

RISK ASSESSMENT BRIEF

SUDAN

Ilan Burkes, Craig Hunter, Bruno Nordeste, Mark Penner
NPSIA

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Prof. D. Carment

BACKGROUND

Sudan is an ancient country, once incorporated in the Egyptian empire. Under English colonial rule, Sudan gained its independence in 1956. Like many African countries at the time, Sudan started as a democracy and quickly slid into autocratic rule. Numerous coups, civil wars, and atrocities have stained Sudanese history since.

Sudan is an ethnically and religiously diverse country. While Muslims constitute the majority religion (70%), Traditionalists (25%), and Christians only 5%, the people are also further subdivided amongst tribal and ethnic loyalties.ⁱ Sudan also remains a poor country with GDP/capita hovering at US\$417 in 2002.ⁱⁱ Similarly, wealth distribution is problematic with oil production in the South going mainly to the North. However, recent economic data seems more promising with relatively high GDP growth (10.6% 2002) and oil production increasing.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Sudanese people continue to suffer from a mixture of ethno-religious and economically motivated violence. The imposition of shari'a law over Christian and Traditionalists minorities remains problematic, with oil revenues exasperating the conflict.

Recent peace talks between the government and the southern opposition group (SPLMA) have substantially improved the situation of late.^{iv} American interest and regional involvement has also brought a necessary stabilizing element to the talks. However, conflict in Darfur and eastern Sudan remains problematic to any sustainable peace.



SUDAN HISTORICAL TIMELINE*

- 1956**—Sudan gains independence
- 1958**—General Abbud leads military coup
- 1962**—Civil war begins in the south, lead by the Anya Nya
- 1964**—The October Revolution overthrows Abbud and a national government is established
- 1969**—Ja'far Numayri leads the May Revolution military coup.
- 1972**—Under the Addis Ababa peace agreement between the government and the Anya Nya the south becomes self-governing
- 1978**—Oil discovered in Bentiu in southern Sudan.
- 1983**—Civil war breaks out again in the south
- 1983**—President Numayri declares the introduction of shari' ah
- 1985**—Military coup against Numayri
- 1986**—Coalition government formed with Sadiq al-Mahdi as PM
- 1989**—National Salvation Revolution takes over in military coup
- 1993**—Revolution Council dissolved after Umar al-Bashir is appointed president
- 1998**—USA launches missile attack on a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum in response to terrorist attacks
- 1999**—President Bashir dissolves the National Assembly and declares a state of emergency following a power struggle with parliamentary speaker, Hassan al-Turabi
- 2000 December**—Police arrest six members of the National Democratic Alliance while they were meeting a US diplomat; Bashir re-elected for another five years in elections boycotted by the main opposition parties
- 2001 February** – Turabi engages in peace talks with SPLM/A
- 2003 September** – SPLM/A and government sign framework of agreement on security
- 2003-4 Dec/Jan** – Detailed talks continue between government and SPLM/A
- 2004 Jan** – Fighting continues in Darfur, 100 000 refugees flee to Chad

* Adapted from "Timeline: Sudan," *BBC Online* (24 May 2001).

MAIN ACTORS (Internal)

Name	Region	Grievance/Interest
Government (National Islamic Front or NIF); aka National Congress Party	Primarily in Northern Sudan	Since its successful coup for power in 1989 the NIF (an authoritarian regime made up of both civilians and military) has attempted to impose Islamic traditions and law on the rest of the Country. ^v Primary interest is to maintain its position of power by suppression of rebel groups.
Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)	Primarily in Southern Sudan	SPLM/A was established to create a new, non-religious, democratic Sudan in 1983. Its objective is not independence but self-determination of southern Sudan. The SPLM/A has also proved very flexible in its alliance structures and bargaining positions. ^{vi}
National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	Members from various regions of Sudan	Umbrella opposition group working for a secular and democratic Sudan respectful of human rights. The NDA includes the SPLM/A, former parliamentary parties (such as the Umma and the Democratic Unionist Party both based on traditional conservative Sunni Muslim Sects), trade unions, and other armed rebel groups such as the Beja Congress and the Sudan Alliance Forces (SAF). ^{vii}
Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA)	Darfur in Western Sudan	Discontented rebel forces in Western Sudan who feel they are not adequately represented in the peace process. Moreover, they are suspect of the government's motives in negotiating with the South, fearing that it will result in a suppression of Eastern and Western Rebel groups. They favour a comprehensive peace involving all regions of Sudan. ^{viii}
Beja Congress	Eastern Sudan (border of Eritrea)	Similar to SLA, this rebel group has had previous relations with the SPLM/A and relies on some sponsorship from Eritrean groups. ^{ix}

MAIN ACTORS (External)

Country/Organization	Interest
United States of America	U.S. interests in Sudan derive from its previous support of terrorist organizations including Osama Bin Laden. Once this support has been entirely withdrawn, Sudan could become an important source of oil for the United States.
China and Malaysia	For China and Malaysia, Sudan is an important alternative oil source to help fuel internal modernization. China has provided weapons to the north, while Malaysia has provided loans. ^x
Chad	Currently one of the mediation teams primarily interested in settling the conflict in Darfur. Also has significant numbers of Sudanese refugees within their borders.
Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya	These four countries have been involved in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) peace initiative since 1993. They seek peace and stability in the Sudan in order to mitigate the accumulation and continuing flow of refugees across their borders.
Egypt, Libya	While both support the peace process, Egypt and Libya have had on-again off-again relations with the northern government, and at times have openly supported the SPLM/A. Primary interest is regional stability. ^{xi}

CONFLICT FACTORS

→Political

History of Armed Conflict – Sudan maintains the longest standing civil war in Africa. The first civil war began before independence in 1955, with only an 11-year reprieve between 1972 and 1983; the conflict between the North and the South is protracted and entrenched in the political culture.

Darfur and East Sudan have always had an uneasy relationship with the state, and the conflict in Darfur has flared considerably in recent days and months, possibly because the SLA has not been included in the Government / SPLM/A peace talks.^{xii}

Population Heterogeneity -

- Religion – Sunni Muslim 60-70%, Traditional/Animist 25-35%, Christian 5-15%
- Ethnicity – Arab 40%, Black 60% (largest single tribe 12%)

The primary divide in Sudan is North-South, with Muslims in the North acting to dominate minority Christians and traditionalists in the South. Ethnicity and religion has become intermixed with power, politics, and recently, oil.

North-South Peace Talks (Naivasha Agreement) - The status of the Naba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, and Abyei continue to be sticking points in negotiations with the potential to sideline the process.

Religious laws – The imposition of shar'ia law on Christian and traditionalist minorities has led to animosity. Equally, religiously motivated violence, such as Christian children being sold into slavery and pastors being crucified has exacerbated religious tension.

→Economic

General Indicators – While the economy has been performing better in recent years, the big problem is the great disparity of wealth between the Muslim North and the South, Darfur, and the East (Eritrean border area). Sudan has a foreign debt of over US\$14.5 billion, which is not being serviced.^{xiii}

Oil – The discovery of oil in Southern Sudan has further exasperated the already fractious and conflicted Sudanese society. The location of the oil in the Southern region dominated by Christians and Traditionalists has also caused conflict with the Muslim North, having the effect of shifting economic power bases; oil will remain a vital strategic concern in future political discussions.

→Security

Military Integration – There will be integration of the armed forces at lower levels in some regions.^{xiv} However, each party will retain command of its separate army and demobilization is unlikely. Where there is demobilization, reintegration will be difficult.

→Social

Internally Displaced and Refugees - Sudan's 4.4 million refugees and internally displaced represent the second largest uprooted population in the world.^{xv} Reintegration of refugees and internally displaced, essential for a political and economic transition, will be a lengthy process that generates conflict between returnees and the present occupants.

Limited Infrastructure – With no capacity to provide fundamental services to its population because of decades of conflict, it will be difficult for the Sudanese government to acquire legitimacy in contact areas.

Demographics – The average age of under 18 makes future unemployment (present unemployment is already 18%) extremely difficult to manage and could exasperate future stability.^{xvi}

→ **Regional Instability**

The Border with Chad - Over 135,000 refugees have escaped into Chad due to fighting in Darfur. Border towns in Chad have recently been bombed, killing Chadian citizens. Relations between Sudan and Chad are becoming strained.^{xvii}

PEACE FACTORS

→ **Militarization**

Some Government and SPLM/A troops deployed into integrated units - Each party has re-deployed their independent forces from the areas where the integrated units are now stationed. This military cooperation will help reduce security fears that have thus far deterred an agreement, although command will stay separated, as indicated above.

Demobilization of Child Soldiers - Some 100 of 800 SPLM/A child soldiers have been demobilized. The early demobilization of children facilitates their re-integration, as they remain capable of acquiring necessary skills.^{xviii}

→ **Economic Performance**

Indicators - Economic indicators are generally positive with good GDP growth (5%) as a result of an increase in oil production. Inflation has been low in recent years.

Economic Stability - A wealth sharing agreement has been reached and will equally divide the oil profits between the North and the South. This is an indication that both parties regard economic stability, as a priority, and the agreement will support the economic development of the South.

→ **Human Development**

Inequality - The wealth sharing agreement further commits to reducing the uneven economic and public service standards between the South and the North. This will undermine historical source of conflict between the North and the South.

→ **Governance and Political instability**

SPLM/A reforms in the civil administration – The reforms have allowed new leaders to emerge at the community level in the South and have strengthened Southern NGOs and civil society groups.

→ **International Linkages**

Increased Attention - There has been increasing attention given to the Sudanese conflict (especially by the United States). Sudan's prior support of terrorism and immense oil reserves may provide the incentive for international players to enforce a peace agreement.

Donor Conference - A donor conference is to be hosted by Norway within two to three months. The conference will induce the support of the parties, and will be an incentive to adhere to the agreements.

Worst Case: A Renewed Civil War

1. Escalation in Darfur and Eastern Sudan leading to increased refugees, militarization, and erosion of central government authority, and renewed conflict.
2. Chad becomes involved in Darfur and Eritrea in the East, internationalizing the conflict.
3. Possibility of terrorist resurgence in event of countrywide civil war.
4. New SPLM/A government in the South fractures under mismanagement resulting in instability and war.
5. Fundamentalist resurgence leads to nationalization of shar'ia, and in turn, increased religious tension and possible war.
6. The government eventually sabotages the peace agreement because it recognizes that the proposed referendum in the South will result in a vote in favour of independence and the loss of the oil revenue.

Best Case: A Lasting Peace

1. US and IGAD involvement leads to an environment conducive to stabilization.
2. Chad and Eritrea contain cross-border rebel groups, stabilizing the region.
3. Darfur and the East are brought into a comprehensive negotiation, with power-sharing agreements implemented.
4. Wealth, administration, and power sharing is equitably distributed leading to stability.
5. Political actors of the SPLM/A institute relatively good governance measures, increasing foreign development (private and international) and internal civil society.

Realistic Case: An Unstable Peace

1. Continuing conflict and instability in Darfur and in the East as rebel groups attempt to gain access to the negotiating table and as the government takes advantage of the cease-fire with the South to demolish other opposition groups.
2. Political infighting is limited as the oil revenues are used to buy the support of opponents
3. Demobilization will not occur. Both the North and the South will maintain large independent armed forces that are funded with oil revenue.
4. The economic development of the South will not be realized as oil revenue is employed for political and military purposes.
5. Run-up to referendum in Abyei will lead to a short period of violence, which international pressure will quickly bring to an end.
6. The referendum, status of the South and other major issues will be delayed and will remain unresolved.

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ENDNOTES

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- ⁱⁱ "Country Indicators: Sudan." *World Bank Online* <www.worldbank.org>
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*
- ^{iv} "Sudan: Peace Talks Adjourn for Three Weeks," *IRIN* 27 January
- ^v "Sudan: Towards an Incomplete Peace," *ICG Africa Report No. 73* (Nairobi: 11 December 2003), p.9. Henceforth known as ICG Report.
- ^{vi} ICG Report, p.9.
- ^{vii} "Who's Who: National Democratic Alliance," *Sudan Update* <www.sudanupdate.org> (1 February 2004); "National Democratic Alliance (NDA)," *Global Security* <www.globalsecurity.org> (1 February 2004).
- ^{viii} ICG Report, p.17.
- ^{ix} ICG Report, p.19.
- ^x "Chad-Sudan: Hundreds Killed in Daily Raids on Darfur Villages," *IRIN* 29 Jan 2004.
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- ^{xii} ICG Report, p.17-19; "Sudan Darfur: 'Too Many Killed For No Good Reason,'" *Amnesty International Online* (3 February 2004) <www.amnesty.org> (4 February 2004).
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- ^{xiv} <http://www.blue-nile.org/PEACE-BRIEFING-JUNE03.htm>
- ^{xv} http://www.refugees.org/news/press_releases/2002/wrs02_PRstat2.cfm
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