

# **Prospects for Peace in Sudan**

## **Briefing: December 2007**

### **Overview**

1. The crisis in the CPA has unfolded with a speed that is unexpected and alarming.
2. SPLM internal dissension.
3. Abyei
4. The centre of gravity of the Darfur crisis is moving
5. Little prospect of progress on peace, dialogue or security in Darfur until the capabilities of UNAMID are clear.

### **The Crisis in the CPA**

6. The crisis of confidence in the CPA unfolded with a speed that was both unexpected and alarming. The background was continuing dissension between NCP and SPLM over aspects of CPA implementation and especially a proposed cabinet reshuffle in which the SPLM wanted to remove Lam Akol as foreign minister. The continuing prevarication by the NCP on approving the reshuffle was a relatively minor issue in itself, but the SPLM has as yet insufficient mastery of the procedures of governmental politics to be able to unlock the problem.

7. It appears that the SPLM initiated the walk-out from government with minimal internal consultation. It was primarily the work of several senior members—notably Pagam Amum and Yasir Arman—without obtaining a consensus of SPLM ministers in the GoNU or GoSS. It also had no agreed plan for what would be the next step. This group—and the SPLM in general—has gained confidence from the way in which its action as focused attention on its issues. However, the SPLM has played one of its strongest cards at an early stage, over some relatively minor issues, and has little else to show for it. Having set a deadline of 9 January 2008 for certain demands, the SPLM is now in a trap of its own making—what is it to do if the demands are not fulfilled?

8. The NCP strategy appears to be to wait for the SPLM to make mistakes and to quietly point out that most aspects of the CPA are being relatively well implemented, and that the SPLM itself is responsible for a number of the problems. Prominent among these are the failure thus far to relocate SPLA forces south of the internal border and the poor performance of the GoSS, whose legislature has yet to pass a single bill.

9. Neither side is prepared for war at this stage. But the decentralized nature of command and control among the militaries and security services of both parties means that incidents are possible, even probable.

10. The exchange of threats between FVP Salva Kiir and President Bashir is a clear signal for the militaries on both sides to begin preparations for future hostilities. Kiir's statement that he did not trust the President was unfortunate, made worse by the fact that he said it while in Washington. Directing this jibe personally at Bashir rather than generally at the NCP was certain to wound Bashir's sense of dignity. Bashir's reaction, in the form of a statement to the Popular Defence Forces in Wad Madani contained a dose of hyperbole—as is normal when he is addressing PDF or mujahidiin rallies—but his call for remobilization of the PDF (which is supposed to be downsized under the CPA) is disturbing.

11. The crisis has occurred at an unfortunate period in the schedule of CPA implementation, with important business before the National Assembly including the elections bill. The essential activities of the national census, voter registration and preparation for the elections are likely to slip further behind schedule. These have already been pushed back as far as they can before they become infeasible in the required time frame. For example, if the census is postponed from its envisaged start date of February, it will run into the rainy season and hence will have to be conducted a year behind the original date of November 2007. Census results usually take many months, often well over a year, to process. Constituency allocation—a highly sensitive task—can only begin after that.

### **Inside the SPLM**

12. It is remarkable that, given the warm relations between the SPLM and western governments, the decision-making processes at the top of the SPLM remain inscrutable. They are just as opaque as those in the NCP and security cabal. This reflects FVP Salva Kiir's background as an intelligence officer.

13. The Kiir government might be called 'Garangism without Garang.' Kiir has reproduced the centralized and arbitrary decision-making style of his predecessor. He has given prominence to individuals who do not have a long history or a strong constituency within the movement. His great achievement (which Garang could not have made) was to bring the SSDF into the SPLA. But the logical next step, which is forging the new and broader SPLA into a unified army of Southern Sudan, has not been taken. He faces the latent challenge of the large secessionist bloc within the SPLM, whose leaders have yet to show their hand.

14. Garang overcame his internal organizational weaknesses with two factors. One, he articulated a powerful vision for the transformation of Sudan, which attracted a wide swathe of Northern Sudanese. Two, he was effective in enlisting the support of the region. Many of his military and political successes were delivered by friends in neighbouring governments. Kiir has not yet managed to emulate these.

15. The SPLA faces immense challenges in creating a unified and effective army. Prominent among these is the question of the division of power between the chief of staff and the minister for SPLA affairs (the defence minister). The chief of staff, not unnaturally, prefers that military intelligence should fall under him. The minister prefers the system, prevalent in Arab countries (including Sudan) for military intelligence to report directly to the minister. The latter arrangement almost always results in military intelligence developing into a separate operational military structure on its own, running paramilitary forces that compete with or challenge the army. The SPLA is using its (unduly high) salary payments to its (unduly many) troops to buy loyalty—a perilous strategy because (a) the amounts of money needed are so great, (b) there is no centralized roster of SPLA troops and hence the payment system goes through commanders, making it a locus of corruption and (c) loyalty is guaranteed only as long as the payments continue. The SPLA recruitment of Baggara Arabs into its forces, with the intent of establishing a separate Arab brigade within the SPLA, reflects the financial attractiveness of joining the SPLA.

16. The SPLM has not resolved the fundamental question of whether it favours separation or unity. Without a resolution of this question it will not be in a position to mobilize the population for war. If it is separatist, then it cannot count on the support of current SPLA supporters in the North. (The SPLM has not been explaining to the people of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile that the ‘popular consultation’ provided for in the CPA does not include the option of self-determination, in the form of joining the South.) If it is either unionist or undecided, then major Southern constituencies would not support the war, and the GoS would be able to exploit this confusion.

### **NCP-SPLM Relations**

17. The NCP and SPLM recognize that their fates are tied together and they cannot abandon their alliance. But their relations are marred by distrust. Each side has a ‘Plan B’ under active consideration.

18. Kiir has a tendency to conduct relations with the NCP through press release rather than internal discussion, which becomes a particular problem when he has not been well informed by his advisers, some of whom are less than competent. The NCP has been much quieter in public.

19. The NCP, SPLM and diplomatic community in Khartoum officially conduct their business on the basis of efforts towards achieving the CPA, while knowing well that more pessimistic outcomes are more probable. As separation is a real option it would make much sense for the parties to begin jointly to chart scenarios, make contingency plans, and set up discreet mechanisms for handling less-ideal outcomes such as separation. However, the lack of trust between the parties is such that this is unlikely to be possible. Rather, each will second guess the other and develop parallel strategies for what will happen in the case of separation. This is a recipe for violent dispute.

Opportunities exist for a trusted intermediary to open a space for discreetly convening discussions on the range of possible futures for Sudan.

20. Abyei

21.

### **Darfur: The Conflict**

22. The main struggle in Darfur remains the contest over the allegiance of the Arabs. The locus of this is South Darfur, and the centre of gravity of the conflict is shifting south-east.

23. The largest Abbala blocs are now completely outside GoS control. The most important of these is the powerful grouping headed by Mohamed Hamdan Hamati, which is now in contact with the SLA-Abdel Wahid forces in Jebel Marra. Hamati has been extensively armed by the GoS over the last year but that patronage has not translated into reciprocal loyalty. Hamati's challenge is how much he can unify the numerous Arab armed groups and the extent to which he can win the confidence of the various fragments of the SLA. He has good relations with the Fur but not with the Zaghawa. As soon as it lost the active support of the Hamati group, the GoS lost control over the entire territory beyond the confines of Nyala. Should this group decide to take the offensive, it is unlikely that the government would be in a position to offer serious resistance.

24. Hamati has not stated his political agenda. It remains to be seen whether his alliance with the SLA is strategic or tactical. Is this the prelude to an ambitious political plan in which an Arab-Fur alliance seeks complete control of Darfur and forces a new political dispensation on the GoS? Or is it no more than a tactic to assert the importance of the Arabs and demand a higher price from both Khartoum and the international community?

25. The struggle over the allegiance of the Baggara is intense and unresolved. With the GoS loss of most Abbala support, the position of the Baggara, and especially the Baggara Rizeigat, becomes ever-more crucial. The success of the nazir of the Rizeigat, Saeed Madibu, in keeping his tribe neutral has been gradually eroded and he is facing a serious challenge from more militantly pro-GoS groups within the Rizeigat. The GoS has created a new locality, Bahr el Arab, carved out of el Da'ien, which will logically become the power base of this group and its militia. But if the tribe is split down the middle it will not be an effective military force. This is probably the reason why the GoS proposed a relative of the nazir's as commissioner for the new locality, as a signal to Madibu that if he shifted his position, he could retain his overall power.

26. Government attempts to control the Darfur Arabs using money and Khartoum-based Darfurian Arab politicians are having increasingly less and less success. Local Darfurian Arabs have lost all trust in their cousins who have risen to high office or become wealthy in Khartoum. One consequence of this is that the Arab supremacist ideology as

demonstrated in the Arab Gathering and its activities has virtually disappeared. The conflict is now largely a local resource grab intertwined with organized crime.

27. The IDPs remain militant and the focus of uncompromising opposition to the GoS and DPA. Several of the major IDP camps are becoming major security hazards, due to a combination of self-arming by the residents, the GoS injection of its own armed clients into the camps (many of whom have either switched sides or have divided loyalties), and the growth of organized crime syndicates. The GoS is sorely tempted to try to disperse some of the larger and more militant camps. While it has the intent it does not have the capacity and if it tries it will just be a public relations disaster. Much better is to recognize the reality that the camps are here to stay, are already socially and economically integrated into the cities and will only become more so, and invest in normalizing them—and the towns—accordingly.

28. The government counteroffensive against JEM and SLA-Unity in west Kordofan and Haskanita appears to have achieved its aim of preventing further infiltration into Kordofan by the Darfur rebels. But this does not address the underlying, and continuing, grievances and flashpoints within Kordofan.

### **Darfur: The Peace Process**

29. The Sirte process has coincided with sharp security deterioration in Darfur, including a further proliferation of formally-named armed groups and the new militancy of the Arabs. The process of rebel disintegration and Arab realignment was underway before Sirte and would have occurred without it. However, the way in which the peace process has been handled, keeping the door open to any group that has demonstrated an armed presence on the ground, has not helped. Even if the UN-AU mediation were to decide to call time on the admission of new armed movements to the talks, the damage has already been done, and the cap on new representation would not be treated as a credible action.

30. Without credible Fur representation (i.e. Abdel Wahid or a figure with his stature) and without Arabs who truly represent both Abbala and Baggara, the Sirte process is in danger of becoming merely the arena in which the Zaghawa fragments play out their interminable internal realignments. In terms of retaining or enhancing his own position, Abdel Wahid has played his cards well. His memorandum of understanding with Hamati

### **UNAMID**

31. It is

32. One essential step for AMIS and UNAMID over the coming months is confidence building with the Arabs.

33. Next Steps

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