production of impressive electoral statistics:

> I remember I was sitting with [Hassan al-] Turabi [the ideologue of the regime in its first decade], and all the governors of the states came to see him. Turabi was very angry. 'You should be ashamed of yourselves, the least [i.e. the lowest number] participants in the

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[48] Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), Table 12.5.

[49] Ahmed Mohammed Babiker, quoted in the newspaper report of a conference on 'The Islamic perspective on elections', *Al Sudan al Hadith,* 6 March 1996.

referendum for the constitution were your subjects! You were the people who didn't do well.' He was very angry that the percentage was very low…[50]

There was a presidential election in 1996, a referendum in 1998 and another presidential election in 2000. Supporters of the regime would object to these various votes being lumped together. There were significant changes in electoral law during this period, notably after 1998 with the introduction of representation for women on a proportional list basis. There were also significant differences between the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections, the first being characterised by a large number of almost entirely unknown candidates running against Omer el Beshir; the second with a much smaller number of better-known candidates (including Nimeiri). However, many observers have regarded all of these ballots as sharing the same basic flaws. During the 2000 election the press openly reported allegations that ballot boxes were being switched, that unregistered voters were being allowed to vote, and that unvalidated papers were being counted. But it also reported Beshir's victory with 86.5 per cent of the vote, in a 65 per cent turnout.[51]

Box 3	**Elections in Sudan**
1953	Multi-party 'self-government' parliamentary elections
1958	Multi-party parliamentary elections
1965	Multi-party constituent assembly election in northern Sudan
1967	Multi-party constituent assembly by-elections in Southern Sudan
1968	Multi-party election for constituent assembly
1971	National referendum on presidency: Nimeiri as sole candidate
1972	Single-party elections to People's Assembly
1974	Single-party elections to People's Assembly
1977	National referendum on presidency: Nimeiri as sole candidate
1978	Single-party elections to People's Assembly
1980	Single-party elections to People's Assembly
1983	National referendum on presidency: Nimeiri as sole candidate
1984	Single-party elections to People's Assembly
1986	Multi-party elections for constituent assembly
1996	Multiple-candidate – but effectively single party – presidential election
1998	Constitutional referendum
2000	Multiple-candidate presidential and parliamentary elections; boycott by major parties

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[50] Mohammad Ahmed Salim, 1 March 2009.

[51] *As Sahafa*, 17 and 30 December 2000; *Al Ayyam*, 30 December 2000.

III. The election process

Electoral management

> *'We, as local government officers, in previous times we do all the elections in the Sudan…
> we and the teachers are highly trained for elections.'[52]*

All of Sudan's national elections have followed one of two contrasting organizational models. The liberal multi-party elections have all relied on temporary structures which assume that an election requires a short-term mobilisation of the necessary resources of government. By contrast, authoritarian regimes have tried to normalize elections as part of ongoing processes of government, with permanent electoral bodies. For both, however, election has been very much a governmental activity, in which serving administrators – usually from local government – have been seconded to election work, and assisted by educated public servants to list and marshal the population.

The Mixed Electoral Commission of 1953 managed to supervise the election, but its ability to do so was largely a result of the determination of all parties involved to have some kind of election and the enthusiasm of the Sudanese election committees at a local level, rather than because of the leadership offered by the Commission itself. The Commission was, in fact, plagued by severe internal disagreements, between the British and Egyptian representatives and between the Umma and NUP representatives. On several occasions these quarrels almost stopped the work of the Commission, and its head, Sukumar Sen, evidently decided that some issues were simply irresolvable, and determinedly put off taking any decisions. This was an effective technique that allowed the elections to go ahead, although it meant that some of the very obvious malpractices – committed variously by British, Egyptian and Sudanese – effectively went unpunished. The creation of temporary constituency electoral committees, however – whose heads reported to a provincial Chief Election Officer, who in turn reported direct to the Commission – was a success. As suggested above, the members of these committees mostly showed great commitment and enthusiasm, and the wide powers give to Chief Election Officers to commander equipment and personnel allowed for logistical arrangements to be made at a provincial level.

In 1958, the large Election Commission was replaced by a three-man Election Commission (whose chair had been secretary to the Mixed Commission, and was perhaps the most senior and experienced civil servant in Sudan at the time). Two were from the north, and one from the south. The minutes of this body show none of the arguments over both principle and practice that characterized the meetings of the Mixed Commission; instead,

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[52] Abdel Rahman Mohammed Gaili, 25 February 2009.

the new Commission devoted itself to issuing a substantial body of directives that set out in detail almost every aspect of the electoral process. The focus was very much on providing a clear and consistent set of instructions, which could be followed across the country. Chief Election Officers were appointed – being in every case the Deputy Governor of the province – and these men were given the task of appointing constituency returning officers, each of whom in turn appointed their own assistants. In all, just over 3,000 people served as election staff. Appointments had to be formally approved by the Election Commission, but there was a considerable delegation of authority combined with a continued heavy reliance on the administration. The normal pattern was for returning officers to be appointed from among the Executive Officers of local councils – the uniformed civil servants who personified the continuing close scrutiny of local government by Khartoum. These men would then appoint local assistants drawn from among teachers and other public servants, as Gosnell observed:

> It was the local police officers, game wardens, teachers, clerks, book-keepers, engineers, rangers, *mamurs*, agricultural specialists and other government workers who actually conducted the election.[53]

The model was largely maintained in subsequent national elections. In 1965 and 1968 there were again temporary three-man Election Commissions, and again these devoted themselves to the issuing of directives, which were largely modelled on those of 1958 (though there were some minor changes, reflecting slight shifts in electoral rules).[54] The elections of 1968 coincided with school examinations, which meant that in some areas teachers were not available for election work: 'unemployed graduates' were used instead, not entirely successfully.[55] The level of detail in the election commission directives excited the admiration of some observers: 'One cannot but be impressed by the thoroughness,' remarked Bechtold.[56] The 1965 Commission was headed by a judge; that of 1968 by a career administrator who had recently been serving as secretary to the State Council (the five-man body that was the formal head of state in this period).

One of Nimeiri's first acts, in 1969, was to dismiss the existing Election Commission. But he then sought to create a new, permanent 'Technical Election Committee', which would move away from the previous practice of appointing a temporary three-man commission, drawn from the civil service and judiciary, for each election. We have not been able to find clear records of the membership of this committee, and it is not clear how far it did in fact serve

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[53] Gosnell (1958), p. 409.

[54] B.S. Sharma (1966), 'The 1965 elections in the Sudan', *The Political Quarterly*, 37, p. 443.

[55] 'Khartoum Province final report on constituent assembly elections', 1968 NRO ELECOM (4) 1/8/114.

[56] Bechtold (1976), p. 173.

as a continuing body. The Technical Committee did imitate existing practice in terms of issuing directives to returning officers; and it followed the practice of appointing senior administrators to run elections – with the innovation that the head of the uniformed security services would also be a member of the committee that ran the election in each province.[57] As in previous elections, these committees would then recruit substantial numbers of serving public servants on a temporary basis for election work. In 1980 there were ten staff in each of the provinces (there were then 18 provinces), and in each geographical constituency (of which there were 68) nine central staff. In one province (Bahr el Ghazal) there were 360 members of polling teams, 240 policeman and 240 identifiers engaged for election work. This would suggest that rather more than 7,000 public servants were employed altogether in geographical constituencies, along with more than 4,000 policemen and 4,000 identifiers.[58]

In 1985, the previous pattern was re-established, with a three-man Election Commission (with two northerners and one southerner, and with the chair of the 1968 commission recalled from retirement to serve again). This commission drew heavily on the experience of the previous multi-party elections, using the same structure of appointed officers at the level of the state, and treating the election as a national project which required – and could demand – almost total mobilisation of government resources. The Commission continued in existence after the 1986 election, but was finally dissolved immediately after the 1989 coup. After an initial experiment in the early 1990s with a seven-man General Elections Authority, the current regime reverted to a smaller body, called the National Elections Authority. Both were headed by the same member of the judiciary. The intention was that this would be a permanent body, which would create its own, relatively modest, structures and would run an annual voter registration update.[59]

Constituency demarcation

In every one of Sudan's multi-party elections, the demarcation of constituencies has been controversial, with multiple (and sometimes contradictory) assertions of gerrymandering. Radical intellectuals allege that what many refer to as the 'traditional parties' – Umma and DUP – have ensured an unfair advantage for rural voters by giving them a disproportionate number of seats:

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[57] 'Regulations for the People's Council elections, 1972', NRO ELECOM (5) 9/1/6.
[58] 'Budget: 4th People's Council', 1980, NRO ELECOM (5) 12/1/3.
[59] Abdul Moneim en Nahas, 20 January 2009.

The traditional parties, the Umma and Ittihadeen, were in coalition governments, they always concentrated on the rural areas, and neglected, almost, the towns… you make more constituencies in the rural areas, and less in the towns.[60]

There is evidence of this in a few instances: in 1965 the allocation of six constituencies to Dar Masalit (all of which were won by Umma) looks odd compared with the single seat for Atbara, for example. But it is not really the case that urban voters were consistently disadvantaged. Population figures for Sudan are often unreliable, with the exception of the 1955 census; using that census against the constituency map for 1953, it would seem that urban constituencies had, on average, substantially smaller populations than rural ones.[61] Taking the rather less reliable population estimates for 1965, Khartoum province, increasingly urban by that time, had an average constituency population of 57,000, while Darfur overall had an average constituency population of 58,000. In 1986, the Khartoum constituencies had an average population of 58,000 (based on the 1983 population estimates); those in Darfur had an average population of 78,000.[62] There is, then, no evidence of overall weighting against urban areas; if anything, the reverse is true.

But there is evidence for gerrymandering on a local level, as attempts have been made to reshape constituencies in the interest of one party or another. Constituency demarcation for the 1958 election was done by the Cabinet, and was the subject of some very blunt published complaints by the Election Commission of the time: 'The law empowering the Government to fix constituency boundaries is an unhappy piece of legislation. It is common knowledge that delimitation could be, if used unscrupulously, a very important factor in shaping the destiny of any elections.'[63] The result of this gerrymandering was several geographical constituencies that were made of physically separate areas stuck together, creating an almost comically flagrant attempt to engineer a local majority for a particular party.[64] In 1965 and again in 1986 the Election Commission was formally given the task of suggesting a demarcation of constituencies, with these suggestions to be considered by the Cabinet: as one observer noted, both the 1965 and 1968 Elections Acts '[gave] the Council of Ministers a clear opportunity to gerrymander'.[65] In practice, the man who chaired the 1968 Commission, and served again in 1986, remembered the process a little differently:

We had no role in the demarcation of constituencies. This was always taken by the Council of Ministers. If the Council of Ministers is keen enough and honest enough, it will give a good

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[60] Adlan Hardallo, 19 January 2009.

[61] Silberman (1958), p. 357; Willis (2007), p. 489.

[62] Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), pp. 172, 210, 121–22.

[63] Republic of Sudan (1958) *Election Commission's Final Report* (Khartoum), pp. 9–10.

[64] Bechtold (1976), pp. 168–71; Silberman (1958), p. 363.

[65] Owen Griffith, British Interests Section, Khartoum to Foreign Office, 2 October 1967, TNA FCO 39/184.

result. But, in most cases, in the Council, because of political intrigues, they tried to move seats. We don't accept this, but they bring it as a law to us…[66]

In the elections of the Nimeiri period, it does not seem that there was any gerrymandering of constituencies. Generally speaking, because the number of such constituencies was very small, the constituencies themselves were large and were composed of several administrative units put together, without apparent consideration for voting patterns. In 1986, there were again accusations of gerrymandering, for example in the redrawing of one of the Omdurman constituencies (number 49) to exclude the Hawawir tribe and thus ensure a win for the NIF.[67]

In sum, the demarcation of constituencies in the liberal elections has been the subject of a great deal of suspicion and controversy. Some of this has been misplaced, a reflex reassertion of the general intellectual anxiety over alleged rural dominance. Some has been the direct result of flagrant party manipulation in particular constituencies, which has led to great disparity in constituency sizes:

> … the division of the constituencies was played according to the interest of the rival parties, and just to give you – the law states, the Commission decided that every 75–80,000 people would form a constituency. But you find that some of the constituencies have more than 200,000, and some less than 50,000. According to the interests of the parties. That happened… especially in 1986.[68]

It may be worth noting, however, that, as one interviewee pointed out, gerrymandering may be more difficult in the coming election simply because effective gerrymandering requires some ability to predict how particular villages or tribes will vote. There has been no free election for such a long time, and population growth and movement has been so great, that no one has a very clear idea of how voting patterns will be shaped. It is certainly the case that this history of gerrymandering will create suspicion about the process of demarcation, and that the principles of rough equality of size, geographical contiguity and administrative integrity will be applied, and be seen to be applied.

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[66] El Tayyib el Khalil, 2 March 2009.

[67] Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), p. 200.

[68] Siddig Yousif, 17 January 2009.

Voter registration

'Registration is the most complicated part of the political process in the Sudan.'[69]

'Most of the cheating happens during registration.'[70]

Registration has proved the single most consistently challenging aspect of the electoral process in every multi-party election in Sudan. All those interviewed agreed on the importance of proper registration, and noted the difficulties of the process. But there was a very striking divergence in interview evidence on one key issue. A number of people – mostly former election officials – assured us that from 1958 onwards all registration in multi-party elections was done on a personal basis. Individual voters attended in person at registration centres to apply for inclusion on the register. The only exception to this – noted also in official reports and correspondence – were lists of names submitted by sheikhs and chiefs of 'nomad and semi-nomad' tribes for registration as a group. In all other cases, these interviewees insisted, 'we don't accept lists'.[71]

Individual registration was indeed required by the electoral laws from 1958 onwards. Those registering were not required to produce documentary evidence of age, citizenship or residence (since few people possessed such evidence), but were required to declare their eligibility to vote. The registering officer could query this if he thought it appropriate, could seek the advice of local identifiers provided by the sheikh or *omda* (headman), and could, if he thought proper, reject the application for registration; those aggrieved could appeal to the local magistrate. However, a number of other interviewees, describing both their own personal experience and their observation of practice, were adamant that in all multi-party elections after 1953 it was common practice for parties – and sometimes other bodies, such as the University of Khartoum – to submit lists of names to registration clerks.

> Then, in the other elections [after 1953], the parties, the political parties took over this responsibility. They register, they get the names of their supporters from various constituencies, and they come and register them, give them to the registration officer.[72]

> I recall that I was registered – we used to have very active political parties, this is. The registration is usually done by political parties, and they use that to do the lobby, to try and convince voters. So, being registered – I didn't go myself, there, this was not the case. All the inhabitants of the quarter had been registered by the different political parties, so

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[69] Sharma (1966), p. 446.

[70] Siddig Yousif, 17 January 2009.

[71] El Tayyib el Khalil, 2 March 2009. See also Mohammed Osman Kahlifa, 1 March 2009.

[72] Ibrahim Moniem Mansour, 24 February 2009.

everybody will find – even if your name is not there, somebody will apply, because he is thinking that you will be promising, as a potential voter…[73]

I did not go and ask to be registered. I will be registered by somebody else. A particular party, or whatever. *Lakin* [but], personally I have never been to a place where I said, register me. Never at all.[74]

This disparity is striking, and is perhaps the most obvious example of the way in which election officials in describing the past consistently downplayed problems, arguing that procedure was always followed and that everything went smoothly. In historical recollection, they suggest an ideal election – one which worked entirely according to the model set out in the directives from the election commissions.

There seems no reason to doubt that, in practice, parties did submit lists for registration; or rather, that groups of local activists organized in support of a candidate under the name of a party did so. The only party that seems to have pursued a coherent cross-constituency policy for identifying, mobilizing and enfranchising voters was the NIF, which set up a special team to do this in 1986. Otherwise, it was local groups, organized on a constituency basis, who did the bulk of the 'party' work. In 1958 the Chief Election Officer in Blue Nile Province admitted that his staff were accepting lists because of 'difficulties encountered by villagers living in far remote scattered villages'. The Commission noted that this was 'rather serious' but took no action.[75] The distance between what was supposed to happen, and what actually happened, is not hard to explain. In 1953, there had been very little personal registration, and in most of the country (except for the small number of urban areas that had seen recent local government election) lists of voters had largely been drawn up from tax lists, or from other lists supplied by sheikhs and chiefs. The decision to insist on personal registration in 1958, which reflected the desire to have an election that was as far as possible of an 'international' standard, imposed an immense burden on registration staff – of whom there were only 591.[76] Quite apart from the physical difficulty involved, as registration clerks toiled to reach remote settlements, there was much popular suspicion that registration was a prelude to some new kind of tax or military conscription:

A registration clerk Philip Ojulo was appointed to do the work until Henry Luk Lual could arrive. He left on foot for Uror. Here he found the Court President Ruot Bidiet away attending a meeting with the Dinka Chiefs at Duk Fadiet. The work of registration here did

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[73] Mohammed Ahmed Salim, 1 March 2009.

[74] Adlan Hardallo, 19 January 2009. See also Abdel Rahman Mohammed Gaili, 25 February 2009.

[75] Chief Election Officer Wad Medani to Election Commission, 12 December 1957, and marginal notes, NRO ELECOM (2) 1/3/18.

[76] Republic of Sudan (1958), p. 2.

not progress smoothly as there was deep suspicion. The Court President arrived but still people were reluctant to register their names… There was considerable opposition to registration and he could gather the cause to be false rumours.[77]

Such rumours were particularly strong in Equatoria, where suspicion of the government had been exacerbated by the military action that followed the Torit mutiny of August 1955.[78]

Only when it became apparent that personal registration would simply not be possible did the Election Commission decide to accept lists from chiefs in the case of 'nomad and semi-nomad tribes'. In the end lists had to be used in all 46 constituencies in Southern Sudan in 1958 – as well as in 14 constituencies in the north.[79] Even where lists were not formally accepted, the use of sheikhs or omdas to encourage people to come forward to register could slip rather easily into the soliciting of names for registration. Elsewhere, the surreptitious provision and acceptance of party lists must have been a welcome expedient for harassed registration clerks; again, it is easy to see how party encouragement to individuals to register might lead on to the provision of lists of names. The Election Commission was pushing for numbers, sending instructions by telegram to 'Grateful speed up registration before 15.11.57 in constituencies where percentage of registration is low'. The self-satisfied reports of some election officials show that the registration of 20 per cent of the total population had been set as an informal target.[80] The submission of party lists did not happen everywhere – in 1968, an official in Khartoum complained at the lack of party involvement – but the interview evidence suggests that it was common.[81]

Whether people turned up to register in person or not, registration posed other challenges. Since there were no identity documents, registration clerks relied on 'identifiers' provided by local sheikhs and chiefs to confirm the name, age and citizenship of applicants, as well as their residence in the constituency.[82] The form required name, father's name and grandfather's name; but some people might be known by other names.[83] As one official rather despairingly noted, some cultural naming practices seemed designed to confound the process:

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[77] 'Report on election work in Lou Nuer South Akobo', 21 March 1958, NRO ELECOM (2) 1/1/4.

[78] Venansio Ioro, 4 February 2009.

[79] Republic of Sudan (1958), p. 2.

[80] Election Commission to all Chief Election Officers, 1 November 1957, NRO ELECOM (2) 1/3/18; see the final report for Constituency 113 (Omdurman), which refers to the 'one-fifth rule' for registration: Returning Officer Constituency 113 to Chief Election Officer Khartoum, 7 April 1958, ELECOM (2) 1/1/4.

[81] 'Khartoum Province final report on constituent assembly elections', 1968, NRO ELECOM (4) 1/8/114.

[82] Abdel Rahman Mohammed Gaili, 25 February 2009.

[83] Khalid Hamad el Nil, 9 January 2009.

> Tradition amongst the Nuba tribes the changing of their names before and after any wrestling. Moving with the *Kujor* from one place to another is also a tradition of the Nuba. These things usually make the names appear different in the final roll. It is common knowledge amongst the Nuba their ignorance of the names of their grandfather.[84]

Citizenship also presented significant challenges, given the considerable movements of population between western and central Sudan, and from areas further west into Sudan itself. Registration officers were advised to refer to the courts any doubtful cases, but confusion was compounded by what the Election Commission sourly called 'the last minute mass conferment of Sudanese Nationality on thousands of foreign subjects' – a political manoeuvre directly intended to benefit the Umma party.[85] All these problems combined to make registration a frantic period, in which there was a strong pressure to include as many names as possible, obtained from any source.

Registration in 1958 began in mid-September, and closed on 15 November. Ten days were then allotted for appeals and objections. The number of these varied considerably from province to province: in all there were 63,063 appeals, the great majority of which were accepted; and 16,004 objections, the great majority of which were rejected. Objections were very largely centred in a small number of constituencies – in 129 constituencies there were 10 or less objections; appeals were much more evenly spread. [86]

The voters themselves were given no record or proof of registration, and there was no voter's card. The names were collected within the registration area – the size and nature of which was decided by the registration officer – and were then arranged alphabetically and typed up as a roll for that area. At that point a registration number was allotted, based on the order in which the name appeared. The voter would have no record of this number, and would not be aware of it, unless he checked his name on the published roll and took a note of it.

Both the procedures established in 1958 and the widespread practical derogation of these were repeated in the 1965/7, 1968 and 1986 elections. In each case the electoral register was drawn up afresh and regulations specified direct personal registration, except where the Election Commission permitted lists to be submitted by sheikhs and chiefs, which it did in much of the south, as well as western and eastern Sudan. The same problems were encountered, too – of large distances, insufficient staff and suspicious people:

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[84] 'Final report, 1958 election', Kordofan Province, NRO ELECOM (2) 1/2/11.

[85] Republic of Sudan (1958), p. 3; Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), pp. 163–7; Bechtold (1976), pp. 158.

[86] Appendices to Republic of Sudan (1958).

> In most of the, in the rural areas, people think that registration means that they will be taxed, they will be taxed. And so it is better that they don't register themselves.[87]

> Difficulties faced in registration [in southern provinces] were heavy rains and bad roads, a lack of election officers, the passivity of the political parties and popular doubts about the registration of women, especially among the Dinka.[88]

In each of these elections, interviewees suggested that parties did submit lists of voters for registration (whether initially or in the appeals stage is not clear), and that this led to multiple registration:

> The electoral roll itself is done in a very unsystematic way, lots of people are not registered. So parties used to register many names, and people sometimes registered in more than one place, so the figures are not highly dependable.[89]

There is some correspondence from 1965 suggesting that in some constituencies there were problems with the production of the initial register, which was printed badly and distributed so late that it was not possible for parties to organize appeals and objections.[90] The final report submitted by the senior election official for Khartoum seems to confirm this problem: 'There was inadequate time for registration, which caused many mistakes which we could have avoided if the term of registration were extended.'[91] In every multi-party election, time was a major issue; the period for registration varied, from six to eight weeks, and the time for appeals varied from one to two weeks, but electoral staff were constantly aware of the pressing need to produce lists of names as quickly as possible.

Despite limited time, appeals and objections were made, though the cost of this kept numbers down. Again, it was parties rather than individual voters who were mostly involved in this:

> You just sign, they bring the petition, they have their own lawyers, your name is not there, your name is not correct. You just sign. It is important that the parties have machinery, very important. [92]

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[87] Toby Madut, 4 February 2009.

[88] 'Final Report of Election Commission', 1965, NRO ELECOM (3) 1/3/14.

[89] Mahgoub Mohammed Salih, 17 January 2009.

[90] Abbas Da'falla, Umma candidate, Constituency No. 31 to Chief Election Officer Khartoum, 22 April 1965; NUP Omdurman to Chief Elections Officer Khartoum, 25 March 1965, NRO ELECOM (3) 1/2/8.

[91] 'Final report on geographical constituencies', 1965, Khartoum Province, NRO ELECOM (3) 1/2/9; see also Sharma (1966), p. 447.

[92] Mohammed Ahmed Salim, 1 March 2009.

If an appeal or objection were successful, the cost was refunded, but simply raising the necessary money in the first place might be a problem, as one party activist noted of the 1965 election:

> In this constituency we crossed out about 2,000 names. The difficulty was, if you want to object to a person you have to pay £5 to the court. If you win, the money comes back, but if you lose the objection, the money is lost. That was our problem… for lack of money we couldn't go to court.[93]

When the parties could raise funds – particularly in constituencies that were viewed as borderline – then just as parties competed to supply names, they also competed in making objections to names supplied by other parties. The Secretary to the Election Commission recalled that in one single constituency in Gezira 4,000 objections were lodged by various parties: 'They do that, they exchange this kind of thing. If you object on 30 people, I do the same.'[94]

In 1986, as well as the provision of lists of names by parties, individual registration was supplemented by the use of ration lists[95] – a technique already adopted during the Nimeiri period to push up registration numbers.[96] This, as well as a rush of activity by political parties, helps explain the very high registration figures for that year. Under the Ingaz ration lists were again used to make up voters registers; and so again, people could find that they were on the register without having registered themselves.

In the multi-party elections, the consequences of the lack of resources and time can be clearly seen in the registration figures. In 1953, when most of the country relied on the same registration technique – mostly, lists supplied by sheikhs and chiefs – registration figures were fairly consistent across the country. In 1958, there was still a rough consistency, but thereafter figures varied substantially, depending on local circumstances. Where parties were active – and where government resources were concentrated – registration levels tended to be higher. On the fringes of the state, where people were suspicious, communications poor and registration staff thinly stretched, and where there was no effective local party organization, registration figures were lower. And behind the figures themselves lay an uncertain reality in which it is impossible to be sure how far the numbers were just lists of names, supplied by sheikhs, or parties or copied from ration lists.

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[93] Siddig Yousif, 17 January 2009.

[94] Jalal Mohammed Ahmad, 20 January 2009.

[95] Lists of names were kept for the distribution of basic commodities, such as sugar. If a person's name was on the list, he or she could buy the commodity.

[96] Shendi group interview, 28 February 2009. In the Nimeiri period, registers for some elections were simply taken from SSU membership lists: Abdel Rahman Mohammed Gaili, 25 February 2009.

Comprehensive figures that break down voter registration by gender are only available for the 1965/7 and 1968 elections. These figures suggest gender as well as geographical disparities. Reports from the 1965 and 1968 elections, and interviewees' comments, suggest that for women all the other issues connected with registration were compounded by the cultural constraints on women: 'Registration among women was very high in towns and more sophisticated areas, and the contrary was true in the rural areas because of traditional barriers, particularly in Kassala.'[97]

Table 4 **Voter registration as % of total estimated population by province**[98]
(NB In 1965 women were enfranchised and voting age was lowered to 18 years)

Province	1953	1958	1965/7	1968	1986
Khartoum	21	18	28	35	44
Kordofan	17	14	21	25	29
Northern	15	11	18	23	46
Kassala	16	13	17	17	34
Blue Nile	17	16	25	30	40
Darfur	14	11	14	24	24
Bahr el Ghazal	19	15	21	23	11
Upper Nile	17	15	10	18	7
Equatoria	17	15	1	4	21
TOTAL	17	14	18	23	29

Nomination

In comparison with registration, the nomination of candidates for parliamentary (and in some cases presidential) national elections has been relatively straightforward. The qualifications for candidates have varied very slightly, but have always been solely in terms of age, literacy and citizenship. There has been no property qualification for candidacy. In most elections, a deposit has been charged, to be forfeited in the event of the candidate polling below a certain proportion of the votes; there has also in some cases been a nomination fee. Ony one interviewee suggested that the deposit or the fee posed an

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[97] 'Final report on elections in Khartoum province', 1965, NRO ELECOM (3) 1/2/9; 'Final report of the Election Commission', 1965, NRO ELECOM (3) 1/3/14.
[98] Figures compiled from the published reports of the Election Commissions and from Bechtold (1976).

obstacle to candidacy,[99] as they were generally set low – £S20 in 1965, for example (in the 1950s the deposit was set at an especially low rate in the south, on the grounds that levels of wealth there were lower).[100] However, it is interesting that on one occasion when no deposit was required – the first election to the 'People's Council' in the early 1970s – a very large number of candidates came forward, to the point that it became almost impossible to run a ballot. In consequence, the deposit system was reintroduced in subsequent elections in the Nimeiri period.

In most of the multi-party elections, substantial numbers of candidates were successfully nominated: varying between an average of just below four in each constituency in 1953, and around five per constituency in 1986. Numbers of candidates were highest in and around Khartoum, and lowest in the west and south. There is no information available on the occupational or age profile of candidates. Abushouk has pointed out that even in the graduates' constituencies, women were a tiny minority of candidates; only two women have been elected in geographical constituencies in multi-party elections.[101]

There is evidence that in some cases the nomination process could be manipulated to affect electoral outcomes. The first example of this came in the notorious Chief Daryo case of 1953, when a British District Commissioner forced a candidate to withdraw his nomination in order to allow another candidate to win uncontested. In 1965 there were reports of candidates being offered 'refunds' of campaign costs in return for withdrawing their nominations.[102] In the Nimeiri period, and under the Ingaz, there is further evidence of the use of the nomination process to manipulate outcomes. Under Nimeiri, all candidates were required to obtain 'certificates of no objection' from the Sudan Socialist Union before their nominations were accepted. In some cases these were simply refused. Under the Ingaz regime, local 'Unity committees' in some constituencies pressured candidates to withdraw their nominations; as a result, there were a substantial number of electoral victories by 'silent consensus' (*ijma sukut*) – that is, unopposed.[103] On the other hand, there were also – as there had been in the Nimeiri period – some constituencies with very large numbers of candidates. Unopposed candidacies could come about as a result of local considerations, as

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[99] Ma'az el Hassan el Awad, 9 January 2009.

[100] '1965 Election Rules', ELECOM (3) 1/2/6.

[101] One in 1965 and one in 1986; one woman in 1965 and two in 1986 won graduates' seats. See el-Battahani (2002), p. 265; Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), p. 209.

[102] Sharma (1966), pp. 451–2. There was a considerable number of withdrawals in all elections: in 1968, for example, 55 out of an original 245 candidates in Kordofan withdrew their nominations, though the reasons are not indicated. See 'Nomination of candidates and voting, complaints', ELECOM (4) 1/13/63.

[103] el-Battahani (2002), pp. 270–71; Mohammed Ahmad Salim (2007) 'Election rules and the organisation of political life', in Tayyib al-Haj 'Atiya (ed.) *Al-Intikhabat* (Khartoum), pp. 142–68; *Al Sudan al Hadith*, 17 February 1996.

well as political calculations. As one man explained of his uncontested victory in one of the Nimeiri period elections:

> In the last Assembly elections, in our constituency, there were ten candidates, and we thought that this, if we leave it to go democratically, after the elections were over we would have ten different areas of enmity. So they all agreed to elect me to represent the constituency, and they withdraw.[104]

This desire to avoid local conflict may have been particularly important where, as in this case, the election could have no impact upon the nature of government.

In the multi-party elections, uncontested candidacies were rare (with the exception of a number of southern seats in the 1965 election, where the election was subsequently the subject of a prolonged legal dispute). Parties did attempt to use the nomination system tactically, launching objections to opposing candidates (literacy, age and citizenship were all challenged in different cases). The number of such objections was, however, limited. A more striking feature of the nomination process was the effective inability of the hierarchies of the traditional parties to control the activities of local candidates and their supporters. Both NUP/DUP and Umma were chronically unable to impose discipline on the nomination process; partly because of local preference for local candidates – rather than those 'sent' from party headquarters – and partly because of poor organization.

> And another factor about those elections is that there were no one candidate for the party, there was no control of who could stand for elections, so in several constituencies you find three people standing for Umma or three people standing for National Unionist Party. So it was chaos![105]

It is symptomatic that in 1953 the man running the Umma campaign did not know how many constituencies there were in the country as a whole.[106] As a result, both Umma and NUP/DUP have been plagued by multiple candidacies – and by post-election defections, as candidates elected on nominal allegiance to one party have subsequently abandoned that party.[107] This is one area in which the legislation for the forthcoming election is clearly designed to address previous problems, by imposing a degree of party discipline.

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[104] Ibrahim Moniem Mansour, 24 February 2009.

[105] Mukhtar el Assam, 18 January 2009.

[106] Minute, Derek Riches, 15 August 1953, TNA FO 371/102758.

[107] Sharma (1966), p. 451.

Voter information and education

In advance of the 1953 election, a fairly rudimentary process of voter information had been undertaken by the administration, involving practice polls in a number of constituencies. The practical effect of this must have been limited, but in this – as in so many other things – the emotional enthusiasm generated by the whole process seems to have carried the election through despite the difficulties. In 1958 the Election Commission attempted a more systematic approach, which involved the screening of two films and the widespread holding of practice polls, in which some members of the public as well as the voting teams themselves would be involved. This seems to have been very effective in some urban areas. But there were insufficient copies of the films and, more importantly, not enough cinemas or mobile projection teams to show them very widely. The directives issued by the Election Commission were ambitious:

> Ensure that candidates, their agents or polling agents also attend rehearsals. Exhibit widely Election Films at these rehearsals. Rehearsals will be of no use unless they are held two or three times weekly. All Presiding and Polling Officers must compulsorily attend these rehearsals.[108]

But while this was practicable in urban areas, where all constituencies were small and it was easy to bring all the people together, such instructions were simply impossible to follow in rural constituencies where members of the polling teams were drawn from a wide area, and were supposed to remain in their regular posts until shortly before the election. In some cases, polling teams only really came together for the first time a few days before the election began; information for the polling officials was thus limited. Returning officers would all have received and read the directives, and in most cases were also involved in training meetings at a provincial level, of which several were held in each election. But not all presiding officers, or their assistants, had much training, and it is not clear if all of them had even seen the directives.

In subsequent multi-party elections, films were shown again in some areas. Otherwise such training as there was seems again to have been aimed at election staff – and sometimes candidates' agents – rather than at the general public. Returning officers of constituencies went to training sessions, and they in turn instructed their subordinates.[109] In so far as voter education was attempted at all, this was left to the candidates and their agents, rather than being undertaken by election officials. At least some of these officials believed that the

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[108] Election Commission, Directive No. 12, 6 January 1958, NRO ELECOM (2) 1/4/26.

[109] For the use of films in 1965, see 'Final report on elections, Khartoum Province', 1965, ELECOM (3) 1/2/9; for training in later elections see, for example, the description offered of circumstances in Red Sea Province, in *Al Ayyam*, 10 April 1986.

injunction to impartiality meant that they could give no advice at all to voters: 'The voters, we have not to talk to them at all!… The parties have to train them… We, as officers, we have not to talk to them at all.'[110]

Political campaigning

Most interviewees, and much of the literature, suggested a clear contrast between the campaigning strategy of the traditional parties and that of the overtly ideological parties – notably the ICF/NIF and the Communist Party. The traditional parties tended to rely on sectarian and tribal affiliations, and their campaigning revolved entirely around these; the ideological parties, in contrast, produced manifestoes and party programmes to present their case.

The distinction is a useful one, but the difference in campaigning styles may not have been quite so absolute. Outside major towns, the role of printed leaflets, manifestoes and posters was very limited. Instead, all parties organized rallies and speeches for the public – for which attendance might be encouraged by the supplying of food and/or drink – and lobbied local men (and women) of influence, whose support might sometimes be won by persuasion, sometimes by promises and sometimes by gifts. An activist who had worked in Kordofan in 1965 described how his candidate ensured victory by marrying a daughter of the *nazir* (senior tribal leader); another described how village midwives were recruited to take gifts to new mothers, and how women singers were hired to compose flattering songs in support of candidates. In towns, candidates of all parties held 'political nights' where they argued their case for election. But they also campaigned simply by meeting people, in a way that revealed the fundamental importance to most potential voters – whatever their party – of knowing their candidate and feeling comfortable with him:

> In Sudan, social activity is very important. This is a candidate belonging to the same party, but he is not social, he does not participate in social activities. Funerals, he never attends funerals, he never comes for weddings, he never help people, so I will not vote for him! … So in Sudan one of the grounds for voting for or against is not just politics, it is social participation, social appearances. That is why most of our politicians try to satisfy this thing – *yaani* [that is], even Ismail Azhari and Abdallah Khalil, the first prime ministers, if there is a funeral there, each of them would try to get there before the other! If there is a sick person in hospital, it is very important to visit! To share our happiness, and our bad days… So in

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[110] Abdel Rahman Mohammed Gaili, 25 February 2009.

1968, though I [was] a law student, I voted not on political or ideological grounds, but personal.[111]

A successful NIF candidate in the 1986 election made a similar point:

> I went to all centres, places you can find people, where you can have access: clubs, football clubs, especially, and the social clubs. Otherwise, the mosque. Every week, to visit the mosque, to say prayers and to speak after with them, informally. So I find a lot of blood relationship, area allegiances where I come from in the north, and ideologically people were really unsure… I did not find that much allegiance to the traditional parties. It is family connections which you can bank on… every, every person, who you can find a connection of blood, or friends, or whatever you have, is not that much committed to the traditional party. If they were Baathist or Communist, maybe they would be very much committed and could not be influenced. But according to my experience, this is the way I have done it. I did not care that he is against me. No, he is not against me. He doesn't know me. I can be more useful to him than the man who – [Than] the three candidates who are against me.[112]

Such comments point to the profound importance, even among the ideological parties, of ties of sentiment of one kind or another. This is not, of course, a unique feature of Sudanese elections – it has long been argued that much voting in Europe or the United States, for example, can be understood in such terms.[113] But the emphasis on social ties is suggestive of the way in which many Sudanese – including those who consider themselves educated – see the choice of a parliamentarian not primarily as a decision on government policy, but as the selection of a representative who will deal with government. The crucial factor in making the decision is thus the existence of some sense of shared moral community between voter and candidate. In consequence, the costs of campaigning lay not so much in the printing of literature or paying for newspaper adverts, but in the need for the candidates and their agents to constantly travel and meet people, and to offer gifts and refreshments.

Newspapers were extensively used for party propaganda in the multi-party elections, since a number of them had very clear political affiliations. How far this affected outcomes is difficult to say; most of the material took the form not of overt political advertisement but rather of stories that were presented in ways favourable to – or critical of – particular parties, and since the affiliation of the newspapers was well known to newspaper readers, it is perhaps doubtful whether many voters made decisions based on such propaganda. Radio

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[111] Mohammed Ahmed Salim, 1 March 2009.

[112] Ahmed Abdelrahman Mohammed, 19 January 2009.

[113] A seminal work being A.H. Birch (1950) 'The habit of voting', *The Manchester School*, 18, p. 75.

and television were entirely in state control in previous multi-party elections: in 1986 arrangements were made for party access to these media. Similar arrangements for media access were made in the 1996 and 2000 elections, but – since the outcomes of these were widely assumed to be known in advance – both the interest in and the effect of these broadcasts would likely have been negligible.

A number of interviewees emphasised that the coming election will be held in entirely new circumstances as far as the media are concerned. Mobile telephones, the internet and the presence of privately-owned radio and television stations as well as newspapers might offer possibilities for quite new kinds of campaigning. However, the extent of continuing government control over the content of newspapers, and of nominally independent radio and television stations, raises serious questions about how far this might really be possible. The press coverage of elections in the Nimeiri period offers an unhappy example of the deadening consequences of such state control.

Table 5 **Digest of registration in 1968 compared with 1965/7**[114]

Province	Number of registered voters 1968			Number of registered voters 1965		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Equatoria	30,421	20,149	50,570	9,555	5,419	14,974
Khartoum	182,914	93,752	276,666	151,174	63,189	214,363
Northern	125,390	113,938	239,328	118,376	57,024	175,400
Blue Nile	492,186	352,560	844,746	464,102	232,219	696,321
Upper Nile	132,866	70,911	203,777	76,812	34,260	111,072
Bahr el Ghazal	193,840	102,791	296,631	189,222	73,899	263,121
Darfur	217,058	140,708	357,766	154,406	55,499	209,905
Kassala	127,830	37,868	165,698	127,024	34,470	161,494
Red Sea	71,717	14,279	85,996	62,273	10,568	72,841
Kordofan	309,610	223,087	532,697	276,656	164,013	440,699

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[114] 'Estimates and reports on registration', Bahr el Ghazal, NRO ELECOM (4) 1/11/54.

Voting

'Transportation is the key to election victories.'[115]

There are different ways of organizing a secret ballot, and Sudanese elections in the 1950s and 1960s exemplified two possibilities. In those constituencies where the electorate was judged to be sufficiently 'enlightened' or 'civilised', voters were expected to mark a ballot paper to show which of several candidates they preferred; all marked ballot papers went into a single box. In other constituencies, voters marked by 'token' – that is, they were given a piece of paper, which they did not mark, but instead put into one of several boxes, each marked with the symbol of one candidate. Where ballot papers were used, these were of a design which allowed them to be used in multiple constituencies: they did not have the names of any candidates, but were instead marked with symbols (according to the number of candidates in the constituency). The allocation of symbols to candidates was done separately in each constituency by drawing lots; it was not possible to have 'party' symbols because of the multiplicity of candidates. The returning officer in each constituency would ask for ballot papers with a number of symbols equal to the number of candidates in the constituency, but in no other way was a ballot paper specific to a constituency. This greatly simplified the printing process – it was just necessary to know roughly how many ballot papers were needed for constituencies with two candidates, how many for constituencies with three candidates, and so on. The single transferable vote was used in the graduates' constituencies, emphasising the distinction between these and the geographical seats.

The Election Commissions disliked voting tokens, partly on practical grounds: the system required multiple boxes, which increased problems with transportation, and because the actual placing of the token in the box had to be done in secret, it was possible for people to simply keep their token and smuggle it out for sale. On at least one occasion, there was also an attempt to set fire to the tokens in one candidate's box by dropping a match into it.[116] Their dislike was also ideological: they wanted Sudan's elections to look as much like the international norm as possible, and the token system challenged that ambition. But administrators in the south and in parts of the west insisted on retaining the token system, arguing that voters were simply too unsophisticated to manage the marking of a ballot paper. In 1965/7 and 1968 half of the geographical constituencies in the country as a whole used voting tokens.

In the Nimeiri period, the use of tokens was formally ended in parliamentary elections, but was maintained for the presidential referenda. In these, voters were given a token and

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[115] Silberman (1958), p. 364.
[116] Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), p. 177.

presented with two boxes, one marked 'Yes' and one 'No'. In a number of polling stations, the boxes were located in such way that election officials and policemen guarding the polling station could see which box the voter chose. Perhaps partly because of this abuse, there was no attempt to reintroduce token voting in 1986, and all constituencies used ballot papers. Regrettably, we have been unable to find consistent records of spoilt votes which might show how far the use of tokens did, or did not, make it easier for relatively uneducated people to vote.

Voting in all of Sudan's previous elections has been spread over a number of days. This has been a direct result of resource constraints. Each registration area was also a polling area and had its own polling station, but since there have not been enough polling officials or sufficient transport to have the necessary number of polling stations all open at the same time, polling teams have had to move around from one station to another within a constituency, taking the poll at each. This procedure was established in 1953, with the intention that any one polling station would only be open on one day; the aim at the time was also that each polling station would not have more than 500 voters on the register. While this made it possible to spread the available personnel more widely, it raised further problems of transport and management. Reports of the multi-party elections gloss over these, but Bechtold reported that, 'upon investigation many a tale was heard in 1953 about lorries or landrovers that broke down or got stuck in sand or mud, making it impossible for the official to reach his destination'. [117]

In subsequent elections the size of the roll for each polling station tended to grow. In 1986 a polling station would thus remain open for more than one day if there were more than one thousand people on the register, because it was impossible for more than a thousand people to vote in one day. Whether the team stayed in one station, or moved between stations, this practice of multiple day voting imposed considerable strains on the polling team, including the repeated re-enactment of the ritual of sealing and unsealing ballot boxes – since the same boxes had to be used on successive days:

> We used to have 2,000, 3,000 in one station and we have more than one day to vote. And then comes the trouble of closing the boxes and sealing the boxes, and the other day opening the boxes, and having the agents and witnesses and the trouble that comes with. [118]

The slow pace of voting has partly resulted from each polling station having a single stream, so that only one person at a time can be identified, issued with an authenticated ballot paper and allowed to vote. Plans for the forthcoming election are for multiple-stream

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[117] Bechtold (1976), p. 146.
[118] Jalal Mohammed Ahmad, 20 January 2009.

polling centres; these will, however, rely on some effective system for informing and guiding voters.

In practice, even the single-stream polling station has posed some problems, particularly because of the lack of voters' cards in previous elections. This has greatly increased the burden on the polling team, which in most multi-party elections has consisted of three officials (a presiding officer and two assistants), two or three 'identifiers' – usually provided by the local omda, sheikh or chief, whose task it has been to confirm the identity of those coming to vote – the agents of the candidates, and one or two policemen. The nature of the problems faced by these teams, who by 1986 were dealing with registers that might have as many as two thousand names, can be inferred from Bechtold's remarks on the elections of the 1960s:

> An additional difficulty lay in the state most registration lists were in, particularly in view of the problem of arranging the names correctly in alphabetical order. It can be estimated that roughly three-fourths or more of all Sudanese names begin with one of three letters, and it is exceedingly tedious to order names under such conditions.[119]

The implication is clearly that there were errors in the lists, which made it hard to find the names of those who were registered. This left the polling team, already pressed for time and with a queue of voters waiting, having to decide whether to keep looking for the name, or to announce that it was not there, or to simply tick off some other name that seemed close to that given by the aspirant voter.

Faced with this problem, some candidates had by the 1960s devised their own streaming system to try and ensure that their supporters voted. As well as agents inside the polling station, they had representatives waiting outside, with a copy of the register, to help potential supporters find their names on the roll, and to write their number on a piece of paper which the voter could then present to the election officials, so that they could identify them on the list.

> Every party, around the polling station, you will find, in one of the houses near there, they will have a member. And they will have the list. But it is very hard – most of the people are illiterate, they come. The parties call them – 'What is your name? Where do you live?' They give him a card, with his name and his number in the registration. And tell him to go there, they will find it easier – and the officers accepted that, because that helped them a lot,

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[119] Bechtold (1976), p. 149.

because the person comes with a card that says, my name is so, my registered number is so. It helped the officer to give him the card to go and vote.[120]

This was, in effect, a do-it-yourself voter's card. It could on occasion lead to conflict between agents and officials, when disputes – sometimes due to confusion, perhaps sometimes due to bias – arose over whether a name could actually be found, or if the person wishing to vote actually was that person:

> Some election officers – if they do not like a candidate, they will say that the names are not there. That the names are not there. Then the agents will insist that the names are there – this sometimes happened. If the agents are not strong, your supporters will be thrown out, your names are not there, your names are not there.[121]

It has not been possible to establish how widespread this practice was, though several interviewees referred to it.

Almost certainly more widespread was the provision of transport by candidates for potential voters, which many interviewees identified as the most important intervention candidates could make in the poll itself. Even with polling teams moving from station to station over a period of days (and with 'mobile polling stations' in some constituencies, which were not tied to any particular place but were allowed to go wherever the polling officer thought necessary in pursuit of voters), many people were still living a considerable distance from the polling station they were supposed to attend:

> Distances are very far, the polling stations are very far, maybe in between them about 20 miles. So it is a long distance, people have to walk long distances to the polling stations, so it is very difficult for the voters to walk long distances.[122]

As Sharma observed of the 1965 election, 'What matters most is the transport facilities to carry electors to the polling stations. If a political party can manage this, it can go a long way in ensuring a large number of votes.'[123] Even where the population was by no means so scattered, the provision of transport for a relatively short distance might be enough to encourage participation by those who would otherwise be too busy, or not sufficiently interested. This was banned in 1953 as a 'corrupt practice', but in subsequent elections the

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[120] Siddig Yousif, 17 January 2009; also Ma'az el Hassan el Awad, 9 January 2009.
[121] David Koak, 4 February 2009.
[122] Toby Madut, 4 February 2009.
[123] Sharma (1966), p. 447.

use of lorries and cars by candidates to bring voters to the polling station was widespread.[124]

> If you have money, if you have transport for the people, particularly in the rural areas, you can be able to bring people to the polling stations, otherwise it is going to be difficult. They may not be interested, or they don't have the means, so – money is important. Particularly in the rural areas. You have to feed some people, you have to bring them to the polling stations, and so on and so forth. They don't come and spend the money for something that they don't know.[125]

This, as much as campaigning, was a major expense for candidates.

Once his or her identity had been established, the voter would be issued either with a token (authenticated with the presiding officer's signature) or with a ballot paper, which would again be authenticated. Both tokens and papers were printed in serially numbered books; the number of the paper or token issued to the voter would be marked on the copy of the register used by the assistant presiding officer. Then, where tokens were used, the voter would go into a separate screened room where the ballot boxes were lined up, to place the token into a box. In ballot paper elections they would make use of a screened table to mark their ballot paper, and then place the paper in the box in front of the presiding officer, before leaving the polling station by a separate exit.

There were, then, two principle challenges associated with the poll itself, both of which were directly connected with the constraints imposed by lack of resources and personnel: the distance which voters had to travel, and the problems with identifying and processing aspirant voters in the time available. Even where potential voters had registered, these factors could be significant disincentives: they faced the prospect of walking for a day in order to spend another day standing in a queue, to be processed by harassed officials. With no proof of identity, unable to read the register themselves, they might then find that they could not vote because officials could not find their name. In such circumstances they would be much more likely to vote if the agents of candidates provided transport, and/or helped them insist on their right to vote. It is unsurprising, therefore, that turnout rates varied even more than registration rates across the country, with much higher levels in the riverain heartland, where communications were better, levels of education higher and candidates more likely to have educated, active agents and money to spend on transport.

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[124] *Al Rai al 'Amm*, 24 November 1953; Shendi group, 28 February 2009.
[125] Adlan Hardallo, 19 January 2009.

Table 6 **Turnout in parliamentary elections as percentage of estimated population** (and as percentage of registered voters)[126]

Province	1958	1965/7	1968	1986
Khartoum	15 (86)	16 (56)	25 (71)	35(81)
Kordofan	10 (69)	12 (55)	15 (58)	19 (66)
Northern	10 (90)	10 (57)	18 (77)	39 (84)
Kassala	9 (70)	7 (41)	11 (65)	22 (65)
Blue Nile	14 (87)	17 (65)	22 (73)	32 (78)
Darfur	7 (59)	8 (56)	14 (59)	15 (64)
Bahr el Ghazal	7 (47)	8 (40)	8 (36)	1 (6)
Upper Nile	6 (38)	3 (30)	5 (29)	2 (31)
Equatoria	9 (59)	<1 (39)	2 (45)	6 (31)
TOTAL	10 (69)	10 (54)	14 (61)	20 (68)

Counting

The count is, of course, the culminating ritual of the whole process of the secret ballot. In all previous parliamentary elections, multi-party and other, counting has been conducted at the constituency level, with ballot boxes being sealed at the polling station and brought under police guard to a central counting place. The counting committee was a separate body from the polling teams – though there might be some overlap in membership. In this, as in most aspects of elections, the 1958 Commission issued detailed directives – still remembered today by some interviewees – setting out the proper way of counting.[127] Each box should be inspected by the committee, including candidates' representatives, to ensure that the seals were intact; then they should be opened in front of the committee. Where tokens were used, the contents of each box were simply counted in front of the committee, each token being checked to ensure that it had been authenticated by the polling officer

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[126] Figures from Bechtold (1976), pp. 248, 249 and 226; Abushouk and Abdelsalam (2008), p. 215; and the appendices of the Report of the 1986 Election Commission

[127] Shendi group, 28 February 2009.

before it was placed in the box; two members of the committee kept a tally. When all the boxes had been opened and tokens counted, if the tallies agreed, the total number of tokens would then be checked back against the record of tokens issued.

The procedure with ballot papers was more complicated. The ballot box from each polling station would be opened, and the papers inside first counted without sorting and the count compared with the number of papers issued. The papers would then be sorted in front of the whole committee into piles for each candidate (and presumably one pile for spoiled ballots, though this was not specified). The piles would then be placed in a bag for each candidate.

Finally, when the ballot boxes had all been opened and votes sorted, the bags would be counted: two members of the committee would count each pile and compare their counts. At the end of the count, each candidates votes' would be replaced in the bag. The bags, the marked voters register and the unused books of papers or tokens would all be placed inside a ballot box and sealed to be kept for six months after the election – against the possibility of appeals – after which they would be destroyed.

In a number of constituencies in 1958, this was found to be unworkable. Almost as soon as the count began it became apparent in constituencies with a large number of voters that the count might take days. The procedure was therefore shortened to exclude the initial count: votes were sorted as they were removed from the box and either counted by tally during the sort, or the resulting piles were counted; one or other of these procedures was adopted in all subsequent elections. The process was, nonetheless, a slow one, and members of counting committees recall extended counts, spread over a day or more.

There were, of course, disputes over counts in every election, and a number of these went on to court. But in the multi-party elections the disputes were not so widespread or irreconcilable as to bring the whole process into question, and the counting process in itself, while prolonged, does not generally seem to have been problematic. It has been regarded – even in the most dubious of Sudan's elections – as a process that was important to perform properly. In elections where there was a widespread assumption that the outcome was the result of cheating, no one suggested that this cheating took place at the point of counting itself

Corrupt practices

'I always believe that there was no election which was not rigged. All of them, it just depended on how. Yaani - *people voted for others, people voted for the women in the house, people registered a number of people who don't exist and they exchanged voting for those who are not there.'*[128]

There are stories of malpractice associated with every election in Sudan. Many of these are widely told, and a number of the provisions of the new legislation are clearly intended to forestall any repetition of the better-known kinds of cheating. Some people tell these stories about some elections partly in order to demonstrate, by contrast, the virtue of other elections. Thus, entertaining stories of the more flagrant cheating in Nimeiri's referenda are set against the more upright practices of the multi-party elections. Others argue that the multi-party elections also saw extensive malpractice – one interviewee recalled the verdict of Sharif al-Hindi, sectarian leader and politician, that the 1986 election was 'vacuumed democracy' – though on the whole the evidence suggests that it was candidates and their agents, rather than officials, who were principally responsible for the cheating.[129] A number of interviewees argued that malpractice, though common, rarely affected the outcome in any constituency. One civil servant with extensive experience in elections viewed malpractice as a sort of entertaining game of wits between officials and candidates:

What you enjoy about the elections is these tricks! These tricks which have happened before – everybody will try to outsmart the other, and it is how you deal with this. Not in Sudan only, but everywhere. This is elections… There are certain smart people who come up with certain tricks that you never think of [LAUGHS].[130]

Accusations of malpractice in the demarcation of constituencies have already been discussed above. Many of the other stories of malpractice revolve around registration: 'Most of the cheating happens during registration. You register more than once', explained one party activist; another group told us how 'the underage, the dead and the absentee' could all be registered.[131] Since there was no cross-checking between constituencies, in urban areas, in particular, some people might easily manage to register twice:

If I live in Khartoum, people in Islam are allowed to marry more than one woman. One of my wives lives here, the other is in Khartoum North. People in Khartoum North know that I am

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[128] Adlan Hardallo, 19 January 2009
[129] Shendi group, 28 February 2009.
[130] Jalal Mohammed Ahmed, 20 January 2009.
[131] Siddig Yousif, 17 January 2009; Wad Medani group, 9 January 2009.

living in that house, people in Khartoum know that I am living here! So I can register in both! And people say, yes, he's right, he's living here.[132]

With voting spread out over many days, it might be quite easy to vote twice: 'sometimes the voting goes on for days and days, and so I can come and vote here, then take the bus and go and vote there!'[133] The marking of voters' thumbnails with ink was intended to prevent such multiple voting. It was introduced in 1958, but abandoned during the election as it proved too time-consuming.[134] Reintroduced in subsequent elections, it was widely seen as ineffective; with extended elections, voters allegedly found it possible to remove the marks and vote again. Others described the registration of voters who were underage: since presiding officers were under instructions to accept the register as absolute proof of the right to vote, it was too late to object when such young voters reached the polling station:

> In the former elections, children of seven years, eight years, when the election first started, they were on the roll. You can't do anything! Legally they are entitled – 'This is his name.' You can't say anything at that stage – you have to say it earlier.[135]

Some interviewees suggested that registering of the names of the dead, with the intention that others would then impersonate them, was also a common technique.

A number of widely used campaigning strategies might also reasonably be described as malpractice. Offering hospitality and gifts to voters – and to men such as sheikhs and chiefs who were perceived as influential – was an integral part of the campaign techniques, as already described. In 1953, one candidate was prosecuted, unsuccessfully, under the Corrupt Practices Ordinance for buying tea and cakes for voters. In subsequent elections this kind of gift-giving became entirely standard, and was built into the practice of transporting voters:

> They gave their supporters some money, OK, Mr A, go and bring so many people from a certain area, this is for the car. The car costs 30 pounds, they give him 50 pounds. And he gets some other people, gives them a pound each, come and vote![136]

> Their agent will collect them and tell them to go, they will bring them here, tell them to go to the polling station. They go and collect them. This is where they make beer, they drink – now, go for polling![137]

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[132] Siddig Yousif, 17 January 2009.

[133] Mahgoub Mohammed Salih, 17 January 2009.

[134] Silberman (1958), p. 365.

[135] Ahmed Abdelrahman Mohammed, 19 January 2009.

[136] Ibrahim Moniem Mansour, 24 February 2009.

Many parties used to rent lorries to collect people, to bring people, give them food, breakfast… They give you transport, they give you breakfast, sometimes they give you some money.[138]

One man described how election day was like a wedding, with the feasting and transporting of guests.[139]

Threats, as well as bribes, might be used to mobilise voters in this way. In 1986, displaced southerners living around Khartoum were heavily reliant on appointed chiefs, and therefore vulnerable:

There were threats also, in the IDP [internally displaced person] centres. Because normally, the IDPs, some were being removed from place to place, so whoever talks much, or has this Islamic support, will be the one who will be elected. Because they were making use of the chiefs, the chiefs appointed in the IDP camps. Those people were being controlled by these chiefs. To go and vote, mobilising them to go.[140]

Oaths were also used to try and influence voters. Those who attended campaign meetings might find themselves forced to swear oaths to support particular candidates (there was a successful prosecution for this in 1958, but the practice continued).[141] Women were in some cases forced to vote by husbands who swore to divorce them if they refused.[142]

In almost every election, there have been complaints that those in government were using government resources to secure election victory. General Neguib's written protest in 1953, listing accusations of British interference, offers a handy summary of the techniques used in that election: 'Direct interventions, and pressure on Election Officers, Tribal Leaders… Use and advance of official means of transportation… Use of Government-owned paper, typewriters etc… Help to hand-picked candidates in the form of paying jobs.'[143] Similar allegations, probably similarly well-grounded, were made in later elections: vehicles were used in campaigns or to transport voters; government funds went to buy pumps or fund other development projects just before election day.[144]

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[137] David Koak, 4 February 2009.

[138] El Tayyib el Khalil, 2 March 2009; see also Halima Hamid Mohammed Musa, 1 March 2009.

[139] Paulo Namulinga Rujamwai, 2 March 2009; see also Al Fadhil Adam Abdullahi, 26 February 2009.

[140] Chamango Awow Dogjok, 4 February 2009.

[141] Mohammed Shareef Fadhul, 24 February 2009.

[142] Sharma (1966), p. 445.

[143] General Neguib to Governor-General of Sudan, 4 November 1953, TNA FO 371 102760.

[144] *As Sahafa*, 18 December 2000.

In every multi-party election, limits were set on spending by candidates, with candidates being required to submit accounts for scrutiny after the election.[145] Candidates seem to have found it very easy to evade these restrictions, both in terms of the overall amount spent and what constituted a legitimate expense. There was apparently no objection made when one candidate in 1986 told election officials that the 'bread' which he had listed as a large part of his expenditure was Merissa beer for distribution to voters.[146]

On polling day, the malpractices most commonly mentioned by interviewees – and most evident from newspaper reports – were impersonation and multiple voting, the corollary of the registration malpractices already noted.[147] Interviews offered multiple anecdotes of these offences: the man who noticed that his dead father was marked on the register as having voted; people who claimed obviously implausible names.[148] The scale of these is very hard to assess: while complaints, arrests and prosecutions were made for such offences in every multi-party election, it is impossible to tell how many others escaped undetected. One interviewee suggested that even those who were caught trying to impersonate or vote twice were not usually prosecuted.[149]

The marking of thumbnails was an inadequate safeguard against multiple voting, as it was possible to remove the ink; in 1986 some women were reportedly coming back to vote for a third time.[150] A number of interviewees offered a plausible argument that impersonation and multiple voting were more of an issue in rural areas (generally, this argument was made by those who thought that rural elections were heavily influenced by sheikhs and chiefs): 'In urban areas it was very difficult, in rural areas some people did not have enough agents to cover every station, so they concentrate on the big ones, others will go there [to impersonate], Omar instead of Ahmed.'[151] Bechtold, however, made an equally plausible argument for impersonation being more of an issue in urban areas: 'The chance of impersonation is more likely in urban areas where newcomers arrive constantly from the provinces in search of a livelihood.'[152] Most interviewees suggested that impersonation and multiple voting were unlikely to have significantly affected outcomes. The only hint that we

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[145] See, for example, '1965 Election Rules', NRO ELECOM (3) 1/2/6.

[146] Jalal Mohammed Ahmed, 20 January 2009.

[147] Bechtold (1976), p. 149.

[148] Shendi group, 28 February 2009. The example of an unlikely name cited is Magdolene, a name that became briefly fashionable after a character in a novel in the 1960s, but was claimed by an old woman.

[149] For newspaper reports of impersonation see, for example, *Al Ayyam,* 2, 9, 10 and 13 April 1986; for complaints by a defeated candidate see Mohammed Ibrahim Tahir to Senior Elections Officer, Khartoum, 1965, NRO ELECOM (3) 1/2/8; Al Fadhil Adam Abdullahi, 26 February 2009.

[150] *As Sahafa*, 2 April 1986; *Al Ayyam*, 11 April 1986.

[151] Mohammed Ahmed Salim, 1 March 2009.

[152] Bechtold (1976), p. 148–9.

have of the potential scale of such malpractices comes from the 1986 election results. The turnout figures for a number of constituencies were extraordinarily – and suspiciously – high, at 90 per cent or more of the registered voters; in several constituencies more votes were cast than there were registered voters.[153] It seems clear either that a large number of unregistered people were allowed to vote, or that many of those registered voted two or more times.

In the multi-party elections, stories of ballot-box switching or stuffing are much less common, though there were allegations of this in 1968: 'There are dark tales of malpractice – the most common one is that the symbols on the ballot boxes were switched whilst the boxes were in the custody of the army – but there is no proof whatsoever in support of these stories.'[154] There are, however, widespread and credible stories of such malpractices in the Nimeiri referenda (as noted above) and in some of the elections of the Ingaz period. The most widely-told story from the 1990s relates not to a national election but to that in the lawyers' union. There are minor variations in the detail, but this version of events is fairly representative:

> One of the lawyers who was attending to electoral practice told me – in fact not me, us, we were a group of people – he told us how they made similar boxes for the elections of the advocates, Omdurman was the heaviest constituency, and that they put two boxes in a pick-up, and the pick-up was half-way, on the bridge from Omdurman. And then the genuine boxes, which were put on another pick-up, came over the bridge, and then the police at the bridge stopped the observers, asked them to check their licences and this and that – by the time they released them, they came near to the boxes in the pick-up that was standing on the bridge, and they changed the boxes.[155]

Similar switches of ballot boxes were alleged in the 2000 presidential election. The use of unauthenticated ballot papers, the giving of ballot papers to unregistered voters and the establishment of additional polling stations were all alleged in the same election.[156]

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[153] The constituencies with more than 100 per cent turnout were no.s. 44 (Omdurman Wad Nubawi), 46 (Omdurman Musalama/Maurada), 111 (Singa), 141 (South Fasher) and 189 (East Kassala). The constituencies with a turnout of 90 per cent or more were no.s. 21 (Khartoum 1), 27 (Khartoum 7), 37 (East Nile 1), 39 (East Nile 3) and 59 (South Berber). Forty-three other constituencies recorded apparent turnouts of more than 80 per cent of registered voters. See appendices to Republic of Sudan, *Final Report of the Election Commission* (1986).

[154] Griffith to Sindall, 11 May 1968, TNA FCO 39/185.

[155] Ibrahim Moniem Mansour, 24 February 2009

[156] *As Sahafa*, 18, 29 and 30 December 2000.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

> *The electoral process is administratively complex; it can be managed with success only by a body of officials tolerably advanced in standards of honesty and routine competence; the existence of such an administration creates and steadies public confidence in electoral procedure.*[157]

The premise of the present report is that elections by secret ballot are intended not simply to choose leaders but to help remake the nature of governance. Since the nineteenth century elections of this kind have been seen to possess the potential to construct a stable yet dynamic political order based on the relationship between rational citizens and an efficient bureaucratic state. Elections by secret ballot require a degree of self-discipline and order from voters, and considerable organizational abilities on the part of the state. They are not magic – a single election cannot completely change political culture – but they are a kind of ritual, and, as with any ritual, repeated performance has the ability to change the way people think about themselves and their relationship to others.

There is, however, an important difference between performance and make-believe. Since 1953, Sudanese public servants have organized five multi-party liberal elections and a number of other national elections and referenda. However, while outside observers praised the efficiency with which those elections were run, their ability to produce stable parliamentary governments was undermined by a combination of factors. The sectarian divide in northern Sudanese politics, and the chronic indiscipline of almost all political parties, were principal causes of instability. However, their effects were compounded by weaknesses in the electoral process itself.

Various forms of electoral malpractice have had a corrosive effect on the legitimacy of elected governments. Perhaps equally damaging has been the very varied nature of electoral participation, in itself partly the result of political manoeuvring and partly the result of a lack of resources combined with the reflexive exclusivity of the Sudanese state. Elections by universal adult suffrage and a secret ballot are perhaps the most demanding administrative task faced by modern states. Registration, balloting and counting require the swift and consistent performance of multiple tasks of ordering and discipline. Sudan's governmental machinery has not always been equal to the task; processes and procedures designed with an administrative ideal in mind, which work in some parts of the country, have been much less successful in others. The effects of this have been emphasised by the repeated use of systems of special balloting, which have given greater influence to educated

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[157] W.J.M. Mackenzie and Kenneth Robinson (1960) *Five Elections in Africa: A Group of Electoral Studies* (Oxford, Clarendon Press), pp. 1–5.

urban voters. This has encouraged a wider sense of exclusion that has undermined the legitimacy of the Sudanese state and fuelled Sudan's multiple conflicts. In combination, these factors have undermined public confidence in the electoral process.

The ideal of the inclusive election offers a vision of a democratic Sudan that has powerful emotional appeal to many Sudanese. A successful election alone will not make this vision real, but it could give a powerful boost to the wider changes required. The priority for election officials must be to take firm action to eliminate the malpractice that has characterized elections under authoritarian regimes, and, as importantly, to emphasize the provision of resources and training in order to maximise participation at every stage of the process.

Necessary actions to prevent gross malpractice may be categorized as follows:

- Previous authoritarian elections have seen widespread use of a censored and/or controlled media to support incumbents, and the effective denial of media access to any critical or questioning voice. At present, censorship compounds the imbalance created by the ruling party's disproportionate control over newspapers and broadcast media. The NEC must use its powers to ensure both greater equality of access to media, and the end of the current routine censorship.

- Freedom of movement and association are essential elements in a plural political campaign. These have been largely present, in northern Sudan at least, in previous multi-party elections; elections under authoritarian regimes have seen no such freedom.

- More effective enforcement of regulations on campaign spending are essential. The new legislation gives the NEC powers to set a ceiling on expenditure; such ceilings have been widely flouted in the past, partly because there has been no mechanism for monitoring them, and reliance has instead been placed on the submission of accounts after the election. It is very desirable that the NEC use its powers to create some system to monitor expenses during the campaign itself and especially to investigate immediately complaints regarding the improper use of state resources in support of campaigns. Such complaints have been widespread in previous single-party and multi-party elections.

- The legislation has been framed in order to minimize the possibility of the stuffing or switching of ballot boxes. It is important that the procedures set out in the legislation – and in rules that will be made under the legislation – are followed. The procedures must be seen to be effective, as there is a great deal of suspicion about

this kind of malpractice, in particular. There is a widespread feeling that the impartiality and integrity that characterized the administration in the period up to the 1980s has very largely disappeared; it is therefore particularly important that procedures be transparent, and be followed fully.

- Devising procedures against malpractice and ensuring freedom of movement are essential. For these to be effective the election will also require very substantial resourcing. The new procedures designed to prevent ballot-box stuffing and switching will make these elections logistically more demanding than previous ones. Multiple polls for different parts of government will be taking place at the same time, and the combination of proportional representation with first-past-the-post votes, compounds the challenges. Effective implementation of the legislation will require a campaign of voter information. The campaign will require large numbers of personnel, vehicles and equipment.

- Lack of voter information and education has been a major contributory cause to variable turnouts in previous elections. Many have not known how or where to register and vote - or why they should vote. And there has been very uneven provision of training for candidates' agents and as polling staff. Political parties have been expected to fill the deficiencies in these areas. But parties, like the state, have lacked resources; and have suffered from considerable internal organizational weaknesses. A party which cannot manage to stop its candidates competing with one another is unlikely to be able to organize a national programme of training or voter information and education. Voter information and education, and training for candidates' agents should not be left in the hands of parties.

- New technologies may offer a way to address some of these tasks. Internet and mobile phone access is by no means universal in Sudan, but is widespread; we would recommend that both the NEC and donors give immediate attention to the use of new communications technologies, alongside more traditional methods of printed posters, radio, television and visits by training teams. The widest possible range of media should be used to deliver voter information and training for agents and election staff. Information distributed by mobile phone could include text messages and recorded messages on toll-free numbers. Internet resources could include material for download and printing. They could also - since printing facilities are often not available – include audio resources such as podcasts.

- Transport (both the provision of vehicles, and the effective management of these to make sure that they are in the right place at the time right time) and training are the

key elements in ensuring that registering and polling staff can perform their tasks properly, and that potential voters encounter a comprehensible, predictable and functioning set of procedures. In particular staff, transport and other resources must be sufficient to allow the issue of voters' cards at the point of registration and to ensure that the registers are prepared in a timely and error-free manner. Many problems in previous multi-party elections have revolved around identification at the time of registering and at polling: it is at those points especially that potential voters are easily discouraged and excluded.

- Experience suggests that procedures to prevent malpractice are only one aspect of a successful election – though they are crucial. Equally important is planning and the provision of resources. The Government of Sudan and NEC should take every opportunity to secure electoral assistance – in the form of physical resources and training – from the international community, and the provision of such assistance should be treated as a priority by that community. Failures in procedure will undermine the process as swiftly and completely as will malpractice.

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FCO 93/1183   Internal political affairs of the Sudan, 1977

FCO 93/1184   Internal political affairs of the Sudan, 1977

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ELECOM DEPOSIT	File number	Description
ELECOM 1	1/1/6	Elections: administrative, policy and procedures, Kordofan
	2/2/8	Election: liaison, Upper Nile
	2/4/12	Elections, direct and indirect, Kordofan
	2/4/13	Elections, Kordofan: Chief Electoral Officer's Proposals
	2/4/14	Elections, Kordofan: Chief Electoral Officer's Proposals
	2/2/9	Elections, Khartoum: CEO proposals
	1/2/10	Elections: administrative policy and procedures, Bahr el Ghazal
	1/1/6	Elections: administrative, policy and procedures, Kordofan
	2/2/8	Election: liaison, Upper Nile
	2/2/8	Elections: direct and indirect, Khartoum
	2/6/22	Elections: Wau Chief Electoral Officer's proposals
	2/7/24	Elections: direct and indirect, graduates
	2/10/42	House of representatives, Bahr el Ghazal
	11/6/32	Minutes of Electoral Commission meetings
	11/8/41	Reports from Electoral Officers
	2/10/44	House of Representatives, Khartoum
	2/10/45	House of Representatives: Kordofan
	2/10/46	House of Representatives: graduate
	10/2/2	Administrative policy and procedures
	10/2/3	Elections: instructions and rulings [up to /6]
	11/3/13	Minutes of meetings
ELECOM 2	1/1/3	Minutes of meetings with Chief Electoral Officers
	1/1/4	Final reports
	1/1/10	Khartoum Province final report
	1/2/11	Kordofan Province final report
	1/4/26	Directives
	1/4/27	Voting tokens
	1/2/17	Elections, general

ELECOM 2	1/3/18	Elections, general
	1/3/19	Elections, general
	1/3/20	Elections, general
	1/1/1	Election Commission agenda
	1/1/2	Minutes
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	1/4/22	Elections, correspondence with parties
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	1/5/30	Ballot papers/tokens
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	1/3/15	Report on progress of elections in the South (217pp)
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	1/2/6	Election rules and regulations (190pp)
	1/2/8	Complaints and criticisms (70pp)
	1/2/9	Final report re. electoral work, 1965 (37pp)
ELECOM 4	1/19/20	Final report: Bahr el Ghazal
	1/19/23	General administrative policy: elections for constituent assembly and parliament: final reports
	1/15/86	General administrative policy: 1968. Voting progress, Bahr el Ghazal (51pp)
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	1/10/47	Estimates and reports on registration – Khartoum (36 pp)
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	6/1/1	Final reports: elections for the constituent assembly

ELECOM 5	4/3/20	4th People's Council: results for economists/financial officers
	4/3/22	4th People's Council: results for professional/administrative sector
	4/3/28	Results for skilled/semi-skilled employees
	5/1/1	Results for the 5th People's Council, 1981
	6/1/1	People's Councils: results and general literature
	6/2/13	Elections for the 3rd Regional People's Council, 1980 – southern Mudiriyya
	9/1/6	Electoral regulations for people's Council, 1972: General policy
	9/2/11	Suggestions for modifying the popular council law, 1973 (43pp)
	9/2/12	Suggestions for developing law and regulations for general elections (23pp)
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	11/1/5	Report on the Popular Regional Council for Southern Region, 1973
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	14/1/9	Directives for the Regional People's Council, 1981
	14/1/4	Popular referendum: 1983: directives
	14/1/5	Directives – 1972

List of interviewees

Name	Date	Place	Electoral experience
Ibrahim Moniem Mansour	7 October 2008 and 24 February 2009	His home, Riyadh, Khartoum	Successful candidate in 1983
Jalal Mohammed Ahmed	7 October 2008 and 20 January 2009	Election Commission office, Khartoum	Secretary to various electoral commissions
Esam el Boushi	9 January 2009	His office, Ahlia College, Wad Medani	College administrator during student elections
Ma'az el Hassan el Awad	9 January 2009	Graduates Club, Wad Medani	Party activist
Wad Medani group	9 January 2009	Graduates Club, Wad Medani	Various
Khalid Hamad el Nil	9 January 2009	His home, Wad Medani	Election official in 1960s
Unionist Party group	10 January 2009	Unionist Party office, Wad Medani	Party activitists
Open University group	10 January 2009	Open University, Gezira	Various
Hamid Yunis	12 January 2009	His home, Um Bedda	Party activist
Ahmed Yunis	13 January 2009	His brother's home, Um Bedda	Election official in 1960s and 1970s
Fuad 'Id	15 January 2009	His home, Khartoum 3	Senior administrator
Mahgoub Mohammed Salih	17 January 2009	His office, Khartoum 2	Newspaper editor
Siddig Yousif	17 January 2009	Communist Party office, Khartoum 2	Party activist
Mukhtar el Assam	18 January 2009	His office, Garden City University, Khartoum	Academic; electoral specialist; current member of NEC
El Hadi Abu Samadi	18 January 2009	His office, Sudanese-Canadian college	Administrator
Adlan Hardallo	19 January 2009	His office, University of Khartoum	Academic

Ahmed Abdelrahman Mohammed	19 January 2009	His office, International Council for People's Friendship	Politician; successful candidate in 1986
Abdel Moneim en Nahas	20 January 2009	His home, Riyadh	Judge; head of the Election Authority in 1990s
Juba Local Govt. group: David Koak; Venansio loro; Chamango Awow Dogjok	4 February 2009	Local Government Board office, Juba	Election officials in 1960s and 1970s
Toby Madut	4 February 2009	Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, Juba	Politician; successful candidate in 1968
Ufondi Ndima	4 February 2009	Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, Juba	Politician; unsuccessful candidate in 1970s
Abd al Kareem Ali al Kareem	24 February 2009	His brother's home, Riyadh, Khartoum	Party activist; successful candidate in 1970s
Mohammed Shareef Fadhul	24 February 2009	His shop, as Sahafa, Khartoum	Election official in 1970s; unsuccessful candidate in 1986
Ali Shumu	25 February 2009	His office, Press Association, Khartoum	Journalist and broadcaster
Abdel Rahman Mohammed Gaili	25 February 2009	His home, Khober, Khartoum	Election official from 1960s to 1980s
Al Fadhil Adam Abdullahi	26 February 2009	Environmental society office, Fatiha Ithnain	Party activist
Adam Hassan Mohammed	26 February 2009	Environmental society office, Fatiha Ithnain	Party activist
Shendi group	28 February 2009	Mohamed Ahmed Ali Abu Jukh's house, Shendi	Various
Mohammed Ahmed Salim	1 March 2009	IDEA office, Amarat, Khartoum	Administrator; election official in 1980s
Halima Hamid Mohammed Musa	1 March 2009	Her home, Umm Bedda, Omdurman	Party activist
Mohammed Osman Kahlifa	1 March 2009	His home, Bahri	Election official in 1960s and 1970s

Paulo Namulinga Rujamwai	2 March 2009	His home, Hai Barakat, Haj Yusuf	Party activist in 1970s; leader of Boya (Larim) people in Khartoum since 1980s
El Tayyib el Khalil	2 March 2009	His home, Manshir, Khartoum	Election official in 1950s; member of the Election Commission in 1968
Hyder Ali	2 March 2009	His office, Manshir, Khartoum	Election official