

# Reforming Social Order to Enhance Social Integration in Sudan: Conceptual Analysis and the Way Forward

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## Abstract

The objective of the study is to analyze disintegration and social instability to maintain national identity and peaceful coexistence in national integration context. The paper investigates how disorder, instability and chaos led to discrepancies in national social integration in Sudanese society. The study adopted descriptive and qualitative methods through textual analysis and rely heavily on secondary data. The findings of this study revealed that despite the country's attempt to advance social order, several challenges has posed a great threat to national social integration. These setbacks range from vulnerability of socio-cultural connections and the absence of unified consciousness at the national level which seriously affected the national social integration of Sudan. The high level of political instability, civil wars, ethnic/tribal conflicts, cultural disparity and dominance, social injustice, and economic deprivation led to feelings of national disintegration. The paper recommended that to enhance social integration in Sudan, there is need to reform social disorder by reshaping socially and culturally accepted values, norms, traditions and customs in the light of new sociocultural pattern of life. Also to reduce wide range of socio economic disparities, there should be reconsideration of resolving root causes of structural inequalities among social entities.

**Key Words:** Reforming, Restructuring, Social Order, Social Integration, Sudan

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## I. Introduction

Since independence Sudan has been confronted with a wide range of challenges that hinder its social integration and national identity. For instance, the vulnerability of socio-cultural connections and the absence of unified consciousness at the national level would seriously affected the national social integration of Sudan. Sudan is one of the most socio-cultural, environmentally, and geographically diverse countries in Africa, with the population being divided along lines of ethnicity, tribalism, and socio-cultural heterogeneity. The issue of how to assure equal rights and opportunities for all, while respecting diversity, is one of the central policy questions of the twentieth century (UNRISD, 1994). Social integration is a complex idea, which means different things to different people, it is simply a way of describing the established patterns of human relations in any given society.

Sudanese experience since the independence in 1956, has shown critical challenges to define the social integration to respond the unity of national identity and solidarity of Sudanese citizens. The evidence of modern Sudanese history is showing the high level of political instability, civil wars, ethnic/tribal conflicts, cultural disparity and dominance, social injustice, and economic deprivation among others which led to feelings of national disintegration. A pertinent question is whose responsibility of this miscarriage and failure of social inequality, cultural progress, political and economic development to enhance social integration of the nation? Is it the responsibility of political leaders who rule the country through the past short three democratic periods (1958, 1964 & 1985)? Or those dictatorship rulers who dominate the power through military coups including the national salvation revolution which started in June 1989 and ended in December 2018 - April 2019 after grate Sudanese's revolution (Glorious December Revolution) which brought hybrid transitional government (civilians and military)? Or its responsibility of Sudanese elites and intellectuals as well as all Sudanese citizens who fail to contribute, constitute and maintain Sudanese national unity?

This paper attempts to deconstruct the concepts of social and national integration using a reforming social order perspective. It joins a heightening debate on the question of Sudanese national integration and identity which was a debatable dilemma more than sixty years ago. Because of the intensity of the distraction caused by this prolonged debate, it is hoped that this contribution and others to be made, will pave way for the final resolution of the reforming social order to maintain social integration which makes the satisfaction of all Sudanese citizens. Thus, the ultimate goal of social integration process is to achieve the social reconciliation and the restoration of harmony which should allow community members to live. Because many

of contemporary global societies ends with the collapse of numerous states and the sharpening of ethnic strife around the world, there is particular interest at the moment in searching for ways to create or reinforce common identities which lessen the likelihood of violence and provide a groundwork for co-operation.

## **II .Methodology**

The study adopts descriptive methods of analysis and mainly rely on secondary data, utilized relevant sources such as textbooks, journals, published articles, websites, scholarly works, and personal observations of the researcher. Essentially, most of the ideas were generated through Sudan's social structure and previous studies gleaned based on their substance, relevance, and comparative quality to give more insight. An interpretive approach also used in this research because it allows for the researcher to recognize the connections of the concepts that are under investigation. Furthermore, the efforts were made to link segments of the literature based on a review of studies related to the problem of study to the contemporary experience of emerging events in Sudanese society.

### **Conceptualization of Terms**

1- **Reforming:** Reform consists changes and improvements to law, social system and institutions. Also reforming means to improve an existing institution, law practice y alteration or correction of abuses to give up or cause to give up a reprehensible habit or immoral way of life. While social reformis reshaping culturally, socially, political, and economically accepted norms, laws, values in light of new cultural paradigms. Reforming social system is essential to promote social order which it leads to national integration.Reforming in this context is the organization of societal relationship for better performance of all social system of the whole society in cooperative, harmony and peacefully way. The reforming concept will be used in this paper to mean reorganization of Sudanese social order including social values, norms, beliefs, traditions, customs, institutions and organizations in order to promote and enhance national integration.

2- **Restructuring:**The terms structure and restructuring has been defined by different perspectives and scholars. For instance from political science view or even in management, the term "structure" is easily recognizable as "the starting point for organizing the roles and positions, hierarchical levels and spans of accountability, and mechanisms for problem solving and integration" (Maduenyi, and Ajagbe, 2015).The concept of restructuring does not entail merging of states or domination by some cultures to others, but to a large extent will stem the tide of restiveness in many parts of country as it is capable of resolving the problems of citizenship, religion, resource control and fiscal nationalism. Otherwise, the restructuring will be a major impediment to the social, economic and political development of the nation (Mboho&Udoh, 2018).

3- **Social Order:**Social order is a fundamental concept in social sciences and sociology particularly, it means the way the various components of society work together to maintain the system of the whole society.Outside the field of sociology, people often use the term "social order" to refer to a state of stability and consensus that exists in the absence of chaos and upheaval.In simple words, social order refers to socio-economic and political environment of a society. It expresses the way things, in general, usually happens or is happening in the society at a particular historical juncture. It describes the intricate web and character of every social formation (otherwise called social system) including the nature of mode of production, superstructure, social consciousness and social relations whether antagonistic or non- antagonistic (Ekpenyong: 2014).Accordingly, the stable social order in certain society it reflects the social system stability, therefore, instability in Sudanese social system including struggle over political power, conflict of identities reflected by different ethnic and trial groups has led to social disorder in Sudan.In ideal situation social order is refers to contrasted to social chaos or dis order and refers to stale state of society in which the existing social structure is accepted and maintaining y its members.

4- **Social Integration:** There are different ways of understanding the concept of social integration. For some, it is an inclusionary goal, implying equal opportunities and rights for all human beings. In this case, becoming more integrated implies improving life chances. To others, it is simply a way of describing the established patterns of human relations in any given society(UNRISD, 1994). Social integration can be defined as the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights and opportunity, equity and dignity, therefore social integration describes the process of building institutions that promote a society for all on the principles of social justice.( Ferguson: 2008). Social integration is the process of building the values, relations and institutions necessary to achieve and making societies more equitable.

## **III. Literature Review**

### **1- Understanding Social Order in Sudan**

The term social order can be used in two senses, in the first sense (Societal Evolution) it refers to a particular set or system of linked social structures, institutions, relations, customs, values, and practices, which conserve,

maintain and enforce certain patterns of relating and behaving. Examples are the ancient, the feudal, and the capitalist social order. In the social sense social order is contrasted to social chaos or disorder and refers to a stable state of society in which the existing social order is accepted and maintained by its members. The problem of order or Hobbesian problem, which is central to much of sociology, political science and political philosophy, is the question how and why it is that social orders exist at all (Hobbes, 1957).

The question of how social order is achieved and maintained is the question that gave birth to the field of sociology. In his book *Leviathan*, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes laid the groundwork for the exploration of this question within the social sciences. Hobbes recognized that without some form of social contract, there could be no society, and chaos and disorder would reign. Sociologists, however, have a more complex understanding of the term, it refers to the organization of many interrelated parts of a society (Thorofur and Jon, 2004). Social order is sustained through social interaction and adherence to social norms. In other words, Social order is a broad term that refers to the links between people and institutions working cooperatively to keep society stable. Therefore, Social order is often based on social contracts that are guided by mutually agreed upon values, morals, and laws. In fact social order is core point of any societal peaceful coexistence because it links all social structure of the whole society. There are many examples of social order such as norms, values, award, cooperation, competition and customs. Social order can be observed within national societies, geographical regions, institutions and organizations, communities, formal and informal groups, and even at the scale of global society (Cole, 2019). The phenomenon of social order must be discussed within the context of each society, because every society is characterized by distinct social order and let it be considered that every social order breeds social consciousness which is peculiar to and indispensable for the existence of that social order. Accordingly, understanding social order in Sudan is also must be referred to the context of Sudanese societal nature and structure which characterized by multi-cultural, ethnic/tribal and social diversity. In addition to long history of national disintegration which caused by political instability and struggle over power, as well as conflict over scarce resources in different parts of the country, misused and politicization of ethnicity and tribalism by political elites for their self and party interests and exploitation of so called native administration to play negative political roles despite of their local community duties. In view of that social order in Sudan facing different types of challenges and led to social breakdown and disorder, social chaos and disrespect, change in people's values, norms, customs and beliefs. Despite the people of Sudan are generally considered to be very modest, humble and stoic, they also share certain cultural values as a sense of duty to support their community and be hospitable. The rapid change in life style of Sudanese people especially in urban areas can be easily observed through daily life activities such the way of dress, use of local transport, naming and wedding ceremony among other social-cultural and economic activities. These changes some of them are related to global cultural diffusion, transformation of social media and information technology, while others due to local societal change. The National Congress Party (NCP) ruling period which extended to almost thirty years with extremist Islamic ideology have affected people's values and norms in relation to individual liberties and freedom. Some of newly sociocultural aspects that can be observed after December 2018 revulsion as reaction of NCP policies, regulations and laws concerning social order. When the society under pressure of instability, such social chaos, disorder, disturbance of social relations and fabric, unfair access to social amenities and privileges, all these it can easily leads to socio-cultural oppression which contributed to collapse of social order in Sudan.

## **2- Enhancing Social Integration in Sudan**

Sudan is a rich and diverse country whose resources are sufficient to guarantee a healthy, peaceful and fulfilled population. The major challenge is still the greed of the few against the interest of the many. According to Ferguson (2008), promoting social integration requires attention to three different, but inter-linked, processes that shape the extent to which people are able to live and work together on an equal basis: Recognition of diverse social groups, cultures and identity in order to promote respect, dignity and co-operation. Representation of political voice in order to ensure that the interests of different groups are taken into account in decision-making and resource allocation. Redistribution of socio-economic resources between individuals and groups in order to prevent deep disparities and fragmentation on the basis of wealth, ethnicity, region, gender, age or other social identity (Ferguson, 2008). Considering Ferguson's explanation of promoting social integration requirements, in case of Sudan, many ethnic and tribal groups complain that cultural dominance by few entities in different ways. The political representation debate, the Sudanese contemporary politics has long history of failure of ideal democratic practices, where the continuation struggle over political power and instability in the county throughout its independence. While the concept of redistribution of resources which reflect the dilemma of imbalance development programs as well as social injustice and deprivation which contributed negatively on raising and continuation of marginalization and conflicts in many parts of Sudan since earlier of 1960s and up-to-date. The problems such as social disorder and disorganization can also arise when social integration is sought without giving sufficient attention to the need for cultural diversity within most societies. The excluded can be

included in ways which attempt to promote an unacceptable degree of homogeneity; and, when this occurs, the search for social integration becomes synonymous with the imposition of uniformity (UNRISD, 1994).

But there are also strong instrumental reasons for promoting social integration, such as deep disparities, based on wealth, region, gender, age or ethnicity reduce social mobility and this easily can lead to fragmentation of society and has negative impacts on growth, poverty reduction, democracy and conflict avoidance (Watkins 2007). The current reality of Sudanese societies is showing that structural defect and deficiency of political and economic programs contributed to national disintegration of the country. Cultural devaluation leads to discrimination and inequality when negative ideas about groups become institutionalized, or embedded in accepted social, political and economic norms, official practices, policies and legislation. These institutionalized systems of rules and norms, or rights regimes, allocate different and unequal rights to particular social groups (Moser and Norton 2001). Social integration, requires the transformation of social values and institutions that perpetuate unequal relations rather than simply help for the disadvantaged to gain access to mainstream society because social integration is about making societies more equitable, it requires actions to renegotiate and redefine existing social contracts which define the rights and responsibilities of citizens, states and the private sector (Fraser: 2005). Enhancing social integration in Sudan requires reform and restore equilibrium to social order through peaceful coexistence in all Sudanese societies without any economic marginalization, socio-cultural discrimination and political dis-representation.

### **3-Social Order and Social Integration in Sudan: The Way Forward**

One of simple meanings of social order is refers to socio-economic and political environment of a society. In other words, stable social order in certain society is reflecting the stabilization of social system of that society. With reference to functionalism theory explanation of social system is that society has a various parts (Economy, political, social and cultural) and the interconnectedness of these parts contributes to the sustainability and continuity of the entire system (Merton, 2003). This means functionalism emphasizes the consensus and order that exist in society focusing on social stability and shared public values.

In this regards, instability of social structure in Sudan's society in terms of political instability, imbalance of development programs and marginalization issues and conflict of identities reflected by several ethnic conflicts, are the main factors led to social disorder and instability in Sudan. Therefore, social order in Sudan is suffering from structural defect of society, politically the long history of political instability expressed by struggle over political power and sharing wealth by the elites. Economically, the imbalance development programs and disparities between the center and the regions/states which led to economic deprivation and marginalization. Socially and culturally, inequalities and disparities between social entities and cultural domination has created social conflicts between some ethnic groups. Musa (2022) highlighted that structural inequalities, disparities between the center and the peripheries and domination of a certain limited number of tribes over the power and wealth of the country- while depriving the majority- are responsible for stirring up ethnic radicalism and separatism. Its clear evidence that ethnic and tribal conflicts that occurred in different parts of the country are one of the major factors of social instability in Sudan. Accordingly, reforming social order need reconsideration of resolving rooted instability and disorder of contemporary Sudanese social structure and system. In other words to promote Sudanese social integration, there is need for elimination of socio-cultural dominance by some ethnic groups, political exploitation by historical traditional and Islamic political parties and deep economic disparities among country regions and states. Deeply disparities, based on wealth, region, gender, age or ethnicity reduce social mobility. This, in turn, leads to the fact of fragmentation of society and has negative impacts on growth, poverty reduction, democracy and conflict avoidance (Watkins 2007). Cultural devaluation leads to discrimination and inequality when negative ideas about groups become institutionalized, or embedded in accepted social, political and economic norms, official practices, policies and legislation. These institutionalized systems of rules and norms, or rights regimes, allocate different and unequal rights to particular social groups. (Moser and Norton, 2001).

## **IV. Conclusion**

The paper concluded that current reality of Sudanese society is showing that structural defect and deficiency of social, cultural, political, and economic programs contributed to national disintegration of the country. The problems such as social disorder, disorganization, social injustice and deprivation can also arise when social integration is sought without giving sufficient attention to the need for cultural diversity within most societies. Social order in Sudan facing different types of challenges and led to social breakdown and disorder, social chaos and disrespect, change in people's values, norms, customs and beliefs. Therefore, there is need for social reforming to reshape cultural and social norms, values and general perceptions of people in the line of new social and cultural patterns that are accepted. Enhancing social integration in Sudan requires reform and restore equilibrium to social order through peaceful coexistence in all Sudanese societies without any economic marginalization, socio-cultural discrimination and political dis-representation. Hence, social

integration is the process of building and promoting the society on the basis of equal rights, obligations and citizenship.

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