

Sudan: Analysis and Prospects

(focusing on Darfur)

July 2006

Overview

1. Several high-stakes games are being played. While President Bashir's hard-line stance on UN troops will probably turn out to be just another episode in bluff and brinkmanship, it may augur an important shift in power gravity and strategy within Khartoum's security cabal.
2. The Darfurian spoilers, sponsored by Chad and Eritrea, are raising the stakes. Theirs is a game of brinkmanship with little popular support. SLM-Unity has been gaining support on the ground. Although JEM has claimed credit for the North Kordofan attack, it appears in fact to be the work of SLM-Unity.
3. Support for the DPA among ordinary Darfurians and community leaders is hesitant. There are four main problems:
 - a. An internal Zaghawa conflict in north North Darfur, which Minni Minawi is not winning.
 - b. Lack of leadership among anti-government Darfurians.
 - c. Continuing lawlessness and ceasefire violations.
 - d. The incapacity of the AU.
4. Implementation of the DPA scores about one half out of three. There is some progress on wealth sharing (the Joint Assessment Mission is moving—though nothing else is) but nothing is happening on security and power-sharing. The AU's Special Representative has to shoulder the blame for the fiasco of the non-meeting of the Joint Commission on June 23. The AU's current casual approach will leave the DPA discredited within weeks. Given GoS stalling on rapid transition to the UN, the salvage option is to put in place the Security Advisory Team at once to implement the security arrangements.
5. Minni Minawi needs to broaden his support base if he is to salvage his political position. He can do this by reaching out to Darfurian leaders who have expressed support for the DPA. Implementation of power-sharing should be put on a slow track while these problems are addressed.
6. The schedule for implementing the DPA over the coming months should be determined in part by the demands of the agricultural calendar. If farmers are to cultivate for the 2007 season, staged return of IDPs and refugees needs to begin in January at the latest. This is a deadline that cannot be shifted.

The GoS Hard Line

7. As President Omer al Bashir celebrated his 17 years in power on June 30, the divisions within the GoS were never more evident. The “security cabal” around the President are in confident mood. Abdel Rahim Hussein, Awad al Jaz, Nafie Ali Nafie, Salah Gosh and Bakri Hassan Saleh comprise this group. Omer al Bashir is comfortable with them as they are his peers, but he normally keeps enough distance from them, and enough public association with the non-security leadership of the NCP to be seen as an impartial figure presiding over bickering subordinates.

8. The moderates, including Ali Osman Taha, Mustafa Ismail and—in this context—Majzoub al Khalifa, are taking the lead on seeking peace in the East, and are also trying (still) to win around Abdel Wahid al Nour and his SLM. Majzoub is offering a better deal on compensation, further clarifications on the SLM role in monitoring Janjaweed disarmament, and an inter-party agreement that could give the SLM more seats in the Darfur state legislatures.

9. Symbolic of the ascendancy of the security cabal is President Bashir’s tough line on UN troops for Darfur. This is widely interpreted as bluff. Probably it is, and Bashir will be ready to concede to “the wisdom of Africa” and not to U.S. or UNSC pressure. It is worth testing out this option, through an AU PSC meeting at the Heads of State level, at which Obasanjo and Sassou-Nguesso could give Bashir the appropriate advice.

10. But there are other shifts in power and strategy at work. The hardliners are playing on the fear that a UN force will be required to arrest anyone indicted by the ICC (as Louise Arbor has indicated). Some believe that the NCP and security cabal have given up on the future of a united Sudan. Resigned to losing the South, they are contemplating other options and planning for them now. And, as always, the main fear of the NCP and Security leadership is threats from within the ranks of the Islamists themselves. Seeking to re-unify the Islamist movement, they are trying to create a common enemy, and using the language of jihad to outflank Hassan al Turabi and his followers.

11. It is worth recalling that Bashir still aims to become President of the African Union in January 2007, and that the AU clearly signalled that progress on Darfur was a condition for him being given the position. One of the objections to his assuming the Presidency of the AU for 2006 was that he would be, in a sense, “in charge” of AMIS. As the January 2007 AU Summit approaches, the argument will arise that his elevation to the AU Presidency cannot occur while the troops in Darfur remain under AU command. This is a point of leverage.

12. The SPLM leadership is very clearly at odds with the NCP and security on this strategy. Lam Akol has been manoeuvring to buy more time for NCP-SPLM discussions to resolve the issue.

13. International jihadists have rattled their sabers on Darfur, with some al Qaida leaders promising to send mujahidiin to fight any foreign “invader.” This should not be taken seriously. In 2003, as the Naivasha process matured, Usama bin Laden put Sudan on the list of “jahili” countries, that had reneged on the path towards the Caliphate. He thereby declared the GoS a legitimate target for jihad operations. Sudanese security, in cooperation with other Arab security agencies, has excellent files on al Qaida operatives. Its interests are much better served by keeping them out than letting them in.

The “National Redemption Front”

14. The Darfur spoilers congregated in Asmara for most of June. Eritrean coercion was evident in the way that SLM moderates—who had gone there to persuade Abdel Wahid and Khamis Abbaker to sign the DPA, or at least continue talking to the GoS—were isolated, silenced, and prevented from communicating or leaving the country. (Some SLM moderates including Babiker Abdalla are at risk and their welfare should be closely monitored.) The meetings resulted in the formation of the “National Redemption Front” though—characteristically—Abdel Wahid wavered at the last moment and failed to sign. JEM has been busy recruiting and rearming but most of the NRF’s claims are bluster—for example its commanders were not involved in the Kordofan attack of July 3.

15. Eritrea is playing both sides. It is hosting the talks on the Eastern Front and also facilitating communication between the NCP and Abdel Wahid. It is raising the stakes and showing that its own issues must be attended to if there is to be stability in Sudan.

16. Chad is in a de facto state of war with Sudan. The civil war in eastern and southern Chad is escalating, with GoS support, and the Deby government is incapable of doing anything to stop it. One card that Deby is playing, through JEM, is reaching out to the west Darfur Arabs (mostly of Chadian origin) playing on their unhappiness with Khartoum. Some surprising alliances may yet emerge.

(Lack of) Support for the DPA

17. Darfurians demand peace but are unhappy with the DPA because they do not understand it and because they have no confidence in the GoS, Minni or the AU. People need to see tangible progress on security before the DPA gains credibility. Rapid disbursement of assistance through the Compensation Fund or a victims’ assistance fund would also be very helpful.

18. Three major internal problems confront the pro-DPA Darfurian leadership: the intra-Zaghawa civil war in north North Darfur; lack of leadership representing the broad mass of Darfurians; and the challenge of security.

The Intra-Zaghawa Conflict

19. The reason why Minni was central to the war in Darfur and to the search for peace was that he commanded strong support among the Zaghawa, and had the potential to

swing the majority of Zaghawa in support of peace. One reason why the Zaghawa were so essential was that they received support from Chad. Unfortunately, Idriss Deby has jumped the other way. The majority of the opposition Zaghawa meanwhile, seeing the military strength of Chad's protégés and the failure of Abdel Wahid to support the DPA, has quite rationally tried to position themselves as an independent or "unity" bloc. Most of the gains of this bloc have not come about through fighting but simply through communities and local commanders switching allegiances.

20. The SLM-Unity bloc that includes Jar el Nabi Abdel Karim, Suleiman Jamous and various others, controls the largest territory in the northern part of North Darfur. Its leaders have few substantive disagreements with the DPA. Their problem is the leadership of the SLM—they don't want either Abdel Wahid or Minni. They don't want JEM either, though they may be ready to enter tactical alliances with JEM and Harir in order to stay out of harm's way.

21. The SLM-Unity staged an attack in North Kordofan on July 3. This is a significant escalation of the conflict. The SLM-Unity explanation for the attack was that SLM-Minawi had attacked them in several places in Darfur and was gearing up for a major offensive in coordination with GoS. SLM-Unity commanders including Jar el Nabi, Suleiman Marajan, Adam Bakheit and Adam Ali Shogar, say they attacked Kordofan in order to broaden the front. However, different commanders give different explanations, some of which sound like JEM's agenda of attacking Khartoum.

22. Anticipating trouble, Minister of Interior Zubeir Bashir made a non-publicized visit to the area in June and held discussions with the paramount chief of the Kababish (Arab) tribe that dominates the area. The Sheikh reportedly refused to form a pro-GoS militia. One reason for the SLM-Unity choosing to attack Hamrat al Sheikh/Hamrat al Waza is that it has a longstanding Zaghawa population whose leaders have been aligned with Turabi. The attack could easily prefigure ethnic cleansing of the type seen in areas of Zaghawa settlement in eastern and southern Darfur.

23. There should be no illusion that intra-Zaghawa conflict can be resolved by military action and political pressure including sanctions. The military adventurism of SLM-Unity and the political naivete of its leaders make it an attractive target for a crackdown. This would be a mistake: it needs to be part of the political process. It is noteworthy that the GoS is publicly blaming JEM and not SLM-Unity for the Hamrat al Sheikh attack—presumably so that it can find a political mechanism for talking to SLM-Unity.

24. The problems of Chad and JEM are parallel and separate. Deby will continue to play a spoiler role while he sees aggressive military activities coming from Sudan.

25. Minni's problems have been further compounded by splits and recriminations within his own camp, with some of his group rejecting the DPA and his leadership, and questions being asked about how he chose his delegation to go to Khartoum. His critics are putting together their files on his human rights record, and his detention of Suleiman Jamous won him no friends. Minni's current strategy of relying on his established inner

circle, many of them from his own clan, stands no chance of either reconciling the Zaghawa or building a coalition of multiple Darfurian constituencies. Minni has no experience of this kind of political leadership and it is too much to expect him to transition from factional military commander to political leader in a few months. The AU and U.S. therefore have the responsibility to put in place the necessary structures and guide him towards this new role.

Building a Darfurian Leadership Coalition

26. Abdel Wahid is in Asmara making bellicose statements and then retracting them. His lieutenants are unhappy with him and some of them are physically afraid to remain in Asmara, but they have not openly challenged his leadership. Key to Abdel Wahid's survival as a political force are the facts that (a) he is (still) the only SLM leader with name recognition in Darfur, (b) his internal rivals are weak and disorganized and (c) he retains a tactical alliance with Khamis Abbaker and the Masalit. His influence is dwindling but there is as yet nothing to take his place. The Fur chiefs, headed by Magdum Adam Rijal, may create a credible leadership in the future.

27. The signing of the Declaration of Commitment to the DPA on June 8 by four Movement leaders (Abdel Rahman Musa, Ibrahim Madibo, Abdel Rahim Abu Risha and Adam Saleh Abbaker) was an important step. The AU did not however build upon this. Minni's people are suspicious of the signatories and fearful that they will be a means whereby the GoS can try to determine who's who in the Movements' representation in governmental posts. The AU should have set up a mechanism to ensure that the respective roles and positions of Minni and the signatories to the Declaration of Commitment were clear. A procedure was agreed for this but the AU SR did not implement it.

28. Abdel Rahman Musa is being flexible. He set up an alternative SLM political structure but then, in response to requests from Darfurians, agreed to suspend it. His group contains influential Zaghawa (e.g. Mohamed Adam) who can be helpful in bringing the SLM-Unity group onside. Ibrahim Madibo has put together a plan for popularizing the DPA. Their goodwill is not being utilized and they are becoming increasingly frustrated at the way they are being ignored by the AU.

29. Minni's lieutenants are trying to find sympathetic members of the SLM-AW to bring onside. However, they stand no chance of success in this unless they first embrace the SLM and JEM leaders who have opted to support the DPA. Minni has done this, somewhat belatedly, in naming his delegation to the U.S.

30. Concrete plans for the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) are on hold because the AU has yet to make a decision on who should chair the Preparatory Committee. One option is to choose Abdul Mohammed, who was a member of the AU Mediation. If he is selected, Abdul has indicated that he wants to involve civil society, the UN and international partners, and to spend the first six months on local-level

preparatory conferences to resolve local issues before moving to a Darfur-wide conference. This is a sensible suggestion. A decision is overdue from the AU.

Creating Security

31. Armchair interventionists continue to assume that an international force could disarm the Janjaweed by force and argue that it is a “weakness” of the DPA that the GoS takes responsibility for disarmament. Asking the UN or NATO to forcibly disarm the Janjaweed would require numbers of combat troops far in excess of what is realistically possible. The problems in the security provisions of the DPA are actually the converse: what is needed is a collaborative, inclusive mechanism for collective arms control. Neither the GoS, the SLM/A nor the AU/UN can disarm the militia and ensure security in rural Darfur. Arms control and disarmament can only be accomplished through consent. For militia commanders to embark upon the first stages of control, they will need to have confidence in how the process will unfold and what their final status will be. The DPA has provisions for this, but they need to be elaborated through the DDDC and the DSAIC.

32. The immediate security challenges can be tackled through a locality-by-locality approach that includes confinement of militia to certain localities, building up the community police in IDP communities, and strengthening AMIS and handing over to the UN. A UN handover should not of course be seen as an end in itself: the right long-term mission plan needs to be in place.

33. Anticipating such problems, and also expecting that the AU might lack necessary technical capacity, Paragraphs 395-398 of the DPA provide for a Security Advisory Team to be drawn from a third parties (countries or international organizations) agreed by the Parties. Canada has already offered to provide members of this team. The SAT should be set up as soon as possible.

The Seasonal Calendar

34. Some deadlines can slip, others cannot. One set of deadlines that cannot be missed are those imposed by the seasons. Darfur’s refugees and IDPs have lost the 2006 rainy season, which is now underway. We cannot afford to lose the 2007 season.

35. Working backwards we have the following sequence based on Darfur’s single rainy season that begins somewhere between late May and mid-June:

- a. Seeds must be in the ground in June, with family and hired labor on hand for the main labor-supply bottleneck, which is weeding the fields, a few weeks later. Weeding is done by all: men, women and children aged above six years. Planting is done by women and men using hoes.
- b. Fields must be cleared before planting can begin. Most fields will have been uncultivated for between two and five years, long enough for there to be a strong growth of weeds and bushes. When clearing new fields, Darfurian

farmers estimate that they should begin work chopping down trees in January or February. On this occasion, less time may be needed for the actual work of clearance, but additional time will be needed for the tasks of rebuilding houses, digging or cleaning wells, establishing boundaries of plots and resolving ownership disputes. The DPA provides for “property claims committees” for the latter task. Clearance and construction work is male labor. Dispute resolution requires women to be present as Fur and Masalit land tenure systems award extensive tenure rights to women. This implies that partial return needs to begin in January-February.

- c. Essential rehabilitation packages need to be provided to IDPs and refugees in advance of return, beginning in December. Given that the donor conference to review the Joint Assessment Mission is scheduled for October, this implies a special fast track for the most urgent rehabilitation assistance.
- d. Before returning to begin clearance and the demarcation of plot boundaries, sites for houses etc., community leaders will need to make exploratory return visits. In some locations this is already happening. In others it will await the end of the rains and assurances of security. This implies enhanced security by December or January. The main components of this are (i) completion of the redeployment phase of the ceasefire, (ii) establishment of the community police for IDPs and (iii) deployment of a stronger international protection force (i.e. the UN).

36. This calendar locks us into an ambitious but achievable set of goals. The key is that a tougher protection force needs to be on the ground in selected areas in January.

The AU and Implementation Paralysis

37. The first major implementation deadline was missed on June 23 when the Joint Commission did not discuss and approve the GoS plan for disarmament of the Janjaweed, demilitarization of IDP camps and humanitarian supply routes, the policing plan, and the beginning of phase 1 of the comprehensive ceasefire (disengagement of forces).

38. There is no excuse for this. The details of the reconstituted Ceasefire Commission and Joint Commission had already been discussed internally in the AU, and solutions agreed for issues including the Parties represented on the existing CFC and JC but which have not signed the DPA. The failure to formalize these decisions and communicate them to the parties, and hence the debacle of the June 23 JC meeting, is solely the responsibility of the AU Special Representative in Sudan. He compounded his mistake by leaving Addis Ababa for Banjul without informing the parties, who were ready to solve the problem of representation and proceed with the substantive agenda of the JC.

39. Similarly, members of the AU mediation and implementation team established a working group to assess the GoS plan for disarmament of the Janjaweed ahead of the June 23 deadline to avoid problems that should arise if the plan were insufficient. The AU SR approved this plan on June 6 and obtained the consent of GoS on the same day.

Subsequent inaction on this is wholly the responsibility of the AU SR. The GoS then arrived at the JC on deadline with its plan. There has not yet been an opportunity to see and assess this plan. This is an embarrassment.

40. At headquarters, the AU still does not have a single professional staff member allocated to work fulltime on Sudan, let alone on Darfur. The AU SR in Sudan micromanages his staff, asking them to account for each phone call to a senior AU or Sudanese official. Competent staff refuse to work under him. He has failed to authorize, even to read, public relations material explaining the DPA to the Sudanese public, obliging AU staff to find ways of privately publishing and translating the materials. There is no systematic briefing or planning.

41. Given that the AU shows little sign of putting a sufficiently strong and capable team together in Khartoum, the Security Advisory Team becomes more important. This can do much of the actual implementation work.

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