



The crisis in Sudan: issues and prospects

The humanitarian disaster in the Darfur region of Sudan received a great deal of publicity in 2004. In fact it was the result of an exacerbation of political strife going back many years. This brief provides a background to the conflict and argues that while a resolution is possible, there are no quick solutions.

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Introduction

Sudan is Rwanda in slow motion. (Anthony Lake and John Pendergast)¹

The UN estimates there are 1 227 000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Darfur. In July, almost 950 000 IDPs received some form of food assistance. About 200 000 Sudanese refugees are being assisted by UNHCR and partner organisations in Chad. The World Food Program (WFP) expects two million IDPs will need food aid by October. (US Secretary of State Colin Powell)²

On 9 September 2004, speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, US Secretary of State Colin Powell detailed the extent of the humanitarian disaster that has been unfolding in the Darfur region of Sudan as well as in neighbouring Chad. He went on to add that based on available evidence, the State Department had ‘concluded that genocide has been committed in Darfur’.

According to a recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), if the current situation continues unchecked, ‘the World Health Organization (WHO) projects 110 000 deaths by December 2004. Other authorities fear that number could be as high as 300 000 to 350 000.’³ In October 2004, the WHO estimated the number of deaths since 1 March at 70 000 and the total number of displaced people at 1.8 million. According to a survey of mortality rates in the Darfur region released by the WHO, up to 10 000 people are dying from disease and violence each month.⁴ These estimates do not include another 200 000 people who have taken refuge in neighbouring Chad.

The intensification of what the United Nations has termed the ‘world’s worst humanitarian crisis’ in 2004 is the culmination of the latest round of civil strife in western Sudan which began in February 2003. In October 2004, it was announced that Australia will deploy two C-130 transport aircraft along with support personnel to assist the African Union’s monitoring force.

This brief discusses the background to the Darfur situation, Sudan’s other conflict (between the central government and resistance movements in the south) and the immediate and long-term issues posed by the Darfur crisis. The background provided on the long-term and immediate elements of the Darfur crisis helps to illustrate why the situation is both complex and likely to be very difficult to resolve.

Background

Sudan is the largest country in Africa (in area terms) and has an estimated population of about 39 million.⁵ Since its independence from the UK in 1956, politics in Sudan have been dominated by ‘military regimes favouring Islamic-oriented governments’. Muslims comprise some 70 per cent of the population (mainly in the north) followed by those holding indigenous beliefs (25 per cent) and Christians (5 per cent) mostly in the south. While the population is broadly distributed between ‘Arabs’ in the north and ‘Africans’ in the south, a

fact that is often overlooked is that there are over 50 ethnic groups and some 600 subgroups in the country.⁶

Except for about a decade (1972–82),⁷ the country has been embroiled in a civil war primarily, by some accounts, because of the domination of the non-Muslim population by Muslims from the north. According to the Minority Rights Group International, '[t]his simplistic perception disguises the complexities of a war fought by multi-ethnic groups where religious differences colour struggles over access to land or political power'.⁸ The contemporary power structure in Sudan is a reflection of:

... the development of over 400 years of centralised political bodies whose elites enriched themselves by exploiting the human and material resources of the periphery. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Sennar on the Blue Nile and the Sultanate of Darfur in the west were established as independent states, where the centres built their power on the resources of the outlying regions.⁹

Darfur itself was an independent sultanate until 1916 and was the last region to be incorporated into Sudan. As Professor R. S. O'Fahey has observed, '[f]rom 1916 to 1956, Darfur was a backwater ruled by a handful of British officials ... It was only in the mid-1960s that Darfurians, both Arab and non-Arab, began to enter the national political arena and assert their own identity'.¹⁰

The current President, Omar al-Bashir, seized power in June 1989 in a coup supported by the National Islamic Front (NIF), an Islamist political movement. The next few years were spent in suppressing the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In 1993, the government transformed itself from a military to a civilian regime and President al-Bashir ruled with the help of Hassan al-Turabi (the founder of the NIF) and other NIF elements. Elections were held in March 1996 although they were boycotted by the NDA and other opposition groups. Bashir was elected with 75.7 per cent of the vote with an estimated 7-15 per cent of eligible voters in Khartoum participating. Turabi was elected Speaker of the National Assembly. In December 1999, President al-Bashir declared a state of emergency and dismissed Turabi as Speaker, two days before Parliament was scheduled to vote on a bill reducing presidential powers.¹¹

Currently, five actors dominate politics in Sudan. President al-Bashir and the National Congress Party (NCP, successor to the NIF), Turabi's Popular National Congress (PNC), the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA, a grouping of opposition movements including the SPLA), and the Umma Party led by Sadiq al-Mahdi which withdrew from the NDA in 2000.¹² The NCP itself faces internal divisions and opposition from other political rivals. *Oxford Analytica* has argued that:

The fractious and opaque character of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and its struggle against domestic opposition are fundamental reasons behind Khartoum's continuing failure to stop atrocities in Darfur. They also contribute directly to the government's procrastination in peace talks over Darfur and southern Sudan.¹³

Sudan's other conflict

Since 1983, Sudan has been mired in a civil war between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) based in the predominantly Christian/animist south and the troops of the Muslim government in the north.

In the 1990s, Sudan attracted unfavourable attention from the United States. Not only had the Sudanese Government repressed the Christians and minorities, including by attempting to impose *Sharia* (Muslim law) in the south but Sudan had also become a haven for terrorists, such as Osama bin Laden who had moved to the country in 1991. In 1996, President Clinton withdrew the US Ambassador to Khartoum and pressured Sudan to expel bin Laden, who moved to Afghanistan. In 1998, after al Qaeda's attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, President Clinton ordered a missile strike on the al Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Sudan which was suspected of producing chemical weapons.¹⁴

The current Bush administration has given added attention to Sudan. From 1994, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) forum (a regional grouping of neighbouring states)¹⁵ had hosted talks between the government and SPLA without much success. This process is now revitalised. According to one account, the motive behind the move to revive the multilateral IGAD peace process hosted by Kenya was:

... the need to satisfy two opposing points of view in the Bush administration: that of the evangelical Christian lobby, which regarded the civil war as an attack by an Islamist dictatorship on the Christian population of southern Sudan ... and that of the State Department, where officials saw a chance to do business with a regime that, while remaining Islamist, had purged itself of the hard-core ideologues ... [and to] ... deter Sudan from cooperating with international terrorism.¹⁶

In September 2001, John Danforth, a former three-term Senator and ordained Episcopal Minister (and currently US Ambassador to the UN) was appointed as the President's special envoy for Sudan. US efforts were successful. The Sudanese Government was keen to end US sanctions imposed by the Clinton administration in October 1997. Its oil reserves for example, were off limits to US oil companies because of the 1997 executive order, and, after September 2001, to avoid being put on the US target list, the Khartoum government was serious about peace negotiations. The SPLA too was ready to negotiate.¹⁷

Facilitated by IGAD mediators along with international observers from the US, UK, Norway, the African Union (AU) and the UN, the two sides signed the Machakos Protocol in Kenya in July 2002 after a ceasefire that had come into force in January 2002. The protocol provided for northern and southern Sudan to enter 'into a six-year interim period following a pre-interim period when the details of the arrangements would be concluded.' During the pre-interim period, *Sharia* would not be imposed on the south and after the interim period, southern Sudan could hold a referendum on whether to seek independence. Negotiations continued on details of the transitional arrangements and on 26 May 2004, the government of Sudan and the SPLA signed three protocols in Naivasha, Kenya. The protocols cover power

sharing, distribution of oil revenues and governance of the disputed provinces of the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan (the Nuba mountains). They are the basis for a peace treaty which was expected to be finalised by June 2004 and signed later in the year.¹⁸ SPLA leader John Garang was reported to have commented, 'This peace agreement was reached, not necessarily because the parties wanted to, but because both parties were forced to'.¹⁹

The two sides have yet to sign a comprehensive peace agreement or decide on the modalities for implementing the agreement including regional and international guarantees. The ceasefire has been extended.²⁰

The peace negotiators concentrated on resolving the north-south dispute by focusing exclusively on the two adversaries. As John Ryle, writing in the *New York Review of Books* has observed, little was done 'to tackle the wider political problems that have afflicted Sudan since independence: the neglect of areas like Darfur that lie outside the central zone of the Nile valley'.²¹

Civil war in Darfur

The current round of violence in Darfur commenced in early 2003 when two local rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA, as distinct from the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army, SPLA, in southern Sudan) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) attacked government forces. As a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) has observed:

The root causes for the insurgency include economic and political marginalisation, under-development, and a long-standing government policy of arming and supporting militias from Darfur's Arab nomadic tribes against the mainly African farming communities. The situation mirrors the dynamic of other conflicts pitting a periphery that views itself as the victim of discrimination against a centre in Khartoum that is seen as holding all the economic and political cards.²²

Whilst the population of Darfur is Muslim, it has never been ethnically homogeneous and includes Arabs and Arabic-speaking people ('camel nomads', mainly Zaghawa in the north and 'cattle nomads', the Baqqara in the south) and non-Arab farmers (mostly Fur, Masalit and others in the central zone).²³ One of the main causes of conflict has been the pressure on resources as increasing desertification in the north has led to the competition between the nomadic (mainly Arab) groups and the farming communities for water and land for grazing. The second cause for conflict is the belief that the Khartoum government has discriminated against and marginalised the African communities in Darfur besides providing support to the Janjaweed (this is a term originally used to describe bandits but which now refers to the Arab militia) to suppress non-Arabs. As the ICG has argued, policies introduced in the mid-1980s 'manipulated ethnicity in the interests of central politicians and their allies. The current ethnic war is the culmination of two decades of misguided policies by successive central governments'.²⁴

According to Mohamed I. Khalil, a former Speaker of the Sudan Constituent Assembly and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Justice, ‘three factors have exacerbated the situation in Darfur: the drought of the 1980s, the disruption of the tribal administrative system, and the use of militias as a proxy instrument of war’. While the drought in the 1980s led to an increase in disputes between the nomadic Arabs and the non-Arab farmers, ‘the native administration machinery, including the tribal conciliation councils, satisfactorily settled them.’ This process ensured the maintenance of law and order, collection of taxes and dispute resolution.²⁵

The administrative system changed in the mid-1990s. A ‘pseudo-federal’ system of administration was created, dividing Sudan into some 20 states, three of which constitute the region of Darfur. Khalil has written that:

The Western Darfur State was split into 24 administrative units, of which 19 went to Arab tribes and only five to the African tribes. The head of each unit is an *emir*, or governor, chosen more for his faithfulness to the regime than his ability or knowledge of local conditions. With little funding coming from the central treasury, governors are left to fend for themselves. Meanwhile, the traditional tribal chiefs are deprived of all legislative, judicial, and tax-collecting powers. The enfeeblement of the tribal chiefs ... crippled the traditional system of dispute settlement ...

The third and most pernicious supervening factor was the regime’s recourse to the use of militias as a proxy instrument of war. This was first began (sic) in 1985 when the Transitional Military Government ... armed the youth of the Arab tribes of Southern Kordofan and Darfur on the pretext of enabling them to fend off attacks by the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) forces. The level of training and arming was raised by the present government, which went to the extent of creating a People’s Defense Force that acts parallel with and independently of the Armed Forces. In addition, the government ... armed bands of young men from among the Arabs of Northern Darfur, now known as the *janjaweed*.²⁶

The Darfur crisis: 2003–04

As mentioned earlier, the current round of conflict began in early 2003 when the SLA and the JEM attacked government military facilities. This was also a time when the government was under international pressure to end the north-south conflict and attention was focused on the IGAD process towards resolution. As a response to the rebels’ initial successes, the government encouraged retaliation by the Janjaweed militias supported by its regular forces.

This retaliation took the form of attacks on villages inhabited by the Fur, Massaleit and Zaghawa groups whose members support and comprise the SLA and JEM forces. There are also reports that link the SLA rebellion to the SPLA, which is said to have provided material assistance as well as public support. The SPLA is also said to have made it clear that in the event of it signing a peace agreement with the government, it will not fight the rebels. There have also been some suggestions that the system of governance agreed for the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile could be relevant to Darfur. The government of Sudan initially

appeared to suggest that the Darfur issue could be resolved after the resolution of outstanding issues on southern Sudan with SPLA.²⁷

Chad, a country on the western border of Sudan, tried unsuccessfully to mediate a ceasefire between the Khartoum government and the rebels in the second half of 2003. One motivating factor could have been that the Darfur crisis has the potential to threaten the stability of Chad itself. According to the International Crisis Group:

Several Chadian ethnic militias are involved on both sides of the conflict, including within the Janjaweed. Khartoum has taken a tough approach, both actively cajoling (President Idris) Deby's government to block the flow of arms and rebel movements across the border and covertly supporting Chadian Arab militias that want to use Darfur as a springboard for taking power at home.²⁸

Tensions between Sudan and Chad increased sharply following clashes between the Chadian army and the Janjaweed in May and June 2004 prompting senior Chadian officials to warn that the raids risked destabilising the entire region. The incursions immediately subsided.²⁹

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, at that stage the US and Britain were reluctant to actively canvass the issue at the UN 'for fear of riling the Sudanese government and upsetting the delicate north-south peace talks that seemed poised for resolution'.³⁰ Humanitarian agencies were effectively banned from Darfur for about four months during October 2003 to February 2004. Human Rights Watch has observed that, as deadlines were missed during the negotiations, 'Darfur began to overshadow Naivasha [the IGAD sponsored talks] as the scope of the human rights and humanitarian crisis began to shake public opinion'.³¹

On 8 April 2004, a ceasefire mediated by Chad with the involvement of the AU, the UN and several western countries, was signed in Chad's capital, N'djamena, by the Sudan government and the two Darfur rebel groups but it never came into effect. On 28 May, all sides agreed to the mandates of the Ceasefire Commission. The Ceasefire Commission was to include some 130 military observers at six locations, five in Darfur and one in Chad. Eighty observers would come from AU countries and others from various parties including the European Union (EU) and US. According to the ICG, the agreement itself was badly flawed, 'neither comprehensive nor professionally negotiated'. In a report released on 23 August 2004, *Darfur Deadline: A New International Action Plan*, the ICG states that:

... monitoring was stretched too thinly. Fighting still occurs between the government and the two insurgent groups, while the Janjaweed continue to target civilians. Government forces and the Janjaweed have burned dozens of villages since the ceasefire was signed, and the ethnic cleansing campaign is ongoing despite repeated high-level visits to the region.³²

On 3 July 2004, the UN and the Khartoum government signed a joint communiqué in which Sudan pledged to impose a 'moratorium on restrictions' on humanitarian work in Darfur, improve human rights protection, protect Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), disarm the Janjaweed and pursue a political settlement.³³ In early July the Peace and Security Council of the AU decided to deploy the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS), a force of 308

soldiers. It was eventually clarified that the mandate of this force would be not only to protect the observers but also, within its capacity, the civilian population. As the ICG has observed however, while this 'force may be able to change the dynamic where it is actually deployed, it is far too small to patrol an area the size of France and protect more than one million IDPs'.³⁴

On 30 July 2004, after weeks of negotiations and compromise, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1556.³⁵ The resolution imposed an arms ban on all non-state actors (the SLA, JEM and the Janjaweed), pledged support for the AU efforts and urged all parties to resume negotiations. The central demand of the resolution (paragraph 6) was that the government disarm the Janjaweed militias and hold accountable those responsible for human rights and international human rights law abuses. The Secretary General was to report on progress made in this regard to the Security Council in 30 days.

The report by the Secretary General to the Security Council on 30 August 2004 stated that while some progress had been made, much remained to be achieved.³⁶ Sudan had not met some of its core commitments and attacks against civilians were continuing. A majority of the militias had not been disarmed and humanitarian agencies continued to encounter difficulties. The report also emphasised that a 'substantially increased international presence in Darfur is required as quickly as possible'. This view was supported by Colin Powell in his remarks to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 9 September 2004. Concluding that genocide had been committed in Darfur, he stated that 'the most practical contribution we can make to the security of Darfur in the short-term is to increase the number of African Union monitors.'³⁷

Apart from the activities of the Janjaweed, clashes are still being reported between government forces and the SLA. Negotiations between the SLA, JEM and the government, brokered by the AU and being held in Abuja, Nigeria are still stalled over security and disarmament issues.³⁸ On 17 September they were adjourned for a month.³⁹ The various parties met again in October without success and negotiations were postponed again.⁴⁰ There were also accusations of further air raids by government forces.⁴¹

One complicating factor is that the SLA and the JEM do not necessarily share the same agenda. As Francis Deng, a Sudan scholar and until recently, the UN Secretary-General's Representative on IDPs, has observed, the SLA and JEM do not entirely share the same vision. With a history of cooperation in the past, the SLA is closer to the SPLA than it is to the JEM. On the other hand, the 'JEM's vision is still tied to some sort of an Islamic agenda ... these are some of the details of the contradictions that the country's going through. If we were to come to an agreement, it would have to be comprehensive.'⁴²

A second problem is the ruling party in Sudan, the National Congress Party (NCP) itself. As mentioned earlier, it faces both internal divisions and opposition from other political groups. In 2004 alone, the government has thrice accused its opponents in the Popular National Congress (PNC) of attempting to overthrow it. Many of the PNC's leaders, including its chief, Hassan al-Turabi, a former ally of President Omar al-Bashir, are under arrest.⁴³ In early

October, amidst further signs of divisions within the government on how to handle the Darfur situation, Bashir sacked one of his top aides, Mubarak al-Fadil al-Mahdi.⁴⁴ Recently, the government accused the JEM, the militarily small but politically more potent of the two Darfur groups, of involvement in one of the failed coup attempts but maintained it would not refuse to negotiate with them.⁴⁵ It has also accused the JEM of being the armed wing of Turabi's PNC. To complicate matters further, 'the government has begun a third negotiating track, with the umbrella opposition body, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)', of which both the SPLA and the SLA are members.⁴⁶

Future directions

Immediate

Besides the human tragedy and the monumental efforts required to avert more deaths, the immediate requirement is for an expanded mandate and an increase in the number of AU monitors. According to a spokesperson for the UN Advance Mission in Sudan (UNAMIS), the need is for 'a mandate that allows the AU to be more proactive ... to be everywhere it should be in all areas'.⁴⁷

By early September 2004, the US had introduced a draft resolution to the UN Security Council which covered, among other things, various sanctions, including on Sudan's oil industry, and advocated an expanded AU monitoring force with an extended mandate.⁴⁸ As Gareth Evans, President of the ICG, has observed, 'it is difficult to believe ... that fighter jet contracts in the case of Russia and oil concessions in the case of China have no link with their reluctance so far to take tough action'.⁴⁹ China is not only the largest shareholder in Sudan's national oil company, it has also built the country's refineries and oil pipelines. It is also a major investor in the country's hydroelectric power sector. (See Appendix for a note on Sudan's oil industry.) It should be noted that China and Pakistan, both importers of Sudan's oil, abstained from the vote on Resolution 1556.

On 18 September 2004, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1564 (2004) by a vote of 11 to 0 with Algeria, China, Pakistan and Russia abstaining. Both Pakistan and Russia maintained that the threat of sanctions would be 'counterproductive' while China insisted that sanctions could 'complicate matters'. Resolution 1564:

- welcomes the AU's intention to enlarge its monitoring force and urges Member States to support these efforts
- calls on all parties to stop human rights violations and reach a political solution
- demands that the Government of Sudan submit the names of militiamen and others arrested for human rights abuses
- requests the Secretary-General to establish a commission of inquiry to determine 'whether or not acts of genocide have occurred', and

- threatens ‘additional measures ... such as actions to affect Sudan’s petroleum sector and the Government of Sudan or individual members of the Government of Sudan’ if it does not comply with the resolution.⁵⁰

A key omission in this resolution was a ban on arms trade with Sudan, in which China and Russia are the two main suppliers.⁵¹

In any event, UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, had already sent the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, and the newly appointed Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Juan Mendez, to Sudan on a fact-finding mission. The resolution is also the first time in the history of the Security Council that article 8 of the Genocide Convention has been invoked. On 7 October 2004, Kofi Annan appointed a five-member panel headed by Italian judge, Antonio Cassese, to investigate allegations of genocide.⁵²

In late October 2004, the Security Council decided to hold a two-day meeting on the situation in Sudan on 18-19 November in Nairobi.⁵³ On 19 November, Council members witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA committing them to reach a comprehensive peace agreement by 31 December 2004. The Security Council also adopted Resolution 1574 (2004) which urges donors ‘to continue their efforts to prepare for the rapid delivery of an assistance package for the reconstruction and economic development of Sudan, including official development assistance, possible debt relief and trade access’ once the peace agreement is signed and implementation begins.⁵⁴

The Resolution was criticised by *Human Rights Watch* as representing a retreat by the Security Council from its earlier stance of holding the Sudanese government accountable for the ongoing human rights abuses in Darfur:

While (the) resolution recalls prior Security Council resolutions passed in July and September, it leaves out the explicit demand in those resolutions for Khartoum to disarm and prosecute the government-backed Janjaweed militias.

In addition, the new resolution omits language in the Resolutions 1556 and 1564 that specifically threatened ‘further measures’, including the possibility of sanctions. Instead, it includes a much milder warning to ‘take appropriate action against any party failing to fulfill its commitments’.⁵⁵

US Ambassador to the UN, John Danforth defended the changed emphasis in Resolution 1574. On 2 December 2004, he said that imposing international sanctions on the Government of Sudan is ‘not a real option’. He maintained that even if they were approved, ‘would sanctions work? The US unilateral sanctions have certainly not influenced the behaviour of Sudan’. Danforth also added that even though Resolutions 1556 and 1564 ‘certainly pointed the finger at the Government of Sudan—and they deserve to have the finger pointed at them—nobody’s hands are clean. The government and the rebels in Darfur have each been complicit in creating this terrible tragedy, and it’s time to end it.’⁵⁶

Meanwhile there have been calls for a large-scale military intervention to alleviate the situation in Darfur by deploying a 'peacekeeping' force and avoiding 'another Rwanda'. There are at least two drawbacks in such suggestions. First, there is an acute international shortage of peacekeepers. This fact was recognised by President George W. Bush in his address to the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2004. He spoke of plans by the G8 group of industrialised countries to train 75 000 peacekeepers, 'initially from Africa so that they can conduct operations in that continent and elsewhere. The countries of the G-8 will help this peacekeeping force with deployment and logistical needs'.⁵⁷ As the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno has pointed out, the UN now has some 50,000 peacekeepers deployed in eight African operations (in Burundi, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sierra Leone and Western Sahara), double the number five years ago. Even these troops are overstretched.⁵⁸ Briefing the Fourth Committee of the UN recently, he made it clear that current peacekeeping demands exceed what the UN or any other regional organisation by itself could meet.⁵⁹ This obviously includes the AU itself. Then there is the question whether a peacekeeping/intervention force could actually achieve the desired results given the complexity and size of the problem. US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, acknowledged this dilemma when he commented:

Khartoum certainly has to do a lot more. It's a very difficult thing to calibrate and I have to deal with this every day. How much pressure can you apply without the pressure starting to become counterproductive because the regime in Khartoum says, 'Okay. We're not going to do any more. Darfur is all yours. No[w] you do it'. Or do you just keep applying pressure to make them respond?⁶⁰

There are also questions of state sovereignty. If a large-scale intervention led by western countries were to be proposed (assuming this was politically and logistically possible, given the commitment that a number of countries have in Iraq), this could create more problems. As Professor Ramesh Thakur has argued, such an intervention could be viewed as 'yet another assault on Arabs and Muslims ... [T]hen there is the moral hazard of encouraging rebel groups everywhere to internationalise their crisis by intensifying violence'. He also makes the point that if developing countries do not want outside interference 'they must accept the burden of responsibility for ending atrocities by one of their own'.⁶¹

Rather than a large-scale, western-led and dominated intervention force, efforts have recently been made to deploy an African monitoring force in an attempt to promote stabilisation. In late September 2004, Nigeria's president and Chairman of the African Union, Olusegun Obasanjo, indicated that he expected an AMIS force of 3000 to 5000 troops to be ready by October, but added that 'millions of dollars' were needed to deploy it.⁶² On 1 October, Sudan agreed in principle to an AU proposal providing for the deployment of some 3500 more soldiers and 800 more police.

On 6 October 2004, during the first visit to Sudan by a serving British Prime Minister since its independence in 1956, the Sudanese Government agreed to a five-point peace plan which includes cooperating with the expanded AU mission, facilitating humanitarian assistance and

a commitment to reach a comprehensive peace agreement with the south (the IGAD process) by the end of 2004.⁶³

A fortnight later, on 20 October 2004, the AU agreed to increase the numbers of its force to 3320 troops and civilian police. (This will include 1700 armed troops, 641 unarmed troops, 450 unarmed military observers, 815 civilian police and 164 civilian staff). Their deployment began in November and the \$220 million, one-year operation will be funded mainly by the EU and the US.⁶⁴ It has been reported that it may take until February 2005 or later for the force to reach its full strength.⁶⁵

The medium term

As the ICG has pointed out, there are two views on how to bring peace to Sudan: to continue with *both* the Darfur and IGAD peace processes concerning the conflict in the south, relying on the Darfur process becoming easier after an IGAD agreement is concluded, or alternatively, to resolve the Darfur crisis *before* finalising the IGAD negotiations.

A 'Darfur first' approach would allow the solution to be included in a new constitution and underline the fact that the reasons for Sudan's conflicts have been 'structural and national, not simply North-South'. Resolving the conflict would also reduce the possibility of it spilling over to other parts of the country, sustain international engagement and maintain donor support. A shortcoming of this approach is that it could be interpreted by other disenfranchised communities as suggesting that 'armed revolt is the only mechanism available ... for securing rights and freedoms'.⁶⁶

Supporters of a separate IGAD agreement first maintain that after its conclusion, the SPLA, 'which is friendly to the Darfur insurgents, would join the central government and become a catalyst for new policies in Khartoum that would create momentum for a solution in Darfur'. What is being attempted in the South, it is argued, is an effort to resolve 21 years of civil war and it is too risky to include Darfur.⁶⁷

In a briefing to the Security Council on 2 September 2004, Jan Pronk, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Sudan made some perceptive observations regarding the search for a 'comprehensive solution' to the problems facing Sudan:

- the Darfur crisis cannot be viewed in isolation. A solution to the crisis in Sudan requires an enduring peace between the government and the SPLA. Given Sudan's history of stalled talks and broken promises, a successful conclusion of the IGAD peace talks could serve as a model for Darfur. This would include decentralisation, power sharing, regional autonomy and coexistence of different groups in one country
- the constitutional changes resulting from this process would provide a negotiating framework for the government as well as instil confidence regarding negotiations among the rebels, and

- making the IGAD process conditional on an end to the crisis in Darfur could lead to further instability and prolong the crisis itself.⁶⁸

Broadly, these have also been the views of UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan and Secretary of State Powell.⁶⁹ Resolution 1574 passed on 19 November 2004 confirms that the UN prefers a successful conclusion of the IGAD negotiations.

An indication of the commitment of western countries was a meeting of the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) in Nairobi in early September 2004 and the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) in Oslo on 27–28 September.

Co-sponsored by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program, the JAM includes representatives of the Sudanese Government, the SPLA and IGAD. It is responsible for assessing Sudan's rehabilitation and recovery needs and for drafting a framework for reconstruction for the period up to 2010.⁷⁰ The IPF reviewed progress on the JAM in preparation for the donor conference scheduled to take place in Oslo after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Donors have expressed a commitment to support the peace process in the aftermath of the peace agreement for a six-year, interim period.⁷¹

Consequently, while there is at least one positive aspect of the crisis in Sudan—political will as well as a commitment of resources by the international and regional interlocutors—the situation on the ground appears seemingly intractable. On 4 November 2004, Special Representative, Jan Pronk, told the Security Council:

Darfur may easily enter a state of anarchy: a total collapse of law and order. The conflict is changing in character. The government does not control its own forces fully. It co-opted para-military forces and now cannot count on their obedience. The spirit is out of the bottle and cannot be pushed back Within the rebel movements, there is a leadership crisis. There are splits. Some commanders provoke their adversaries by stealing, hijacking and killing, some seem to have begun acting for their own private gain.⁷²

He went on to add that the situation could only be reversed by a three-pronged approach:

First, deployment of a third party force—the AU—to effectively deter violations. Second, there must be a speeding up of all negotiation processes. Third, political leaders—the official ones as well as the self-selected ones—must be held accountable for ongoing violations of agreements and further human misery.⁷³

Humanitarian and emergency assistance

By September 2004, a UN appeal for US\$531 million to enable it to carry out its humanitarian work in Darfur and Chad had raised US\$276 million, leaving a shortfall of US\$255 million.⁷⁴

As of September 2004, the World Food Program was able to feed only 78 per cent of the targeted 1.2 million people. The sheer scale of the problem and logistical difficulties in transporting supplies have made it an extremely formidable task.⁷⁵

Australian assistance

Australia has provided A\$20 million in humanitarian aid for the crisis in Sudan and has indicated its willingness to consider further assistance.⁷⁶ On 21 September 2004, AU chief spokesman, Assane Ba, called on Australia to provide financial and logistical assistance to the AU monitoring force. He told an Australian journalist, 'Australia has not contributed and has not shown any interest'. In response, a spokesman for Foreign Minister Downer said that the Government would soon announce details of the 'actual logistical contribution' to be made to the AU effort. 'We have some proposals under consideration ... this has been discussed at senior levels in government', he added.⁷⁷

In October 2004, it was reported that Australia had offered to deploy two Australian C-130 Hercules transport aircraft along with support personnel to the Darfur region to provide logistics support for the AU mission. This would be the largest Australian military contingent to be sent to Africa since troops were sent to Rwanda in 1994 as part of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).⁷⁸

Summing up

In trying to address the question whether the Darfur crisis can be resolved in the short to medium term, the main problems faced by interested parties are:

- a divided government in Khartoum and long-term tension and hostilities in Darfur
- uncertainty and unpredictability in the government's negotiations with the rebels
- political difficulties confronting efforts to influence the Sudanese Government, and
- limited capabilities of the AU—or indeed the availability of any other—monitoring force.

An (anonymous) State Department official recently made a very apt observation:

The first notion anyone's got to disabuse themselves of is that there are any good guys in this. There aren't. The S.L.A. started this war, and now they and the Justice and Equality Movement are doing everything possible to keep it going. The S.L.A. has never stood up to the army the way the S.P.L.A. did in the south. Instead, they've been very content to sit back, let the village burnings go on, let the killing go on, because the more international pressure that's brought to bear on Khartoum, the stronger their position grows.⁷⁹

With regard to the prospect of putting pressure on the Sudanese Government for a solution, the same official commented, 'It's a pretty tough position to be in ... The Sudanese will bend

to a certain point, but beyond that they just won't. The real danger is that if you go too far, it derails the north-south deal, and you're back to another 22 years of war'.⁸⁰

Consequently, while efforts continue to alleviate the humanitarian problems, given its history and complexity, it is not realistic to expect a comprehensive resolution of the political crisis involving issues of governance and allocation of resources in the near future.

Apart from trying to alleviate the human suffering, the immediate priority for the UN and the international community is to persist in their efforts to bring about a ceasefire among the warring parties as well as ensure the safety of the civilian population in the Darfur region. Any attempt at imposing sanctions on Sudan, the most frequently suggested option, is unlikely to succeed. The fractious nature of the Khartoum regime also injects an element of uncertainty in peace negotiations. Military or 'humanitarian' intervention on a large scale is not likely to be seen as a viable option given the size and complexity of the problem. In other words, a quick fix for a long-standing problem is not likely to be possible.

The expansion of the size of the AMIS monitoring force will play a vital role in the operational part of the process (the EU, US and the UK currently provide the largest support to this force). Political, financial and logistical support for the AU's efforts would be invaluable as would a commitment by the US, UK, EU and others to stay involved in the long term if peace and stability in Sudan is to be pursued as an ultimate goal. Recent statements by the US, members of the EU, as well as the IGAD Partners Forum, suggest that such commitment exists.

Appendix

Sudan's oil assets

Sudan's oil industry is one of the fastest growing in the world. In an otherwise resource-poor country, it is its largest asset and easy to exploit. Oil production quadrupled between 1999 and 2003 and official estimates put the recoverable oil reserves at over 2000 million barrels.⁸¹ In January 2004, Sudan's proven reserves of crude oil were estimated at 563 million barrels (more than twice the 2001 estimate) and by June 2004, oil production averaged about 345 000 barrels per day (b/d) compared to 270 000 b/d in 2003. According to Sudan's Energy Minister Awad al-Jaz, production is expected to exceed 500 000 b/d by the end of 2005.⁸²

Sudan's oil industry is also a rarity in that Western oil companies have minimal presence. This was not always the case. Chevron (US) had an exploration permit when oil was discovered in 1979 but the civil war prevented commercial exploitation. Canadian, Swedish and Austrian oil companies have also been active in the past but have withdrawn due to a combination of security concerns and pressure by human rights groups at home.

Currently, the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC) dominates Sudan's oil industry. GNPOC is mostly owned by state-owned oil companies from China, Malaysia and India. Current stakeholders in GNPOC are: the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC, China) 40 per cent, Petronas (Malaysia) 30 per cent and ONGC Videsh (India) 25 per cent. The Sudanese Government has a 5 per cent interest through the Sudanese Petroleum Corporation (Sudapet). The GNPOC also constructed a pipeline from the oilfields to a terminal at Port Sudan in 1999 and oil is exported primarily to India and China. The three foreign investors also have substantial interests in various oil exploration blocks.⁸³

The country's largest oil refinery, the Khartoum refinery, built and jointly operated by CNPC is currently being upgraded at a cost of US\$340 million. CNPC is also building a pipeline from oilfields in Western Kordofan to the refinery. In June 2004, the Indian Government approved a US\$196 million project for ONGC Videsh to build a petroleum products export pipeline from the Khartoum refinery to Port Sudan. It is expected to be completed in late 2005.⁸⁴

Apart from the oil sector, China also has substantial involvement in Sudan's hydroelectric power generation and distribution sector.⁸⁵

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