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**From:** OpsNewsTicker  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 14, 2011 12:09 AM  
**To:** NEWS-Sudan; NEWS-Mahogany; SES-O  
**Subject:** President Hints at Fresh Start for Sudan, but Many Are Skeptical (NYT)

KHARTOUM, Sudan — It is a grand title, carrying the suggestion of a new era, a new dawn. Now that the southern part of Sudan has split off and formed its own nation, many politicians here in the north, including President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, have a new way of referring to what remains of their country. They call it the “second republic.”

In a speech before the National Assembly on Tuesday, Mr. Bashir outlined the principles of the second republic, saying they “affirm a commitment to the rule of law, the extension of justice, the propagation of a patriotic spirit, the guarantee of citizen rights, impartiality and transparency in decision making, integrity in public spending, accountability and the dependence on the standards of efficiency.”

His speech came only days after South Sudan officially declared its independence, and on Wednesday the United Nations Security Council recommended admitting it to the world body, where it would be the first new member since Montenegro joined in 2006. But while international attention has been lavished on the birth of South Sudan, many diplomats and analysts believe that the north now constitutes a new nation as well.

So, what does a “second republic” actually mean?

“Sudan has witnessed a geographic change; it lost one-quarter of its area,” said Sana al-Awad, Sudan’s state minister of information.

“France alternated between being a monarchy and a republic until its ‘fifth republic.’ ” she added. “Saudi Arabia’s ‘third state’ was declared when the kingdom’s area significantly expanded. Likewise, Sudan enters a new historical era, that of the second republic.”

Declaring a second republic may be a response to the major political changes in the structure of the Sudanese state, but not all are optimistic that it may mean changes for the better.

“A new republic should mean the introduction of something new, a different system of government, new laws and a new constitution that accommodates everybody; this is not what the National Congress Party wants,” Adlan el-Hardello, a political science professor at the University of Khartoum, said of Mr. Bashir’s governing party.

“These are tactics; they want people to believe that they are going to change,” Professor Hardello argued. “They are afraid of what happened in places like Egypt and Tunisia.”

Izdihar Juma'a, a member of the northern wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the party that governs South Sudan, was no more enthusiastic.

"This has been said before; we want to see practical steps and not listen to declarations," she said. "The N.C.P. dominates governmental institutions. If it starts with itself then that would be good."

The question of identity is a central one. While the overwhelming majority of Sudan's remaining citizens are Muslim — 96.7 percent, according to an official booklet published by the Ministry of Information days before South Sudan's independence — the nation remains ethnically diverse.

"If south Sudan secedes, we will change the Constitution and then there will be no time to speak of diversity of culture and ethnicity," Mr. Bashir told supporters at a rally in the eastern city of Gedaref last year, weeks before the referendum in which south Sudanese overwhelmingly voted for independence.

"Shariah and Islam will be the main source for the Constitution, Islam the official religion and Arabic the official language," he said.

The information minister, Ms. Awad, however, saw things differently.

"A characteristic of the second republic is that Sudanese, after much debate, see themselves as simultaneously part of Africa and the Arab world; we are a hybrid people that resemble the people of the belt that extends from Somalia and Ethiopia to Mali and Senegal," she said.

In his speech to the National Assembly on Tuesday, Mr. Bashir also addressed the political futures of Darfur and South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, all areas that remain in the north but have come into conflict with the central government in Khartoum.

"On Thursday, July 14, the Qatari capital, Doha, will witness, God willing, the signing of the final document that will end the Darfur crisis," he said.

A peace agreement is to be signed between the Sudanese government and the Liberation and Justice Movement, one of several Darfur rebel movements. But two major rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement, are not expected to take part in the signing.

Mr. Bashir also stated in his speech that deadlines for "popular consultations" to determine the political future of South Kordofan and Blue Nile would be extended to "allow the people of both states more time to consult and remedy the situations in both states."

But whether the declaration of a second republic indicates that Sudanese politicians have learned lessons from South Sudan's independence remains uncertain, critics contend.

"Northern politicians need to properly diagnose the problems of the outer provinces or the result will be similar to South Sudan," Ms. Juma'a said. "It is not about who rules Sudan, but about how Sudan is ruled."

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