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A long-time friend, Dr. Mohamed Salih, was co-presenter at last month's MAAFA, the annual Day of Remembrance of the forced dispersal of Africans. Salih, who is from Sudan, began with facts about the African continent. Africa is the second largest of the world's continents, he said. Its landmass is sixty percent dry land or outright desert. The African Sahara is the world's largest desert. He added the following:

- Lake Victoria is the largest lake in Africa and the second-largest freshwater lake in the world. The Nile is the longest river in the world; still, water scarcity is a problem for over 300 million Africans. Global warming aggravates the shortages. Groundwater is a mere 15 percent of the continent's total renewable water resources.
- The African continent holds 54 countries. Except for Ethiopia and Liberia, all were colonized by Europeans. With more than three thousand languages, many of African origin, Africa is the most multilingual of the world's continents.
- The continent holds around 1.1 billion people, half under the age of 25. In the adult population, 40 percent are illiterate; half of that percentage are women. By 2050, Africa's population is projected to more than double, to 2.3 billion.
- Africa holds 40 percent of the world's gold, 60 percent of its cobalt, and 90 percent of its platinum. France and Belgium, aided and abetted by the US, continue to excavate and export these riches.
- Africa has the largest remaining populations of rhinoceroses, cheetahs, hyenas, leopards, zebras, and wildebeests. It holds over 85% of the world's elephants and over 99% of its lions. Over 3,000 protected areas have been set aside for wildlife; still, poaching remains a huge problem. Rhinoceros horn, ground into powder, is in demand in Asian countries as an aphrodisiac; often, a debilitated rhino is left to die an agonizing death. "Bush meat" is harvested by destitute residents.
- Often, a colonized country rids itself of its oppressors through repeated, methodical violence against them. As a result, once it has achieved independence, the first governments tend to be military or paramilitary dictatorships.

I had no idea that, in 1884 my country, in what became known as the Berlin Conference, conspired with other European countries to grab not only Africa's metallurgic riches but also its humans. They divided the African continent into colonies and allotted these to themselves. Already at the turn of the century, Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, exposed King Leopold's ruthlessness in what was then the Belgian Congo.

When Imperial Germany lost the First World War, other European countries took over erstwhile German holdings in Africa.

If Germany held no colonies, why did it conduct warfare campaigns in Africa during the Second World War? I knew about these through German films that mythologized the African campaigns of “the desert fox” Erwin Rommel, never letting on that Hitler engaged his troops to save Italy’s hold on its colonies. When Italy’s weak-willed monarch and his fascist strongman realized, Hitler and his Axis coalition were losing their war, Italy switched allegiance from the Axis to the Allies.

Professor Salih used his native Sudan as a case study of colonialization and its aftermath. Since its independence from Britain in 1956, Sudan has been ruled mostly by military dictators, with a few years of democratic rule in between. Since independence, five different dictators have governed the country, bringing violence and instability. Their rule has been mired in wars with South Sudan and Darfur. The South Sudan war killed over three million people before the region seceded in 2011 and became South Sudan.

Sudan lies to the south of Egypt and shares with it the coast of the Red Sea. At times, Sudan was subsumed into a reigning pharaoh’s territory; at other times, Egypt and Sudan were ruled by black pharaohs, apparently a dynasty from Ethiopia or Sudan.

Earlier this year, a brutal civil war erupted in Sudan, pitting the Sudanese Army against the militia group Rapid Support Force (RSF).

The United Arab Emirates and Russia, have taken advantage of the war and exploited the country’s resources for their gain, says Dr. Salih. The Russian Wagner paramilitary group has been mining gold with RSF assistance, using the income to fund its war in Ukraine. Internally Sudan has been plagued by the Muslim Brotherhood, a group that abuses the Islamic religion to gain power and seize wealth.

Famine should not be a problem in a country that is as rich in farmland and animal resources as Sudan, Professor Salih points out. It is estimated that Sudan has close to 200 million acres of arable land, of which only about 20 percent is used. Yet the United Nations estimates that 25 million Sudanese will die of famine and lack of medical care. Salih expressed profound sorrow over the misfortunes that has befallen his country. He hopes the international community will hold the warmongers responsible, but what is needed right now is humanitarian aid.