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Sudan: international dimensions to the state and its crisis

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Overview

This paper follows on from the associated essay, *"Sudan: What Kind of State? What Kind of Crisis?"*[1] which concluded that the two dominant characteristics of the Sudanese state are (a) the extreme economic and political inequality between a hyper-dominant centre and peripheries that are weak and fragmented and (b) the failure of any single group or faction within the centre to exercise effective control over the institutions of the state, but who nonetheless can collectively stay in power because of their disproportionate resources. As a result, Sudan has been marked by chronic political instability, characterised by (a) constantly shifting coalitions at the centre, (b) protracted armed conflict in the peripheries and (c) the persistent ability of the broader central elite class to not only survive but prosper amid this flux and crisis. The Sudanese state is deeply dysfunctional but has thus far proved resistant to radical restructuring. This paper continues this analysis, examining the international dimensions to these entrenched patterns of governance.

Sudan's crisis is internationalised in two major ways. First, the viability of the state and its military is dependent upon external financial linkages, both donor assistance and informal flows of resources. Second, the mercantile and security hinterland of the central elites extends beyond the country's borders, so that Sudan is entangled in its neighbours' internal conflicts.

The first part of this paper locates the internationalisation of Sudanese governance in a historical context, briefly noting how the country had an unusual and complex experience of imperial rule. This section mentions some of the implications of this for post-independence politics.

The second section looks into Sudan's relationship with its donors and creditors. It examines how the government has managed to maintain a remarkable degree of autonomy despite its enormous debt burden that should in principle have left it dependent. It looks at how successive governments have managed to finance the war using a mixture of formal and informal channels for international resource flows. The conclusion is that while Sudan today possesses the finance to escape from its dependence, it is unlikely to be able to manage such a feat because of the contending power centres within Khartoum.

The third section examines how Sudan relates to its eastern, western and southern neighbours. In common with its domestic pattern of contested power and policy, Sudan has generally followed several competing foreign policies at the same time. Sudan's strategy for peripheral governance has included creating clientelistic relationships with governments, security services and insurgents across its frontiers. This is the structural condition underpinning the ubiquitous "spillover" of conflicts into neighbouring countries, and from neighbouring countries into the Sudanese peripheries. The conclusion is that Sudan is a regional power, exporting its habit of retail politics over its international frontiers. This has grave implications for the region.

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[1] Crisis States Occasional Paper 2 (April 2007).

The last part of the paper examines the international strategies for peacemaking in Sudan and the role they play in governance strategies. International mediators and guarantors of agreements have become drawn into Sudanese political affairs, becoming players in the unending game of political reshuffling and manoeuvre. Because Sudan's political system is marked by very limited levels of trust, agreements tend to be politically opportunistic rather than founded on confidence that they will prevail. The weaker parties (provincial insurgents) increasingly look to international guarantees to compensate for their expectation of betrayal from the centre. Peacemaking efforts for the Khartoum-Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) conflict succeeded in 2001-05 primarily because of an unusual focus and clarity of international policy and the unusual geo-political environment following September 11, 2001. Peacemaking efforts for Darfur in Abuja and subsequently are unlikely to succeed because they are unfocused and the multiple and ambitious goals of the U.S. exceed its diminished power.

The paper concludes with the observation that there are no obvious or simple solutions to Sudan's crisis, noting again that the flux and indeterminacy that continue to characterise Sudanese politics are an outcome of the structure of power and not the perfidy of individuals.

History

Sudan was created by a peculiar colonisation. It was trebly an imperial conquest. For most of the territory's inhabitants, the most significant "foreign" rulers were traders and soldiers from two tribes in Northern Sudan, who conquered and dominated the peripheries up to (and in some cases beyond) the country's current borders. Known collectively as *jellaba,* this group dominated the trade and administration and held senior positions in the army. During the first colonial period (1821-83) the formal sovereign was the neighbouring state of Egypt – which at that time was a province of the Ottoman Empire - and during the second period (1898-1955) Sudan was formally an Anglo-Egyptian condominium.[2] Beginning in the 1860s, the British Empire underpinned Egypt's colonial enterprise. But the fact that from early days Sudan was an exercise in dependent colonization - conquest by a state that was itself subject to imperial domination - meant that formal incorporation into the metropolitan empire was never complete. Britain's Sudan Political Service was a branch of the foreign office not the colonial office (Daly 1991, 2003; Deng and Daly 1989).

The dissonance between the interests of the different *conquistadors* created some of the most significant themes in Sudanese history (Fabunmi 1960; Warburg 1992; Woodward 1979). For the Northern tribes, the primary concerns were power and mercantile opportunity. The most useful political skill was navigating the interests of Cairo and London so as to retain paramountcy within Sudan.

For the Egyptians, the motives included prestige, *realpolitik* and profit (Troutt-Powell 2003). Initially, Egypt sought an empire to rival the French who had defeated and humiliated the country in 1798. For millennia, Egyptians had wanted to locate and control the source of the Nile, and controlling Sudan was the first and most essential step in that. Southward expansion was also an opportunity for primitive capital accumulation. After the completion of the Suez canal, Egypt was unable to pay its debts, and the running of the Egyptian state was taken over by its creditors, principally Britain. The British imposed what would now be called "good governance conditionalities" on its dependent - specifically it insisted on the abolition of the slave trade. This

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[2] In principle, sovereignty was exercised jointly by Egypt (on the basis of its conquests of 1821-83) and Britain. In practice Britain was the dominant partner, not least because Egypt was itself under British administration for the early part of the condominium period.

placed the Egyptian ruling class and its Northern Sudanese allies in an awkward position, as their profits were heavily reliant on the same economic activities that their controlling creditor demanded should be suppressed (Bjørkelo 1989). While the abolitionist rhetoric was sustained, in practice many of the European administrators sent to Sudan were ready to compromise with the unsavoury reality of what they euphemistically called "Sudanese servants." These inescapable contradictions came to a head by the early 1880s, resulting in widespread support for the millenarian rebellion headed by Mohamed Ahmad al Mahdi.

For the British, engagement in Sudan began as an adjunct to strategic interest in Egypt. The overriding aim was to stop France controlling the Suez Canal and hence the sea route to India. However, Britain soon developed an important streak of philanthropic imperialism in the form of the suppression of the slave trade. The pretext for dispatching British soldiers and administrators to Sudan was to ensure that the Egyptians carried out their promise in this respect. In the 1890s, the demand to avenge the death of General Charles Gordon also helped drive the charge to war against the Mahdist armies. However, it was strategic rivalry that prompted the 1896-98 invasion. After the French sent an expedition from the Congo that set up a base on the Upper Nile at Fashoda, keeping the French out of Sudan demanded a re-conquest, supposedly in the name of restoring Egyptian sovereignty. Thereafter, economic interests in the form of cotton came to play an important role. Meanwhile, each of the internal elite groups in Sudan learned to play on the interests of potential external sponsors.

Sudanese nationalism emerged as a conflicted movement with distinct and competing political, ideological and cultural strands (Woodward 1979). Each strand was shaped by what it identified as its principal adversary and its strategic and tactical allies. The first manifestation of nationalism was the White Flag League of 1923-4, led by an assimilated Dinka former soldier called Ali Abdel Latif. He made common cause with the Egyptians against the British and staged what the British called a "mutiny". The subsequent leaders of Sudanese nationalism were drawn principally from the elite groups of the North and they too identified Britain as their prime adversary, enlisting Egyptian support to mobilise. The British meanwhile minimised the Egyptian role in Sudan and sought to undermine the urbanised and educated class, instead supporting the rural aristocracy and sectarian leadership, including (in a remarkable about face) the neo-Mahdists. In the 1880s, the Mahdi had fought against both Egypt and Britain but in the early twentieth century, his son Abdel Rahman built up a new Mahdist movement in alliance with the British: his nationalism was hostile to Egypt and his productive base was cotton farming. What Sayyid Abdel Rahman al Mahdi and his Northern political rivals shared was the assumption that on independence, the Northern elite would inherit the state. Meanwhile, the Southerners were opposed to both Egypt and the *jellaba* class and belatedly saw the British as a protector against both.

The failure of any one of the contending political factions to exercise decisive leadership over the Sudanese nationalist movement meant that the struggle for independence was a war of political manoeuvre in which diplomatic skill (including a talent for perfidy) was critical to success. After 1945, Sudanese politicians also learned to play off the United States against Britain (Woodward 1979). Independence was achieved on 1 January 1956 by Prime Minister Ismail al Azhari who infamously made incompatible promises to different constituencies: unity with Egypt to the unionists and the Egyptians, sovereign independence to the neo-Mahdists and the British, and federation to the Southerners. His government lasted only a few months and to this day, Sudanese lack a unifying nationalist myth and a "father of the nation" figure.

The Egyptians felt especially betrayed by Azhari, and still continue to see Sudan as a "lost province" or "younger sister" (Troutt-Powell 2003). Until very recently, Sudanese did not need visas to travel to Egypt and could not be registered as refugees in Egypt, while Cairo's policy towards Sudan remained in the hands of the Ministry of the Interior. Egyptian governments tend to see other countries' engagement in Sudanese politics as an infringement on their own sovereignty.

Financing the Regime

From the outset in 1956, Sudan's politics were chronically unresolved but financially at least the state was a going concern. After decades of fiscal stringency in which the only significant investments were in the cotton-growing areas, imperial Sudan began its first attempts at national economic development in the decade after World War Two. In the first decade of independence, governments continued to invest in infrastructure: extending the railway line to Darfur and the South, expanding the irrigated schemes and developing rain-fed agriculture in the eastern savanna. Ambitious plans for rural development in Kordofan and Darfur were drawn up. These investments chiefly benefited the existing dominant classes: the neo-Mahdist support base was founded on agricultural schemes, the trading *jellaba* gained from the expansion of infrastructure and markets and the administrative elite played an ever-bigger role in economic and political life. Sudan received very little foreign aid. It balanced its budget and ran current account surpluses.

In the early and mid-1970s President Nimeiri accelerated development efforts, with gargantuan schemes for digging a canal to divert the Nile in the South, a vast sugar plant, roads and agricultural development projects. The political rationale was, however, radically different. He had driven the sectarian elites out of the country and sought to use a developmental state to transform the country, building up a new ruling elite in the process (Khalid 1985; Niblock 1987; Woodward 1990). This began as a socialist-inspired project with technical assistance from the eastern bloc. After Nimeiri fell out with the Communists in 1971 he switched by degrees to the western bloc. Development finance became central to his experiment at national renewal, and increasingly, to the survival of his regime. The technocratic elite he was trying to build had no established constituencies in Sudan—they tried as hard as they could but were unable to challenge traditional sectarian loyalties—and instead built their politics on a promise of future prosperity.

Nimeiri allowed his ministers to borrow recklessly in pursuit of these goals. Officially a socialist country, they sought loans from the eastern bloc but being increasingly aligned with the USA they also borrowed from western Europe, the USA and the World Bank. After the oil boom there was plentiful Arab money and they even went to commercial banks and borrowed for long-term development at commercial rates. It was much too good to last. By 1978 Sudan was $6 billion in debt and could not meet its interest payments. The following years witnessed a struggle to bring both borrowing and spending under control.

Mansour Khalid, formerly a minister in Nimeiri's government, describes how in 1980 when the President

> ….finally succumbed to the disciplining hand of the Bank of Sudan and the Ministry of Finance (though not for long enough), the government had to hire a special adviser, Morgan Grenfell, to identify the size of the total indebtedness of the country. There was no record in the Bank of Sudan of obligations undertaken by the palace. Morgan Grenfell sent out telexes to all Sudan creditors asking for details. (Khalid 1985: 135).

The IMF, backed by both the Paris and London clubs of creditors, insisted on an austerity package including devaluation of the Sudanese pound and expenditure cuts (Hussein 1988). For almost three decades, managing Sudan's debt has been a central preoccupation of the government. Unable to borrow any significant new funds, the increase in foreign debt from $6 billion in 1978 to $14 billion in 1990 and $26 billion today has been due entirely to accumulated arrears. Servicing this debt should in theory cost more than $3 billion per year—several times Sudan's foreign exchange earnings, even with oil revenues. Most creditors have written off or written down their Sudanese loans and the amount has recently been growing more slowly. In theory, indebtedness on this scale should leave the country at the mercy of its creditors and this is what happened to Egypt a century earlier. In practice, Sudan was able to maintain a high degree of autonomy despite the meltdown of government finance and tokenistic debt service payments that have never amounted to more than six per cent of the interest payments total due (Brown 1988: 73). Simply not paying its debts has been the centrepiece of Khartoum's financial strategy.

Sudan has been insolvent but has still paid for essential government functions and has managed to pay for its war. Its finances have operated under very tight constraints but it has nonetheless managed. In1987 the official defence budget was $230 million on the armed forces and $219 million on other security requirements.[3] The following year the government budgeted $570 million for the army and security but could only find $460 million total - a very modest increase. In February 1989, the army chief of staff wrote to prime minister Sadiq el Mahdi and said that he was unable to prosecute an effective war with the resources provided to the army, that the militia strategy was dangerous and unacceptable, and that the government should instead seek peace with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) which had led a rebellion in southern Sudan since 1983. The National Islamic Front (NIF) responded with a demand that the government find the funds needed by whatever mechanism.

We can identify four distinct periods to Sudan's management of its bankruptcy (Brown 1992; African Rights 1997). The first was from 1978 to 1985. During this period, the government struggled to play the game of indebtedness according to the rules set in Washington, by seeking a series of rescheduling agreements (a record of eight over seven years). It was able to succeed at this due to three factors. One was the sheer diversity and complexity of the debt. Though enormous overall, significant parts of it were to creditors who were unable to put much effective pressure on the regime (e.g. eastern bloc countries) and so Khartoum simply ignored those obligations. Second, Khartoum skillfully played the Cold War geopolitics. It granted important favours to the US State Department, including a large CIA station in Khartoum, support for Egypt's *rapprochement* with Israel, loyalty in opposition to Marxist Ethiopia and South Yemen, cooperation in the CIA's covert war against Libya in Chad, and allowing the Ethiopian Jews to be clandestinely airlifted from Sudan to Israel. In return, the State Department pressed the US Treasury (and hence the IMF) for lenient treatment. Until early 1985, the State Department consistently won out over a reluctant Treasury and Nimeiri was repeatedly bailed out. In March 1985, the funds needed were getting too large and the Treasury stalled; the resulting financial crisis helped bring Nimeiri down, despite the president's last-minute dash to Washington to secure new funds.

The third factor that kept the government going was the fact that a huge swathe of the ruling Northern elite had benefited from the largesse of the 1970s and had secured their own private incomes. A large part of this was private investment abroad. In the early 1980s, although the Sudan government was well over $10 billion in debt, cumulative private capital flight amounted

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[3] Africa Economic Digest, 26 June 1987.

to perhaps twice that figure (Brown 1992). A large part of the country's budget had been plundered for private gain and the proceeds invested in Arab countries, Europe and north America, much of it in real estate. The group of beneficiaries was, however, too small and too uncertain in its political allegiance to have much impact on stabilising the regime. More significant was another related development: a huge exodus of Sudan's professional classes to the Gulf states, where they took well-paid jobs in the rapidly expanding service sector. In the mid-1980s, about 350,000 Sudanese expatriates in the Gulf earned a total income equivalent to roughly sixty per cent of Sudan's GDP. Their remittances sustained a prosperous middle class, mostly in the urban areas of the North, and blunted the impact of successive austerity measures imposed by the government. They also accumulated very substantial capital abroad. The expatriate labour/remittance factor has been a major element in Sudan's economic inequality for thirty years.

The remittance economy also meant that the IMF-sponsored adjustment packages were almost wholly ineffective. Contrary to official statistics, Sudan was awash in foreign exchange, sent home through private and informal channels. Successive devaluations merely became a source of rent for those who controlled the official exchange markets, as businessmen and remittance-affluent families sought the most profitable ways to send their money abroad. The informalisation of Sudan's hard currency earnings, and its focus on the Arab world, were to have important consequences for the country's financial management later on.

The period of IMF-endorsed debt management came to an end in 1985-6. Firstly in March 1985 when the US. government hesitated to bail out Nimeiri, and then when the IMF declared Sudan in default of its obligations to the IMF itself eleven months later. An unfortunate side effect of the international system for debt management in this period was that Sudan borrowed funds directly from the IMF, and then ran into problems paying the interest on these. At that time, when a country was in arrears to the IMF, the IMF would not approve any economic restructuring package and thus would not convene the Paris Club to authorise debt rescheduling. Despite the fact that the arrears to the IMF were relatively small ($220 million in 1986), Sudan could not even find this sum and so fell into a trap: it could no longer formally manage its debt and the IMF therefore suspended dealings with it, so that no more rescheduling was possible.

From 1986 to 1990, Sudan was in a second period of financial management: what Richard Brown has called "managing the unmanageable." (Brown 1992) The Ministry of Finance proved remarkably adept at this. Once again, it played the State Department off against the Treasury. Unable to have a formally-approved restructuring package, it negotiated "shadow agreements" with the IMF, on the basis of which creditors and donors sympathetically assisted the government to stay afloat. Sudan under Sadiq el Mahdi was still in the western bloc at this point, although its policy towards Libya had changed to one of seeking Libyan aid and turning a blind eye to Libyan involvement in Chad through Darfur. Khartoum had in fact discovered that its weak position could be a strong card. So long as the State Department wanted Sudanese cooperation, Khartoum could hint at a wholesale default on its loans or at a defection to the Libyan camp, and the USA would comply. Only in January 1989, when James Baker shifted from Treasury to State, did Washington DC get tough with Khartoum. The results were rapid but mixed: achievements such as 'Operation Lifeline Sudan' and a serious peace process with the SPLA but then a military coup. Like Nimeiri before him, Sadiq el Mahdi had learned that succumbing to US pressure, when he could not obtain a consensus inside his government, could cost him his job.

One of the basic rationales for the Islamist coup in 1989 was that the parliamentary government had only reluctantly prosecuted the war, providing the army with insufficient resources. But the

incoming NIF government found itself in exactly the same straits, and indeed worse ones, as it was rapidly cut off from many sources of international assistance. Sudan was formally suspended from the IMF in 1990, only the second country in the world to earn this dubious distinction. During 1989-90 Khartoum financed its expanded war effort partly by printing money, thereby setting in motion nearly two years of hyperinflation which contributed to severe famine in many parts of Sudan, most notably urban areas, in late 1990 (African Rights 1997, chapter 6). The hyperinflation did however provide the cover for a number of radical economic reforms.

From 1991 onwards, the military-Islamist regime was, in many respects, a more reliable financial interlocutor for the IMF than the preceding parliamentary regime. It pushed through a series of economic reforms including abolishing the urban bread subsidy, devaluing the Sudanese pound, massively retrenching government spending, and selling off state-owned businesses (mostly at bargain prices to regime supporters). After the initial shock, in the longer term there was an impressive economic stabilisation and growth. Even before oil revenues came on-stream in 1999, Sudan was posting GDP growth rates of about six per cent per annum. The positions of the State Department and the Treasury/IMF were now switched. While State opposed Sudan for political reasons, Treasury and IMF were favourably impressed by the finance ministry's commitment to sound macro-economic management. Sudan made some modest good-faith debt repayments to the IMF and a few other multilateral creditors. There was no chance of Sudan joining the highly-indebted poor countries' initiative (HIPC) which would have begun a process of debt forgiveness. However, the beginnings of what would need to be a hugely complicated deal on Sudan's debt were coming into focus.

One reason for this new-found fiscal responsibility was that Sudan had fewer cards to play with against its creditors. It was politically a pariah state and the IMF had revised its rules so as to legislate around the moral hazard of tolerating default. Countries such as Somalia and Liberia had joined the default list and the IMF feared that others would follow, and it had bigger fish to fry elsewhere in the world.

The big financial story of Sudan during 1990-99 was elsewhere, off the official books. While the Ministry of Finance was impressing international financial institutions with its stringency, the regime - here defined as both state and party - was spending copiously on the war and on titanic programmes of Islamist social transformation. On-budget military spending did not increase and in fact the officially gazetted figures shrank. The source of the additional money was a number of parallel channels. From the late 1970s onwards, the NIF had built its party finance on Arab money. It not only kept substantial funds abroad, but set up banks and commercial companies that invested in key emergent sectors, especially in the service sector and the urban areas. Sudanese development and relief professionals also became leading members in the fast-developing sphere of Islamist philanthropic organisations. Many of these agencies are based in Saudi Arabia and have largely opaque financial systems that blur the distinctions between charity and commerce and between missionary work and support for *jihad*. From 1990 onwards, multiple channels of Arab and Islamic finance were a key element in the regime's financial sustainability.

The immediate reason why the NIF came to rely so heavily on these sources was that in August 1990, Hassan al Turabi, political leader of Sudan's Islamists and the *eminence grise* behind the government, declared his support for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. This decision was fiercely disputed by President Bashir, but Turabi prevailed. Economic sanctions and a rapid slow-down in foreign aid resulted. International assistance that had been running at about $900 million in the late 1980s was reduced to an average of $200 million over 1996-99, most of which was

accounted for by UN spending on humanitarian programmes, especially in Southern Sudan..[4] The fact that so much aid to Sudan was food aid destined for conflict-affected areas helps explain why the government was so energetic and creative in trying to co-opt relief programmes into its counter-insurgency strategy (African Rights 1997). Donor funds to the government dried up almost entirely and by 1997 they were just $15 million.[5] Meanwhile, Sudan opened its doors to all kinds of Islamist financiers. The best known, though not the most well-resourced, of these was Usama bin Laden, who was initially drawn to Sudan as a country in which he could build up his businesses and provide employment to his base of demobilised veterans of the Afghan *jihad*.

There are no reliable figures for the extent of Islamist finance provided to Sudan during the 1990s. However, it is remarkable that by 1999 the national budget was just $884 million and yet the government was able to sustain a major war and infrastructural development projects. Officially, military spending was just $242 million[6] - less than in the 1980s. Actual expenditures were undoubtedly far higher, estimated at up to $1 billion (Ajawin and de Waal 2002: 43-4). Central to Turabi's political self-confidence was the fact that his Islamist networks had been instrumental in setting up Sudan's domestic armaments industry and its off-budget security agencies. If we see the militia strategy as a mechanism for running a self-financing war ("counter-insurgency on the cheap" (de Waal 2004)), this was an internationalised version of the same approach.

There were two major structural defects in the strategy of relying on non-state Islamist finance. The first was that it set up the party financial bosses as an independent power centre capable of challenging the state. In 1999, with the prospect of oil revenues transforming Sudan's financial standing, the struggle for supremacy over regime finance resulted in the longstanding Bashir-Turabi split coming into the public arena. Critical to Bashir's success in this struggle was the fact that the architect of many of the Islamist institutions, Ali Osman Taha, switched to his camp, along with security chiefs such as Salah Abdalla Gosh. The second was that Islamist finance was unable to work the economic miracle that its proponents had promised. Just as Nimeiri's gamble on development aid had fallen apart, so too Islamic banking and Islamic philanthropy were failing to deliver. There was a succession of scandals affecting Islamic banks and charities in the late 1990s - some of them instigated by their political opponents, but largely reflecting real instances of corruption and flawed investment strategies. The dream that purely Islamist economic institutions could supplant the relatively secular institutions of government was receding. This was one reason why Khartoum's security cabal was ready to abandon Usama bin Laden and Hassan al Turabi and instead focus on making money through state institutions.

The fourth period of financial crisis management consists of Sudan's attempted return to economic normality since 2000. This is based on oil revenues and a hoped-for peace and counter-terrorism dividend, which includes an expansion of international development assistance, closer economic ties with Asia (notably China) and, at some future point, debt reduction and cancellation. Oil income and Asian investment have undoubtedly lessened the financial pressure on the government and given it much increased leeway for autonomy. The national budget increased from under $900 million in 1999 to over $2.5 billion in 2003, with oil revenues providing about half of the total. In the subsequent four years the combined impact of oil revenues, an economic boom in Khartoum and the availability of loans from China meant that the state budget increased at an astonishing rate, to reach a projected $11.7 billion for 2007. Of this, about $1.2 billion is transferred to the Government of Southern Sudan. While this level of gross

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[4] OECD, *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Aid Recipients 2004-2006,* Paris.
[5] IMF, *Sudan—Recent Economic Developments*, 1998.
[6] See Human Rights Watch, *Sudan: Oil and Human Rights,* 2002, tables.

budget is probably unsustainable, even a cut of a quarter or a third will still leave the Sudan government immeasurably more financially capable than it was in the 1990s.

For the first time in over 25 years, the Sudan government has both sufficient revenue and sufficiently consolidated control over its key financial institutions, that it could in principle move towards economic normalizstion. But even with this level of income, it struggles to pay the interest on its debts. Khartoum needs an agreement under the HIPC mechanism if it is to be fully solvent. It has the funds to pay its debts but there are too many domestic claimants on that money for it to be released for that purpose, and too many obstacles in the way of adopting a credible poverty reduction strategy and implementing it. Most likely Sudan will move slowly in the direction of normalisation as long as there are not powerful political interests arraigned against today's relatively conservative economic policies.

One implication of this analysis is that the international financial institutions still possess some leverage over Sudan. But should this leverage be exercised in pursuit of political goals, it is certain that Khartoum will revert to its well-established crisis management mode, continue to live as a defaulter and play off different international stakeholders against one another. Real leverage is much more limited than the headline figures for debt indicate.

Targeted sanctions on the companies and financial institutions associated with the security agencies would in principle not only be a punishment and a deterrent to those involved in prosecuting the war, but could also squeeze those parallel financial channels that still exist. However, such smart sanctions are difficult to design. The regime has survived under various forms of sanctions for almost eighteen years and still retains sufficient informal Islamist financial networks to be able to hide personal financial assets. The one measure that would truly hurt the Sudanese economy would be capital market sanctions on companies doing business in Sudan, but it seems improbable that the US Treasury would support such a radical move.

Sudan's Trans-Border Peripheries

The model of the Sudanese state developed in the paper *"Sudan: What kind of state? What kind of crisis?"* (Crisis States Occasional Paper 2) namely incomplete consolidation at the centre combined with extreme centre-periphery inequality, has ramifications beyond Sudan's borders. It has embedded Sudan's crisis in a system of regional crises, which have been structurally linked from the nineteenth century and which continue to be entangled today.

First, the centre has commonly contained two (or more) competing foreign policies. During the 1990s, these could be characterised as a traditional national-interest approach and a radical Islamist approach, though many individuals in the diplomatic service and in the security agencies hedged their bets and tried to stay in favour with both contending groups. Both policies have led to intervention across borders, though in slightly different forms. While the national interest approach has been ascendant since the mid-1990s, many connections with regional Islamist insurgents remain and can be activated in pursuit of either perceived national security interests or, potentially, a revived Islamist agenda.

Second, Khartoum's mercantile periphery extends into neighbouring countries to the east, west and south. This means that Sudanese traders operate across borders and Sudanese socio-cultural mores exert their influence too. Parts of lowland Eritrea, western Ethiopia, eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic are more commercially and culturally integrated with

Sudan than with their own capitals. Were it not for the war in the South, the same would be true for south-western Ethiopia, northern Uganda and the north of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Third, when Sudan's provincial elites have been in rebellious mood, they have looked to neighbouring states for sources of support that will be independent of Khartoum. They have been ready to enter into client relationships with governments next door to counteract dependence upon central elites. In turn, this has drawn Sudanese military intelligence into the affairs of those neighbours.

The divergence of Sudan's foreign policies was most dramatically illustrated in August 1990 when President Bashir assured Egypt and Saudi Arabia of his support for them against Iraq, only to be countermanded by Turabi's declaration of *jihad* in support of Saddam Hussein. Turabi anticipated a series of Islamist revolutions across the Arab world, toppling corrupt monarchies and secular dictatorships. That did not happen. But it led to a brief period in which Khartoum was the hub of global Islamist militancy. Both the nationalist and the jihadist approaches to foreign policy agreed on the need to support armed groups in neighbouring states—their chief disagreement was on which ones and with what in mind (de Waal and Abdel Salam 2004).

The national-interest rationale for cross-border meddling was that Sudan was already the object of intervention from Ethiopia and Uganda. There were several thousand Ugandan regular troops fighting alongside the SPLA in Equatoria and in November 1989 the Ethiopian army had threatened to invade and occupy Damazin (the site of the Blue Nile dam which supplies water to the Gezira and electricity to Khartoum) if Sudan did not stop providing a rear base for the Eritrean and Tigrayan insurgents fighting against Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian threat was defused by a counter-offensive from Blue Nile spearheaded by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front into Ethiopia (EPLF). It is important to recognise that (a) Sudan has been on the receiving end of foreign military interference and (b) Sudan's conservative national-interest security strategists advocate intervening in neighbours' affairs - cross-border military engagement is not just a preserve of radical Islamists.

From 1990 to 1995, Sudan's foreign policies were in the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the external security agency, military intelligence and the Arab and Islamic Bureau, a party institution set up by Turabi to facilitate the activities of national and international *jihadi*sts (amongst other things). These institutions often did not coordinate among each other and often did not even inform one another of their activities. There was a free-for-all.

Sudan's entanglement in Ethiopia is as old as either state. Tit-for-tat destabilisation was marked in the 1960s when Sudan backed the Eritrean nationalists and Ethiopia supported the Anyanya. It is impossible to prove who was the original culprit in this long-running proxy war. The Ethiopian state resembles Sudan in its history of territorial expansionism and its readiness to engage in intrigue and intervention across its borders.

During 1989-91, Sudan supported the EPLF and its ally the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front[7]—secular and leftist guerrillas—for clear national interest reasons, providing them with a rear base and fuel to assist their military victory over Mengistu Haile Mariam (which in turn led to a military disaster for the SPLA). The rationale for this was that Ethiopia had armed the SPLA and helped direct its operations. The strategy adopted by the SPLA leader John Garang for resisting Khartoum was to seek external patrons, and Mengistu was his first and most

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[7] Which emerged from the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

substantial. After the loss of Mengistu in 1991, Garang diversified his backers. The Sudan government also backed Eritrea Jihad, Ethiopian Islamists, the Oromo Liberation Front and al Itihaad al Islaami in Somalia, against its avowed allies after they had taken power in Asmara and Addis Ababa. Different arms of the regime were pursuing different and contradictory policies. Osman al Saeed, the Sudanese ambassador in Addis Ababa skillfully kept track of these competing policies and sought to manage them in his country's interest.

During the years of friendly relations between Khartoum and its eastern neighbours (1991-93), Sudanese businessmen were actively investing, especially in Eritrea. When Addis Ababa and Khartoum resumed friendly relations again in 1999, two economic concerns helped bring them together. One was that northern Ethiopia began using Port Sudan as its route to the sea. The second was that the oil reserves in south-west Ethiopia, which are an extension of the Upper Nile oilfields in Sudan, can only be commercially exploited if the oil is pumped out using a spur to the Sudanese pipeline.

Ever since the Muslim Chadian rebel national liberation front (FROLINAT) was founded in Darfur in 1966, Sudan has been entangled in Chadian affairs, in part as a byproduct of its hot-and-cold relations with Libya (Burr and Collins 2006; Marchal 2007). Khartoum backed Idriss Deby's military takeover in Chad in 1990 with a clear understanding that each would prevent rebel forces from the other country from operating in its territory. Deby has no Islamist credentials. In this instance, Khartoum refrained from supporting a parallel track of militant Islamists in Chad - an unusual case of consistency that perhaps explains Bashir's anger at Deby's inability to stop his Zaghawa kinsmen in the Chadian government and army supporting the Darfurian rebels. Since 2005, Khartoum's primary strategy has been to support Chadian rebels seeking to overthrow Deby. This is implemented by military intelligence as an extension of its role in supporting the Janjaweed. It has also a parallel strategy, pursued by external security, of using Eritrea as an intermediary to unify the Darfur rebels and then deliver them as part of a security package. A third parallel strategy is a cross-border extension of internal retail politics: buying elite members one-by-one.

Sudanese engagement in Chad had a substantial business component, with important contracts in Chad being awarded to Sudanese companies. The fall-out between N'djamena and Khartoum was also associated with business intrigues and the assassination of a leading Sudanese businessman in Chad.

Sudan has backed several groups fighting against the government in Uganda, some with an Islamist hue and others (notoriously the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) without. The rationale was the same as in the case of Ethiopia: the SPLA was getting support from Kampala (again with historic precedents). In this case, the key intermediaries were military intelligence and selected Islamist philanthropic agencies. In the South, military intelligence is the most powerful regime institution and the coordinator of assistance to domestic militia. Its role in supporting the LRA and other insurgents across the southern borders follows naturally from that.

Sudan has sent troops to the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in each case through the Ministry of Defence in coordination with Foreign Affairs. In 2006, an insurgent group with Sudanese military intelligence backing appeared in north-east CAR. Given the close links between Presidents Deby and Bozize, this is a logical extension of the policy of seeking regime change in Chad.

During its internationalist militant phase (1990-95) Sudan backed Islamist insurgents in Egypt, leading Egypt to retaliate by occupying the disputed Halaib triangle on the Red Sea coast in 1994. Sudan also sponsored al Qaida's east African cells. These activities were under the auspices of the Arab and Islamic Bureau and off-budget security agencies working with Islamist philanthropic agencies. After 1995-96 most of these activities were reined in, and some of the agencies went out of business or downsized. But it is rare for a parallel organisation, whether security or philanthropic, to be disbanded entirely and some of them re-appeared on the fringes of the Darfur conflict.

The policy of liberally supporting *jihad*ists came dramatically unstuck in June 1995 when a group based in Sudan tried to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa. This operation was conducted without the knowledge, it appears, of either Bashir or Turabi, though senior security officers had sponsored it. As an immediate consequence, President Bashir stepped into the political fray and insisted on some accountability within his security agencies. This took several years to achieve (in fact it was never fully accomplished) but not before Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda had all intervened again in Sudan's civil war.

The Ethiopian engagement was particularly interesting and effective. It was conducted in a low diplomatic key (in contrast to the vociferous statements coming from Asmara and Kampala). It involved large military operations under the command of very senior Ethiopian officers. These included the defence of Parajok against a Sudanese offensive followed by a counterattack (in 1995), the capture of Yei and the capture of large parts of southern Blue Nile (both in 1997). Meanwhile, Meles Zenawi made his intentions very clear to Khartoum: he wanted an end to all destabilisation activities in the region and was if necessary prepared to bring about a military solution in pursuit of this. After each operation, Ethiopian security officers met their Sudanese counterparts and demanded proof that certain training camps had been closed down and certain individuals expelled. Ethiopia's military activities in Sudan ended in May 1998 with the outbreak of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, but by that time its principal objectives had been attained. Khartoum made its main concessions towards counter-terrorism (e.g. the expulsion of bin Laden) and peace (the Khartoum Agreement that recognised the South's right of self-determination) under this pressure. The USA provided diplomatic cover at the UN Security Council, a task made possible by Egyptian anger towards Sudan.[8] The USA only began to ratchet up its direct pressure on Khartoum in late 1997 and the cruise missile attack on al Shifa took place in August 1998, when the Ethiopian military threat had been removed. The concessions that were wrung from Khartoum were won by Addis Ababa and not by Washington DC.[9]

There are several important lessons from the Ethiopian experience between 1994 and 1998. The first is that it takes very significant military pressure to bring about a serious shift in Khartoum's policies, and even then that shift takes several years. The reason for this slow impact is that Bashir cannot simply dictate to the various groups within the regime how they should behave. A second lesson is that such pressure can bring about very specific ends, provided that they are clearly detailed. Third, in the absence of a direct military danger from a neighbouring state, Khartoum has little reason to be concerned about any threats made against it. Whatever threats are made today they cannot match the reality of Ethiopian armoured brigades on the outskirts of Sudanese towns while the UN Security Council turns a blind eye.

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[8] During 1995-98 Sudan was in the unique position of having offended both Egypt and Ethiopia. Fortunately for Khartoum, the two did not trust one another and did not coordinate beyond backing each other up in condemning Bashir and Turabi in diplomatic fora.

[9] This episode is wrongly interpreted in the International Crisis Group report, "The Answer to Darfur," March 2007.

Since 1998, Ethiopia has been largely preoccupied with its unresolved conflict with Eritrea and its internal problems. Fears of Eritrean destabilisation were the major factor prompting the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006 and the installation of the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu. While Ethiopia has the potential to be the major external stabilising force in Southern Sudan, it has remained curiously low profile since the signing of the CPA.

Sudanese relations with Eritrea swung between a warm embrace in 1991 to proxy war in 1994 and outright armed conflict in 1997-8. Eritrea's policy during the 1994-8 period was to support the National Democratic Alliance as a government-in-waiting - despite (or perhaps because of) its weakness. After the outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean war, Khartoum warmed more to Addis Ababa than to Asmara, and established a loose coalition with Ethiopia and Yemen to contain Eritrea and neutralise its attempts to destabilise the region. However, since 2005, Sudanese security has begun to utilise Asmara as an intermediary in its attempts to manage its peripheries.

Khartoum's strategy has to be seen in the context of Eritrea's game-plan for the region. Eritrea's primary aim is to weaken Ethiopia and in pursuit of that, it has supported opposition groups in Ethiopia and Somalia. In order for this strategy to succeed, Asmara needs (a) to weaken Sudan, because a strong Khartoum-Addis Ababa axis is not in its interest and (b) to keep the international community out of peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts, because if international efforts succeed in stabilising the region's hotspots, then Eritrea loses its relevance as a player. Eritrea has therefore supported the Eastern Front (comprising the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions) and the Darfur armed movements (it supported both the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and JEM and then hosted the founding meeting of the National Redemption Front (NRF) in June 2006). Eritrea has also established direct links with the SPLA, which serves the dual purpose of supporting a counterweight to Khartoum and countering Ethiopian influence in Southern Sudan. Eritrea's strength is its military and its readiness to use it, either to support insurgents or (potentially) as a regional peacekeeping force. Eritrea's weak spot is its disastrous economic performance which has left it a beggar.

Khartoum has gone along with the Eritrean strategy, to a degree. The main reason for this is a shared objective of minimising international engagement in the region's crises. Khartoum and Asmara signed the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement in October 2006. This was essentially a bilateral deal between the two governments in which Sudan provided economic assistance (oil supplies and an open border) in return for which Eritrea delivered the Eastern Front. This is a deal with no guarantees. It is held together solely by the self-interest of the two principals: Asmara needs economic assistance and Khartoum wants a secure border. Eritrea still keeps Eastern Front guerrillas on its territory. But Sudanese money gives Khartoum the upper hand.

Sudanese security and Eritrea hoped for a similar deal for Darfur - which would minimise the international role in guaranteeing the peace and providing peacekeepers. The prerequisite was for Asmara to obtain the same degree of control over the Darfur armed movements as it had over the Eastern Front. Between May 2006 and March 2007, Asmara repeatedly tried to centralise the SLA and JEM under the NRF banner, using arms supplies, coercion and a deal with N'djamena to ensure that only NRF-aligned commanders were permitted to operate on Chadian territory. (Asmara provided security for Idriss Deby in return for his cooperation with this strategy.) On the surface it appeared that Eritrea was actively supporting the armed opposition to the Sudan government but in practice it was cooperating in a strategy designed in Khartoum. The game became clear in March 2007, when Eritrea provided troops to patrol the Chad-Sudan border and Deby decided not to accept UN troops for eastern Chad. Asmara even organised a visit by the

president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, to N'djamena. However, the strategy did not work because Eritrea did not enjoy the confidence of the Darfur rebels (especially after several were detained and one was tortured in Asmara) and because Deby could not stick to his side of the bargain. Deby needed the support of his Zaghawa kinsmen more than he needed Eritrea so he allowed SLA commanders to decide their loyalties for themselves—and they rejected the NRF. What this episode shows is the level of secret collusion between the security services of the region and Khartoum's ability to manipulate a weaker neighbour in pursuit of its own ends.

This approach did not command universal assent in Khartoum. It was pursued in parallel to continuing support to the Chadian armed opposition and ongoing attempts to buy the Darfur commanders off on an individual basis. As the short-term strategy for controlling the Darfur resistance through Asmara fails, alternative approaches both to Darfur and to Eritrea will emerge.

Sudan's engagement with Somalia is in part a product of the two countries' common problems with Ethiopia and in part from the common cause shared by Islamists in the two countries. During the period 1998-2005, the joint interest between Addis Ababa and Khartoum in containing Eritrea meant that Sudan was politically aligned with Ethiopia against the Somali Islamists, because the Eritreans were opportunistically supporting the latter. During 2006, as Bashir gave up hope of normalising relations with the USA, some old figures from the militant days of the Arab and Islamic Bureau revived ties with the Somali Islamists and began to dream again on fostering political Islam in both Somalia and Ethiopia. The parallel policies towards Somalia may be an indicator of the re-emergence of competing power centres in Sudanese foreign policymaking.

Sudan's insurgents typically pursue parallel tracks as well. The SPLA under John Garang is the clearest case of this. During the last years of the war he openly admitted that he had three tracks. One was the pursuit of a military solution - a "New Sudan" by force of arms. This involved military support from Eritrea and working with armed groups in eastern and western Sudan. An SPLA attack on Torit very nearly destroyed the ongoing peace negotiations in August 2002; its support for the Darfurian SLA in 2003 had a similar impact. The second track was a common front with the parties of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an umbrella of different opposition groups aiming at a popular uprising and a broad-based government, or as a minimal alternative, a negotiated power-sharing with the ruling National Congress Party (NCP). The latter option was backed by the Egyptians and Libyans. The prospects for this were fading by 2000 but Garang kept hopes alive. Track three was a peace negotiated bilaterally between the SPLA and Khartoum. This had the backing of Kenya and the international community, especially the USA. Garang's approach led to a situation in which, having signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), he was making mutually-incompatible promises to different Northern groups. The multiple options approach was both a response to the enduring problem of indeterminacy of political alignments in Khartoum and also a product of his reliance on external patrons.

On a smaller scale, we see similar approaches adopted by the Beja Congress and the Darfurian rebels, which are all backed by neighbouring states (Eritrea, Chad, Libya). However, insofar as Khartoum can create client relationships with those neighbours, the insurgents are vulnerable to betrayal.

This analysis has located the origins of the Sudan government's policies of bad neighbourliness in a historical legacy of cross-border entanglements and regional rivalries, underpinned by a strategy of frontier governance that involves establishing dependent relationships on and across international borders. In the case of Ethiopia, the two states have traded reciprocal blows for generations. On the other frontiers, Sudan is habitually the aggressor, but the traffic of

destabilisation goes in both directions. In all cases there are numerous potential sparks and pretexts for conflict. Sudan has territorial disputes with Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia (although border demarcation is underway), Kenya (the Ilemi Triangle) and Chad. There are cross-border tribes and pastoral movements on every border save Libya. In most neighbouring countries, the army or security play the leading role in policies towards Sudan. In Egypt it is internal security. Senior military commanders and security officers have moved between service in Sudan and many of its neighbours (e.g. Egyptian security has long had a presence in Khartoum; Libya's Islamic Legion was organised in part by a Sudanese; Eritrea has employed Sudanese security officers; Ethiopians and Ugandans have fought in the SPLA; Sudanese nationals serve on both sides in the conflicts in Chad and CAR and Chadians fight on both sides in Darfur, etc.)

What makes Sudan distinct from its neighbours is not its cross-border interventionism or the permeability of its security institutions to nationals from other countries, but the fact that it tends to run parallel and sometimes contradictory foreign policies at the same time, projecting its pattern of peripheral governance across international borders. In turn this is the outcome of the failure of any one interest group to achieve consolidated control of the state. Each of these policies reflects the domestic agenda and interests of the elite faction in question. In turn, this makes for complexity, entanglement and the persistence of retail politics, so that the management of regional peace and security is even more challenging.

Another implication of this model of governance is that while any future Southern separation will put up a sovereign barrier between the secessionist state and Khartoum, it is unlikely that any such barrier will be strong enough to prevent the continuation of existing patterns of political bargaining between Sudan's centre and a periphery that reaches across international borders. Separation is more likely to resemble incomplete decolonisation than partition.

Peacemaking and Politics

In Sudan, peacemaking efforts have served as an extension of the pattern of centre-periphery political bargaining combined with the elite's regional (cross-border) and international bargaining. Successful peacemaking in Sudan demands dealing with a hugely complex set of shifting stakeholders, within the centre, in the peripheries and in the neighbouring countries. The only cases of successful peacemaking have occurred when there is (a) solidification of central decision-making, so that the centre is not constantly shifting, (b) cohesive leadership of the provincial insurgency, (c) containment or resolution of conflicts in the neighbouring states, and (d) a cohesive international approach. Each of these preconditions is hard to achieve on its own, and getting them all aligned at the same time is exceptional.

The main political game in Sudanese peacemaking is bargaining and calculation among and between different factions of the central elite and the insurgent provincial elites, with each group keeping an eye on what neighbouring governments and international stakeholders may have to offer. While the formal structure of a peace process may resemble the two sides in an international negotiation, the real process is one of multiple overlapping processes of political bargaining. These processes are so complicated that it is enormously time-consuming just to track them on a day-to-day basis.

For the political players in Sudan themselves, the key issue is a low level of trust. All parties expect political coalitions to shift as a matter of course and for any agreement to be revised as those power alignments change. Different elite groups have different expectations of how peacemaking should work and how the resulting agreements should be honored. The central

elites, accustomed to power, strike compromises knowing that they will claw back many of the concessions during the implementation. Radical provincial insurgents pore over every detail of the text, demanding cast-iron guarantees, grimly confident that they will be double-crossed during the implementation. They turn to the international community to provide the guarantees of faithful implementation. Other provincial insurgents simply calculate the balance of forces and jump when the moment seems opportune, regardless of the substantive concessions they may have won (or failed to win): their sole interest is in personal advancement.

In this context, how can a conflict be "ripe" for resolution? A deal may be struck among mutually-distrustful parties simply because the political alignment happens to be favourable, but it is likely to last only a short time. (This is indeed the characteristic pattern of Sudanese peace agreements.) Nonetheless even a short-term peace deal can bring benefits, because it can reconfigure the conflict in such a way that the parties then pursue their goals in the political rather than the military arena. (This was the case for the 1977 "National Reconciliation" initiative that brought the sectarian parties and Islamists back into government.) Forging such a deal requires aligning the political calculations of the major players so that they are ready to make a deal that will not come apart by last-minute second-guessing - and then sustaining the political incentives to make sure that this political bargain sticks. Given the multiple possibilities of shifting the parties' political calculations, one could conclude that Sudanese conflicts are always susceptible to resolution through the right kind of political engagement, but never "ripe" for lasting resolution.

Could a political formula be designed such that a lasting agreement is possible based on trust between formerly-belligerent parties? The closest that Sudan has come to this in recent times is the CPA.

The Naivasha-CPA process is best analysed as the product of specific political circumstances and initiatives, which led the belligerent parties to recalculate their political goals, develop a minimum common project, and take advantage of certain political alignments. The most important processes were the emergence (briefly) of a consensus in Khartoum sufficiently strong to enable the leadership to make significant political sacrifices and the development of a common international approach at a historical moment when the USA had unparalleled power.

During the 1990s, there was a series of partial peace agreements between the Sudanese parties (Justice Africa 2000). Declarations of political commitment were made between the Government and various opposition groups including breakaway factions of the SPLA, and between the SPLA and various Northern parties. The substantive content of the agreements converged on common formulae including self-determination for Southern Sudan, limited separation of religion and the state in the North, and political pluralism and democratisation within a government of national unity. In principle, it seemed, there was a consensus on how to solve the major problems facing the country. A secondary difficulty was that the question of security had been skirted. The primary problem was that the principal belligerents - the Government and the SPLA - had not signed a deal with one another.

The IGAD process was moribund for a long time. The Declaration of Principles was adopted in 1994 but no meetings were held until 1997. For four more years, it was principally a forum for grandstanding and mutual acrimony. Only in 2001 did it become serious, due in large part to a policy review by the incoming Bush administration. This happened after two years of debate among the IGAD member states and their international partners (mainly the troika of the USA, UK and Norway) as to the formula for representation in the IGAD peace process. A minority

(including this writer) pressed for full representation including the NDA and the non-SPLA Southern factions. This did not prevail. One reason was that the internationals thought it was simply too complicated to bring in all the parties. The argument was that the principal problem was between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the SPLA, that the others did not have significant military forces, and that once the GoS-SPLA problem was solved, the other questions of democratisation and participation could be addressed in a way that would satisfy the other parties. The second reason was that both the GoS and the SPLA wanted to keep the IGAD forum to themselves, anticipating that it if it succeeded it would allow for a new power axis to be formed, blessed by the international community. The SPLA tried to appease the NDA by continually hinting that it would allow NDA members to participate or at least observe the talks. But when NDA representatives (including Darfurians) turned up in July 2002, the SPLA rebuffed them. Some of the Northern NDA leaders had seen this coming some time before and in July-August 2000, Umma Party leader Sadiq el Mahdi set up the "Sudanese-Sudanese Initiative" which quickly became the "Libyan-Egyptian Initiative," a parallel track for dialogue between the GoS and the (Northern) NDA.

The single most important reason why the IGAD-Naivasha-CPA process began to move was that the central elites had achieved a degree of cohesion (though in retrospect it was all-too-transitory). Bashir's political victory over Turabi was important less because Bashir was more accommodating than his rival, but because it meant that there was only one power centre within the regime, for a while at least. This made it possible for the government to begin to offer significant concessions to the SPLA with a real prospect that it could deliver on them - the deal would not be undermined by a power realignment. This meant that Bashir could respond decisively to the opportunity for dialogue with the USA offered by September 11 and could also exert sufficient control over the diverse state and security institutions to be able to pass the tests set by President Bush's special envoy, Senator Jack Danforth in early 2002. When Senator Danforth insisted, "don't say it, show it" with respect to a halt to aerial bombing in Southern Sudan, Bashir could order it to stop. A couple of years earlier he would have had difficulties in doing so. Moreover, when Danforth indicated that the US government would support a government of national unity, including the NCP, dedicated to giving national unity the best possible chance, Bashir was not only ready to see this as an acceptable end-state for the peace process but to instruct his colleagues in government to give it a chance.

Also critically important was a common approach by the most important international powers. In the late-1990s, there was modest international interest in Sudan, and such concern as existed was primarily humanitarian. Most western governments had despaired of finding a political settlement and were merely spending aid funds to ameliorate the human consequences of a seemingly-endless war. The USA was more strongly opposed to Khartoum than were the Europeans and the second Clinton administration made a number of bellicose statements, turned a blind eye to military activities against Sudan by neighbouring countries, and in August 1998 bombed a pharmaceutical factory in the belief that it was involved in the manufacture of biological weapons. However, this policy had little depth and was readily reversed by the incoming Bush administration. In early 2001, a consensus between the U.S. and Europe (led by Britain and Norway) coalesced on re-invigorating the IGAD peace talks. In this instance, President George W. Bush's predilection for setting simple policy goals and persistence in pursuing them proved very useful: he resolved on pushing for peace in Sudan and was not deterred by the clamour of the Sudan lobbies in Washington DC that he should revert to a Clintonite regime change policy. Active support for the Sudan peace process moved into gear with the appointment of Senator Danforth as special envoy on 6 September 2001. The timing was fortuitous. In the immediate aftermath of September 11 the USA was globally ascendant to an unprecedented degree: it gained

immense political standing after the al Qaida attacks on New York and Washington DC and the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and was yet to squander that capital by invading Iraq. Sudan was potentially vulnerable in the "global war on terror" because of its earlier hosting of Usama bin Ladin. China had not yet emerged as Sudan's principal investor, trading partner and political patron. This historical moment was seized with a simple, common policy: peace.

However, there was still much politicking to do and it was only in September 2003 that the Naivasha talks truly moved onto an irreversible track towards agreement. This occurred when Ali Osman Taha had gained a conditional ascendancy in the NCP - he was the chief power broker, conditional on (a) obtaining a deal with Garang and (b) getting the USA to deliver on its promise of normalising relations.

Two years later, as Khartoum negotiated on Darfur, that central cohesion no longer existed. Since the death of Garang, Ali Osman no longer had his partner for unity, and the NCP leaders were no longer convinced that the USA was ready to normalise relations. On the contrary, they feared that Washington DC was intent on regime change. The ongoing debates in the international community, especially the USA, about the importance of sanctions and other forms of intense pressure on the government of Sudan tend to overlook the point that no amount of pressure on a government can be successful if those running that government believe that the end point will be their removal from power (and, given the fate of Saddam Hussein, worse). Pressure can only work if the object of that pressure can accept the final outcome. In the case of the Naivasha process, a government of national unity and the best chance for national unity was an acceptable outcome worthy of Ali Osman's gamble. By the time the AU-mediated Darfur peace process in the Nigerian capital Abuja was reaching its climax, Ali Osman could no longer make such big gambles with his political capital.

International engagement in the Darfur peace process was greater than in the North-South peace process. But rather than a simple and modest agenda of supporting the mediator, it consisted in a welter of parallel and often competing activities. Different institutions within the US government had different priorities, which included counter-terrorism, sustaining the CPA (and supporting the SPLM), maintaining humanitarian operations, and meeting the vocal demands of a bi-partisan activist constituency that was calling for military intervention. It is unsurprising that the Sudan government and the Darfur armed movements were confused and unable to discern Washington's ultimate goals. In addition, the White House decided that its priority for Darfur was to change the African Union mission to a UN peacekeeping force. Lack of clarity over whether this would be a version of classic peacekeeping or the advance party of an invasion by "international forces" further muddled the debate. Both advocates and critics of UN forces constructed their arguments on the basis of inflated expectations for what the force could achieve. Following the Iraq invasion and the plummeting US standing in Arab and Muslim countries, and with the rise of China as a major political player on African issues, the Sudan government now had the option of managing international demands by procrastination, perfidy and divide-and-rule, all of which it practiced with well-honed skill.

The politics of insurgency changed too. By the time of the IGAD revitalisation in 2001, the SPLA had regained its dominant position in the Southern insurgency. On the ground its forces were severely tested, but Garang had achieved a dominant international standing such that Khartoum's earlier divide-and-rule strategies had reached their limit. The SPLA's political dominance made it possible for there to be, first, a deal between North and South (the CPA) and then, a year later, an internal agreement in the South (the Juba Agreement).

The international community initially hoped that the Darfur rebels would achieve unity during the peace process, and indeed the very process of keeping the rebel leadership in a single hotel in Abuja created a degree of cohesion. When this did not translate into a common negotiating platform or agreed outcome, the AU and its international partners banked on the SLA-Minawi unlocking the solution, with Minni Minawi playing the same role that Garang and Salva Kiir had done for the South. However, Minawi was soon proved incapable of playing such a role. In addition, the US-led strategy of trying to bully the non-signatories into compliance, rather than making the DPA attractive to join, failed completely. Darfurians tend to respond to threats with defiance.

The context of neighbouring countries was also crucial to the success of the Naivasha-CPA process. From a European or American viewpoint it is tempting to see IGAD as merely a front for an initiative in which the heavy lifting was done by the troika of the USA, UK and Norway. While the foreign technical support to the IGAD Sudan Peace Secretariat was very important, the political roles played by IGAD and its member states were also crucial. General Lazarus Sumbeiywo carved out some autonomy for himself through his strength of character and energy along with the backing of his government. More important, however, was the quiet role of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa was capable of making or unmaking the peace process through lending support to one side or the other. The Ethiopian government did not play an active role in the mediation effort. But its discreet and consistent signal that it considered the Naivasha process to be fair and that it supported the outcome of a united Sudan was the most important security assurance that Khartoum could have wanted. With Ethiopia onside, Khartoum considered the problems that Uganda and Eritrea could pose to be manageable.

By contrast, the ongoing war in Chad during the Abuja negotiations that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement undermined the prospects of success. Just two weeks before the 30 April 2006 deadline, the Chadian rebels - with Sudanese support - stormed N'djamena itself. For Idriss Deby, it was a fight to the death and Darfur was one of his battlegrounds.

Lastly, as already discussed, international consensus on an approach to peace is essential for success. That consensus existed for the North-South negotiations of 2001-04, but did not cohere over Darfur. By 2005, the USA and Europe had distinctly different approaches to Darfur, China was capable and willing to play Security Council politics on Sudan's behalf, and the USA itself had multiple contradictory policies. Moreover, US leverage was declining while the Abuja talks were underway, as it became ever more deeply embroiled in the Iraq debacle.

The Naivasha-CPA process contained a hierarchy of concerns. The North-South military conflict was considered primary. Directly-related conflicts such as the Nuba Mountains and southern Blue Nile were, after much wrangling, included in the CPA format but they were given second billing and the formulae achieved have left many Nuba and Blue Nile leaders dissatisfied. Internal Southern conflicts and other internal Northern conflicts were excluded but provisions were made for addressing them within the CPA. Salva Kiir was able to resolve many internal Southern conflicts. (Had Garang lived it is unlikely that he would have been able to bring the Southern Sudan Defence Forces, an alliance of militia armed by Khartoum, into unity with the SPLA as Kiir did in January 2006.) The Northern parties, including especially the Darfur rebels, consider that their problems were relegated to the margins. In this their assessment is correct: they were asked to postpone their political claims until the 2009 elections.

The approach of achieving nationwide peace through a sequence of separate and parallel negotiations between the Sudan government (i.e. the NCP) and each opposition group or

grouping was established by 2002. The policy wavered in early 2004 when the size of the Darfurian rebellion became evident and there was some pressure to resolve Darfur first, or at least in coordination with, the South. This path was not followed. First, it was evident that the Darfurian crisis could take a long time to resolve, while the South was close to a final settlement. Second, John Garang enjoyed the confidence of the SLA leadership and it was expected that, once he was in a Government of National Unity, he could find a formula for bringing in the SLA. Noting that part of Garang's skill and stature in this period derived from his ability to make different promises to different groups, we cannot be confident that he would indeed have been able to deliver on this. Nonetheless his absence after July 2005 has meant that there is no heavyweight rival to the NCP in Khartoum with the ability to create new (albeit perhaps transitory) political alignments.

In principle, the CPA provides a blueprint for the thorough-going democratisation of Sudan in such a way that all parties can obtain their fair share of power through a popular vote, and the North-South issue can be resolved through a referendum. In practice, the CPA is workable only if all the parties that did not sign the CPA have confidence in the democratic process and there is a strong chance that the interim period will leave Southerners sufficiently well-disposed towards national unity to vote for it in a referendum. From the outset, most Sudanese were sceptical about both of these, and as time has passed, Garang has died, and Darfur has remained unresolved, pessimism has deepened. The CPA is seen principally as a means whereby the NCP stays in power dealing with its adversaries one by one, managing by bribery, manipulation and coercion what it managed previously through outright war.

A range of international stakeholders have become intimately involved in Sudanese political affairs through the Naivasha-CPA process. Not only were they involved in mediating the deal but they are also custodians of its implementation, in the form of peacekeepers, donors and guarantors in the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. One of the key messages passed to the Sudan government and the SPLA by IGAD and the USA in 2002 was that any agreement reached should be a Sudanese agreement, to be implemented and monitored by the Sudanese with minimal external engagement. This did not happen: bit by bit, international partners were drawn into every aspect of the agreement and its implementation, and were even more closely engaged in the Abuja-DPA process (though they were wholly absent from the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement). How did this happen and what does it portend?

The view from the NCP is resentment at what it sees as the intrusiveness of the international role and the extent to which foreigners are engaged in monitoring aspects of governance such as the defence budget and controlling institutions such as the Abyei Boundary Commission. It sees itself have having surrendered an unprecedented degree of control over sovereign affairs. However, what it resents is the provisions in agreements that it itself has signed. Usually, what has happened is that the ruling coalition has been faced with a concerted international push for a particular concession and has backed down, because in the short-term this is the path of least resistance. Because of poor internal coordination and communication within the government, the nature of the concession does not become apparent to other key stakeholders until later. When the implications do become clear, government implementation slows down, stalls or is reversed.

Khartoum's perfidy is not a cunning stratagem to deceive its adversaries, it is a structural condition of a dysfunctional regime whose members expend most of their efforts on internal intrigue and who do not keep one another fully informed. At every stage in a peace process when there is an impasse, the initiative for unblocking it has come from an international partner. Part of the formula for the unblocking has been the formalisation of an additional international role - in

creating a commission or monitoring a commitment. Incrementally, the international role has expanded. And over time, the leading members of the regime (and its predecessors) have learned that most agreements can be surreptitiously rolled back or openly flouted with minimal damage, so that honouring commitments has not become part of Sudan's political culture.[10] Meanwhile, many Sudanese from the central elite social groups come to believe that the international community has tricked and bullied their government into making concessions that it could not possibly have yielded willingly. This readiness to believe in international conspiracy theories is also a characteristic of many in government itself.

Despite its antipathy towards the international community and especially the USA, the NCP government needs international guarantees more than its parliamentary predecessors. The NCP government has the allegiance of only a minority of the Sudanese electorate and that loyalty is largely untested. Its major rivals in Northern Sudan - the Popular Congress Party and the Umma Party, and to a lesser extent the Democratic Unionist Party - are more confident about the strength of their core constituencies. Their enthusiasm for a simple reversion to an electoral regimen arises from this. Sadiq el Mahdi in particular is well-known for chastising his political rivals by saying that as far as he is concerned, his only guarantor is his popular vote. The NCP seeks international recognition of its essential role in future governments, for fear that it could be swept aside in any real test of democratic will. On the other hand, it is also aware that some internationals - for example the USA - would like to see regime change through the electoral process.

The government's critics, on the other hand, tend to regard any compromise by the international community on the strictest interpretation of the CPA text and other commitments as signs of moral weakness and sellout. Because one of the habits of the provincial elites has been to seek external state patrons, because the most prominent of those patrons is the US government, and because of the nature of the tough rhetoric coming from Washington DC under both Democrat and Republican administrations, a number of Sudanese opposition leaders have come to believe that their salvation lies in external intervention, or at least intrusive external engagement. A vocal American constituency calls for regime change and/or military intervention. The more that anti-government forces rely upon - or at least appear to rely upon, or want to rely upon - foreign endorsement and support, the more the government becomes distrustful of avowals of neutrality by international intermediaries. And, lacking the confidence that they can ensure the faithful implementation of any agreement on their own, and fearing their own incapacity for political mobilisation, the radical provincial elites seek stronger and more intrusive guarantees from the international community. The SPLA sought bigger and bigger roles for the international community as the Naivasha talks dragged on, including UN peacekeepers and international supervision of national budgets. Subsequent to signing the CPA, international partners have been brought in to resolve the problem of Abyei (thus far without success) and we can expect more *ad hoc* expansions of international mandates in future. The SLA's Abdel Wahid Nur demanded a UN force that would in effect remove the government from Darfur as a precondition for signing the DPA.

While the central elites enter any political negotiations with the mindset that they can concede a great deal on paper which they will then claw back during implementation, the provincial elites aim to achieve an agreement with the maximum detail laid out with as many monitoring mechanisms as possible, knowing that this will at least slow down the process of post-agreement claw-back. Both parties therefore see the text of the agreement as a political asset to be struggled

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[10] Drawing upon [use proper citation] we can remind ourselves that in Sudan, any agreement is only as good as the particular political configuration that allowed it to be made can hold, and the dysfunctional regime survives because of the immense disparity in political and economic resources between centre and provinces.

over rather than a binding commitment. Quite often, the international guarantors take the agreement more seriously than the parties themselves. The Sudanese parties see each international role and task as a political asset or liability within a wider political arena. Although ostensibly neutral, the international stakeholders have become important political players in Sudan.

The trajectory of the CPA is disturbing. The Darfur conflict is far from resolved. The prospects of national unity by consent are fading. The 2009 elections are likely to witness polarising political discourse and quite possibly contested coalition governments with resulting instability. With each future crisis it is likely that the UN and other international partners will be drawn even more closely into a CPA-framed attempt to achieve stability, democracy and unity. The SPLA and other provincial parties (including especially any Darfurian movements that sign a peace deal) will insist on greater international presence. Public opinion, especially in America, will demand a bigger international role. But it is quite possible to envision a scenario in which UN peacekeepers and diplomats are struggling to enforce an agreement that the Sudanese parties no longer believe in. In the case of failure it will be convenient for everyone concerned to blame the UN and its partners.

The basic lesson for the international community is this: it can achieve peace if it is focused, coordinated and has leverage. Those conditions were in place for the Naivasha negotiations during 2001-04. With multiple competing priorities, or too complex a set of policies, less coordination, and less leverage, the USA and Europe cannot expect to achieve peace. The agenda must be simplified if it is to have any chance of success.

Conclusions

The first conclusion is that Sudan has always had complicated relationships with its neighbours, donors and creditors and that the Sudanese elites have hard-won skills at managing its dependency.

A second conclusion is that for the first time for a generation, Sudan has the financial capability to escape its debt trap and secure an autonomous state that can finance its own capable institutions. However, the continuation of multiple power centres among the governing elites and the weakness of state institutions means that it is unlikely to take this opportunity, and that while today's financial bonanza will definitely benefit today's rulers, it is unlikely to stabilise the state.

A third conclusion is that Sudan is projecting its power across its eastern, southern and western frontiers, replicating the same kind of clientilistic mercantile and militarised relationships with neighbouring countries as it has with its own peripheries. Sudan is exporting instability but it can continue to preside over conflicts in its own peripheries and across its borders for some time to come.

A fourth conclusion is that the successes of peacemaking between Khartoum and the SPLA between 2001-05 owed much to the clarity of purpose of international engagement, led by the USA and the fact that a policy for peace was backed by immense international standing during the short period between September 11 and the invasion of Iraq. Today, the USA and the Europeans are trying to achieve much more complex goals over Sudan, especially Darfur, with less clarity and less leverage.

Faced with such a frustrating impasse, it is easy to revert to the "bad men do bad things" approach to politics and diplomacy and assume that removing or isolating some of those currently in power would solve Sudan's crisis and therefore revert to banging the drum for sanctions or intervention or similar punitive action. The idea that this will bring an improvement is an illusion, as the succession of similarly-entrapped governments in Sudan indicates. Regime change is likely to result only in a reconfiguration of the existing political pathologies, possibly with even greater instability - or indeed the nightmare scenario of the collapse of government entirely. At present, however, the debate on Sudan in western countries -notably in the USA - is so over-moralised that it is extremely difficult to discuss the country's political choices in a sensible manner. Mahmood Mamdani sums up Sudan's position in the American political imagination by saying that for Americans today "Darfur is not a place with a history, it is a moral high ground."[11] Serious advocates for Sudan have a responsibility to reflect more and preach less.

No obvious solutions present themselves. Perhaps the hope for Sudan begins in a collective recognition, by both Sudanese and their international friends, that their problem is a structural condition inherited from a unique history and is not a reflection of their national virtues or otherwise. On that basis it may be possible to hold a coherent conversation about the future of Sudan and explore the options for the future.

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[11] Mahmood Mamdani, presentation at Columbia University symposium on Sudan, 22 February 2007.

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