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STRIFE AND SECESSION IN SUDAN

Khalid Mustafa Medani

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Between 9 and 15 January 2011, the people of the southern states of oil-rich Sudan—Africa’s largest country by land area—voted almost unanimously (about 98 percent of the South’s eight-million voters) to become formally independent of the North as of 9 July 2011. The referendum was the culmination of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the longest civil conflict on the continent. Since the mid-1950s, when Sudan became free of Anglo-Egyptian rule, the predominantly black and Christian or animist South had sought either autonomy or independence from the Arabic-speaking, Muslim-dominated North. The Khartoum-based government of Sudan, meanwhile, fought to keep control over the South in a struggle whose latest iteration lasted 21 years. On the cusp of partition in early-June 2011, the two sides are once again on the brink of war as long-simmering issues are coming to a boil after the northern invasion of the town of Abyei in the contested region of the same name.

Although the separation of the North and South may seem like the inevitable outcome of a strife-torn history, the path that led to the split might have ended elsewhere had it not been for two things. One was Sudan’s failure to democratize. The other was the flawed implementation of the CPA. Brokered primarily by the United States, the European Union, and Norway, the CPA was signed on January 9 in Naivasha, Kenya, by Sudan’s ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The CPA’s opening chapter, known as the Machakos Protocol after the Kenyan city where it was signed in 2002, affirmed the “right to self-determination” for southerners and provided for extensive southern auton-

omy pending the referendum on independence. The ethos underpinning the CPA was respect for the wide ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of Sudan's various regions. Although the agreement called for a vote on independence, it was at the same time designed to induce the regime of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir to make a unity vote "an attractive option."

The interim between the signing of the CPA and the referendum failed to accomplish this objective for three important reasons. First, the CPA included only the South and not the other outlying regions of Sudan—Darfur to the west and the states of Kassala and the Red Sea Hills in east, where insurgents had been battling Khartoum since 2003. Although Khartoum signed a separate agreement with the Eastern Front rebel group in 2006, the accord failed to foster a genuinely inclusive process. Since the referendum vote, the government has faced renewed insecurity in eastern Sudan, where there has been a small but protracted revolt. Second, the peace accord was entered into by two nondemocratic parties (Bashir's NCP and the SPLM) without the participation of civil society or the country's subnational communities, such as those in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains in central Sudan, and eastern Sudan. Finally, and perhaps most important, although the CPA stipulated that nationwide elections were to be held prior to the referendum in order to encourage southerners to vote for unity and to promote greater democracy for the entire country, the 2010 elections were so flawed that they failed to serve their purpose. Thus as partition looms, so does a key question: Will Sudan and South Sudan, having failed to build unity amid diversity, live in peace with each other, or will partition itself give rise to further armed strife?

The crucial issue in the case of Sudan is one common to most secession situations. Can partition prevent the recurrence of ethnosectarian conflict? Scholars divide into two broad camps: Proponents of partition maintain that secession can indeed prevent future conflict if it succeeds in separating warring factions and creates more homogenous units that reduce the security concerns of various ethnic groups. Other scholars insist that partition—which requires population transfers and near-impossible levels of ethnic homogeneity—often leads to renewed conflict and that the creation of new borders in and of itself does not prevent the recurrence of war or lower levels of violence.¹

Furthermore, the potential for continued violent interethnic antagonism, as well as a resumption of the conflict between the state created by secession and the rump (original) state, is greater within the context of ongoing disputes over land and natural resources. Indeed, the presence of resources can make things worse by giving the warring parties a source of cash to draw from and fight over. In Sudan, it remains to be seen whether secession will lead to peace or conflict and what will prove harder to settle: the drawing of new borders—at issue because of lucrative oil fields located along the North-South divide and pipelines



that go through the North—or the arrangement for sharing oil revenues after partition occurs.

Although scholars continue to debate whether partition is generally a good answer to secessionist conflicts, they do broadly agree on the key issues determining peace or conflict after secession: Has the separation hatched states that are more or less ethnically homogenous? Has the process been managed peacefully, thereby limiting leaders' justifications for using force later "to revisit the secession-created boundaries"?² Do the parties agree on political and economic divisions prior to the secession? Moreover, while the historical record shows that secessions are no better or worse at ending civil wars than other political solutions, the experience of other countries—most notably India and Pakistan—shows both that ethnically based territorial disputes are more likely to lead to armed conflict and that nondemocracies are more likely than democracies to see violence recur once separation has taken place.³

In order to gauge whether more conflict lies ahead in Sudan, we must first answer a set of interconnected questions: 1) What role have political elites played in shaping the North-South conflict? 2) How severely

will the persistence of ethnic-based grievances, particularly along disputed borders, threaten prospects for a sustainable peace? 3) What roles will external actors play in overseeing a peaceful secession process? 4) What are the prospects for further political divisions within the North and the South following secession—in other words, will the continued concentration of power in the hands of the NCP and the SPLM, respectively, lead to further fragmentation in the outlying regions of the country, including Darfur?

One of the most important lessons of past secessions is that partition works best when ethnic groups are already mostly separated at the time of secession and the international community is willing to supervise mass population transfers if necessary.⁴ Sudan does not meet these standards; thus the likelihood that hostilities will resume is strong. The country is not divided neatly into ethnically consistent regions along the lines of an “Arab” North and an “African” South. The ethnic, religious, and linguistic heterogeneity of both parts of the country makes the demarcation of homogenous entities difficult. There are multiethnic regions in the middle of the country, and an estimated 1.5 million southern Sudanese reside in the greater capital area of Khartoum. More important, Sudan’s proven oil reserves (estimated to total about 6.6 billion barrels) are located in the South and along the North-South border. In this context, the likelihood of oil-driven territorial disputes is high, and they promise to be even more difficult to resolve than the issue of ethnically demarcated borders.

The quest for oil wealth had much to do with the escalation of the conflict between the Bashir regime and the South during the 1990s. Even though Sudan’s civil war cannot be attributed to natural resources alone, the country’s increasing dependence on them for most of its revenue mattered greatly in both the conduct of the civil war and the content of the negotiations between the warring parties that finally ended it. After oil was discovered in 1978, Khartoum was keen to ensure that there would be no opposition to its plans to develop a petroleum-export economy. In a strategy later used to devastate Darfur, the central government’s military and its associated militias attacked civilians in oil-rich areas of the South, often by aerial bombing. In addition, since the regime was unable to find willing recruits to join in what it termed a jihad in the South, Khartoum stoked ethnic tensions by using local communities in a proxy war. By the early 1990s, the Bashir regime had expanded its military campaigns against civilians in the South and the Nuba Mountains. As the government’s oil revenues rose, these actions became deadlier.

Islamism and the Failure of Democracy

If the discovery and development of oil resources exacerbated the territorial and economic dispute between Khartoum and the South, by the

late 1980s a new pattern of Islamist politics had emerged that sharpened the cultural and religious conflict between the two regions in ways that have been difficult to resolve. Historically, Islam in Sudan had been guided by Sufi orders espousing a tolerant and accommodating version of the religion that was distinguished by the extent to which it incorporated pre-Islamic rites and traditional African religious beliefs into Muslim rituals.

By contrast, the rise of politicized Islamic fundamentalism (Islamism) sharpened conflicting identities in the country and set the stage for the southern Sudanese to make stronger calls for self-determination and secession. Political Islam emerged as a strong force in Sudanese civil society as early as the 1970s, but in recent decades its chief legacy in terms of Sudan's civil conflict has been in obstructing prodemocratic forces in ways that have undermined national unity. This is evident in the origins of the Islamist-backed military coup of 1989 that overturned Sudan's last democratic experiment. Indeed, contrary to recent scholarship arguing that democracy does not promote internal peace because electoral competition in poor, multiethnic countries is rarely able to produce accountable and legitimate government, the last short-lived democratic government in Sudan illustrates democracy's peace-promoting possibilities.⁵

To be sure, democracy has never had the opportunity to fully take root in Sudan. No multiparty election has produced an enduring democracy, and three elected governments have been overthrown by military coups. As in many African countries, in Sudan successive multiparty elections have suffered from leadership deficits, the divisive legacy of colonial rule, and ethnic, sectarian, and regional identity politics. Moreover, an array of corrupt practices—ranging from ballot-box stuffing and intimidation to the misuse of government resources and state-controlled media—plagued all three of the country's attempts at parliamentary democracy (1956–58, 1964–69, and 1985–89).⁶

What is noteworthy, however, is that, in terms of resolving the North-South conflict, democratic contestation had the potential to produce peace within a national-unity framework rather than via secession. Although Sudan's previous tries at democracy were brief, they did make headway toward addressing some of the root causes of the country's chronic conflicts. These gains included agreements on the repeal of the divisive implementation of Islamic law, the decentralization of political power, greater representation for civil society, and a fragile consensus to pursue a political rather than military solution to the four-decade-long civil conflict with the South.

Although Sudan's third and last multiparty period in the 1980s did not represent the broad spectrum of Sudanese communities (the southern parties, for example, boycotted the elections due to the war in the South), it still opened avenues for a resurgent civil society to press the

government on the topic of resolving the civil war. In December 1988, Khartoum saw demonstrations led by a newly revitalized coalition of farmers, professional syndicates, civil servants, and senior military officers. Their actions stemmed from the frustration caused by the squabbling between the two traditional parties, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Umma Party (UP), as well as the alliance that the latter had formed with the Islamists of the National Islamic Front (NIF) in order to secure a parliamentary majority.⁷ The parliamentary regime's declining legitimacy, its lack of responsiveness to voters, and rising criticism of official corruption added force to civil society's demands. The first of these was for a peaceful resolution to the civil war that Khartoum was waging against the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the SPLM's armed wing. The second was for the repeal of the *shari'a*-based laws passed in September 1983.

At this point, it seemed likely that democracy would yield peace. In November 1988, DUP representatives acting on behalf of the government signed a peace deal with the SPLM in Addis Ababa that called for lifting the state of emergency and repealing the so-called September laws. Although the state of emergency was lifted and then soon reimposed in response to a coup attempt, in mid-June 1989 the government announced that it was planning to repeal the September laws on July 1. Also in June, a government delegation and the SPLM met again in Addis Ababa, this time for peace talks mediated by U.S. officials. On June 30, however, a group of officers led by then-Brigadier General Omar Hassan al-Bashir staged a successful putsch and announced the rule of the Revolutionary Command Council.

It quickly became clear that Islamists had been behind the coup. Before the overthrow, the Islamists had been marginalized by widespread popular support for a swift resolution to the country's political crisis and civil war. The coupmakers' twofold aim was to preempt any peace agreement that would repeal the imposition of Islamic law and to reverse the influence of prodemocracy forces, many of which had been incorporated into the government following growing protests.

Bashir and the NIF leaders immediately canceled the North-South ceasefire, imposed a stricter Islamic legal system, and outlawed all political parties and other nonreligious institutions. The war in the South became even crueler. Khartoum's air force bombed southern refugee camps, and government-aligned militias expelled southerners from displaced-persons camps around the capital. In the mid-1990s, the Bashir regime called for jihad and used proxy militias employing scorched-earth tactics in the Nuba Mountains and South Kordofan to carry it out.

By the time of the 2002 ceasefire, more than two-million southerners, most of them civilians, had been killed. The sheer magnitude of the suffering led to stronger international calls for self-determination in the South and increasing support for an orderly "separation" of the two regions.

It was because of the devastating humanitarian cost of the war and instability in the South that Chevron in 1990 and later the Canadian oil company Talisman sold their interests in the oilfields.⁸ By the late 1990s, both Canada and the United States had barred their oil companies from doing business with Khartoum due to its war against southern rebels. This left the door open for China, Malaysia, and India to expand their oil operations in the country. They now dominate Sudan's oil sector, with the Sudanese government owning only 5 percent of the Greater Nile Petroleum Company (GN-POC) oil consortium.⁹ China presently derives 5 percent of its oil from Sudan, and Chinese officials have countered accusations that their policies have undermined security and fueled the fighting in Darfur. They claim that the country's conflicts are internal Sudanese affairs and that Beijing is "not in a position to impose upon them."¹⁰

A Comprehensive Peace or a Peaceful Divorce?

By the late 1990s, the two warring sides had reached a military stalemate, each believing that victory was at hand and neither willing to concede to the other's demands. Talks led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an East African initiative, achieved agreements in principle that collapsed as the time came for implementation. By this point, the Bashir regime had moved away from the NIF's radicalism amid infighting between the politically pragmatic Bashir and NIF founder and Islamist ideologue Hassan al-Turabi (who in 1990 had invited Osama bin Laden to settle in Sudan, where he remained until 1996). This rupture helped to create an opening for external actors to begin brokering the CPA that ended the civil war. Former U.S. senator John Danforth, the George W. Bush administration's special envoy to Sudan, played a particularly influential role.

One reason for the success of the peace talks is that the United States did not insist on the immediate cessation of hostilities before mediating talks between the two combatants. In a key confidence-building step, Danforth secured an agreement for the protection of civilians that did not explicitly require Khartoum to cease its military campaign in the South. After the extended mutually hurting stalemate, the United States, Britain, and Norway managed to broker a peace agreement focused on resolving the issues of the separation of state and religion and self-determination for the South. The door was now open for the signing of the CPA.

Like other postconflict peace accords in Africa, the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement represents what Donald Rothchild has termed a "minimalist route to implementation" between two formerly warring parties, neither of whom had been able to achieve military victory.¹¹ In other words, the CPA was a negotiated agreement among ethnic and military elites who accepted the minimum possible participation needed

to achieve political stability while avoiding opposition from other forces in society. Although these elite power-sharing systems are not as participatory as democratic regimes, they do have democratic characteristics in that they require an ongoing process of bargaining among elites with the objective of achieving a transition to stable social relations. This is what

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the CPA was designed to accomplish with its series of protocols on power sharing, wealth sharing, border territories, self-determination, the separation of state and religion, security arrangements, and the status of the border states of South Kordofan (which contains the flashpoint area of Abyei) and Blue Nile.

In addition to recreating an autonomous region of South Sudan, the CPA also brought southerners into the central government in coalition with the

NCP. John Garang, the commander of the SPLA, was made president of South Sudan and first vice-president of Sudan. More crucially still, perhaps, oil revenues were to be divided evenly between the central and southern governments. Many hoped that the CPA would usher in a new era for a united Sudan whose political factions would no longer play zero-sum games by exploiting ethnic and religious differences. For these hopes to be realized, however, two more things would be needed. The CPA would eventually have to be extended to address the legitimate grievances of other outlying regions (Darfur and parts of the east), and the central government would have to convene *free and fair* elections before the referendum. Neither of these things occurred.

The first blow to the possibility of continued unity was, of course, the Darfur conflict. This erupted in 2003 with inspiration, ironically, from the ongoing peace talks between the North and South. When Darfur's Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) took up arms against Khartoum, it was in hopes of winning concessions similar to those that the South had recently gained. Instead, Khartoum ordered the brutal bombing of Darfur and utilized the now-notorious paramilitary forces known as the *janjaweed* against the rebels. Five years later, the International Criminal Court in The Hague indicted Bashir for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur—the first time ever that the sitting president of a country has been so charged.

The conflict in Darfur has highlighted key shortcomings in the implementation of the CPA. First, it shows how mistaken it is to view the crisis in Sudan as one only between the North and South, ignoring the need for a more comprehensive solution to the problem of an authoritarian regime at the center with disaffected populations not only to the south but to the east and west as well. Second, it shows that by assuming a North-South

peace was the key to resolving civil conflict, the CPA underestimated the degree of ethnic diversity in both the North and the South.

More than a million African southerners reside in the North, and many Arabs live in the South. It is unclear whether they will be afforded the right to work, reside, and move freely between the two countries after separation. Moreover, while the SPLM currently holds the greatest political influence in the South, the organization continues to be dominated by the Dinka tribe. Equatorial ethnic groups in the far South have long experienced economic and political marginalization and land dispossession at the hands of the SPLA.¹² Given that secession cannot feasibly produce two ethnically homogenous states (the best-case scenario for a sustainable peace following partition), future discord in both the North and the South is likely.

The problem of Sudan's ethnic mosaic was brought into relief by the riots that broke out in Khartoum and Juba, the southern capital, after Garang was killed in a helicopter crash in 2005. Southerners were angered by the state's "lack of respect" for their leader. The ensuing riots took on an ethnic dimension—for example, Arab-owned shops were attacked while those of "Africans" were spared. On 10 October 2010, just a few months before the referendum, pro-unity and pro-secession demonstrators clashed violently in Khartoum. Several thousand people rallying in favor of unity turned on the forty or so southern Sudanese present who were calling for secession.

During Sudan's last experiment with electoral democracy—the one that Bashir's coup shut down—the country's political parties faced pressure to bridge the North-South divide within the framework of national unity. This history gave hope to supporters of a united Sudan, who saw the CPA's stipulation of a general election before the holding of any referendum as a means to preserve a unified state. Ultimately, however, the lack of credibility associated with the elections of 11–15 April 2010 dashed any hopes for a peaceful democratic transition that would allow for greater southern participation in a unity government and thereby make "unity more attractive" to southerners (as the CPA put it) ahead of the plebiscite for self-determination.

The ruling NCP's electoral machinations and vote-rigging were clear from the start. In 2008, the SPLM leadership rejected the census figures reported by the central government, which were to determine the number of eligible registered voters for the April 2010 elections. According to the Bashir regime, the census counted 8.2 million people in the southern states, or 21 percent of the total population. The SPLM, however, claimed that these figures were false and that a third of Sudan's 39.2 million people lived in the South. The SPLM had two primary concerns with respect to the census results: first, that the figures undercounted the southern Sudanese living in the fifteen northern states, which would reduce the number of eligible voters in the upcoming referendum; and second, and

most important, that the results overcounted the Arab nomadic population in disputed border areas such as Abyei, where much of the country's oil is located. The SPLM feared that Khartoum would use the census to backpedal on the fifty-fifty split of oil revenues mandated by the CPA.

Ultimately, the NCP and SPLM became strategic allies in order to ensure that each could stay in power and pursue its own ends. The NCP hoped to preserve the status quo in the North and ensure that other political parties remained excluded from decision making at the center. For its part, the SPLM's main goal was to preside over a successful referendum culminating in the South's independence. The April 2010 elections that were to pave the way for the January 2011 referendum were completely unrepresentative of Sudan's population. In the end, all the major opposition parties wholly or partly boycotted the contest (including the SPLM, which had originally planned to field candidates in the North as well as the South). The election nonetheless went forward amid widespread allegations of fraud. The NCP, running largely uncontested in northern Sudan, held onto power by "winning" 68 percent of the total vote. Meanwhile, the SPLM secured an overwhelming victory in the South, where it ran largely uncontested by either southern or northern political parties.

In Africa, externally induced peace agreements historically have proven far less durable and effective than internally negotiated power-sharing agreements. In this regard, the CPA suffered from three important weaknesses: the reluctance of the Sudanese government and the SPLM to incorporate new political parties and regional opposition movements into the negotiations; the concentrating of power in the hands of two belligerents while excluding the political aspirations and human-rights concerns of other groups; and the prioritization of narrowly defined security concerns over a commitment to national reconciliation and democratic transformation.

Taken together, these factors have obstructed any resolution to the dilemma of ethnic security in the disputed North-South border regions, and they have helped to keep alive the two biggest threats to peace and stability after southern secession: the conflict in Darfur and a rebellion within SPLM ranks that could hamper the party leadership's ability to build a strong state. In March 2011, former SPLM general George Athor defected, and his breakaway militia has already clashed with the SPLA in the state of Upper Nile. Such internal party strife poses a serious challenge to the development of a strong, peaceful, and democratic South Sudan.

A resolution to the conflict in Darfur (as well as other marginalized regions in the east and far north), meanwhile, demands a peace process similar to the one negotiated between Khartoum and the SPLM as outlined in the CPA. Despite significant factional divisions, the Darfurian rebel groups share a list of common demands, including greater participation in state institutions and more equitable resource sharing. It is now widely acknowledged that the SLA, which launched the Darfur

insurgency, timed its insurrection in response to being left out of the power-sharing agreements brokered at the Naivasha peace talks. The perpetual exclusion of other stakeholders in negotiations over power-sharing and the division of wealth has undermined both democratization and the resolution of the Darfur conflict. It will doubtless also prove to be the biggest challenge to a sustained peace between Khartoum and the South once the two countries separate.

The Dilemma of New Borders

In Sudan, as in other instances of secession, the question of how and where to draw new borders amid a multiethnic populace is the most explosive issue and a likely cause of renewed conflict. Territorial disputes become harder to resolve over time because partition, redefinition, and compensation become more difficult to implement as disputes mature.¹³ Moreover, they tend to drag on even longer when local ethnic groups harbor an emotional, identity-based attachment to the land.

In the Sudanese case, the status of the oil-rich border region of Abyei is especially thorny. Abyei lies in the lower North, but its population identifies strongly with the South and backed the SPLA during the war. The CPA therefore granted Abyei special administrative status, allowing it to vote on whether it would remain in the North or become part of the South. It was widely anticipated that Abyei would vote to join the South, but the balloting, which was scheduled to take place in January 2011 along with the southern referendum, never took place.

The North's May 21 invasion of Abyei left more than a hundred civilians dead and caused some 40,000 to flee. With the South's secession only weeks away, northern leaders were hoping to use the occupation of the town as leverage to gain concessions on water, land, and oil. Although media coverage has focused mainly on Khartoum's role in the brewing conflict, southern-aligned forces have played a part, providing a pretext for the invasion by attacking dozens of northern officers in Abyei. The SPLM did, however, refrain from retaliating militarily, and by the end of the month the two sides had agreed to establish a jointly patrolled demilitarized zone along the entire North-South border.

The 2011 invasion was not the first time that Khartoum had used force against Abyei town. In 2008, some 60,000 people fled Abyei after a government-backed militia attacked the town in a move to annex the Heglig oilfields. The next year, a special tribunal in The Hague, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), issued a ruling to alter the region's borders, effectively awarding the central government control of the oilfields and nearly the entire length of the thousand-mile-long Greater Nile Oil Pipeline that terminates at Port Sudan on the Red Sea. On 4 October 2010, the influential Sudanese second vice-president, Ali Osman Taha, warned that the referendum in Abyei would not take place

unless the NCP and the SPLM could first resolve such pending issues as the national debt, citizenship, and wealth sharing. The people of Abyei still have not cast their ballots, and at the end of April, President Bashir warned that if the SPLM included “Abyei in the constitution of the new state of South Sudan, we will not recognize the new state.”¹⁴

Although the PCA granted key oilfields to the North, it awarded the South most of the land, including the town of Abyei. The area is fertile and holds great economic and cultural value for both the African Dinka and Arab Messiria tribes of the region, making it a flash point for potential conflict and an obstacle to a peaceful “divorce.” The SPLM interprets the PCA’s ruling to mean that the Messiria have no right to vote in areas that the PCA assigned to the Dinka. The cattle-herding Messiria, backed by the NCP, fear that the South’s secession will mean loss of their traditional grazing rights and thus their livelihood.¹⁵

Moreover, at present there is only a remote likelihood that a credible “popular-consultation” process will take place in the border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, as is called for by the CPA. Popular consultation is defined as a “democratic right and mechanism to ascertain the popular views of the people of the two states” and is meant to provide indirect consultation via the elected representatives to the state assembly to renegotiate political, administrative, and constitutional arrangements with the central government. In the case of South Kordofan, this process also included a popular vote on such contentious issues as border demarcation, power sharing, land management, and religious discrimination. The objective of this bottom-up approach to democratization and conflict resolution was not only to resolve longstanding differences between the two new states following southern secession, but also to set a model for peaceful and sustainable center-periphery relationships throughout the country.

The CPA-mandated gubernatorial and legislative elections in oil-rich South Kordofan took place in mid-May. The polls were marred by allegations of fraud and ballot rigging as well as violence between members of the local Nuba ethnic group allied with the SPLM and supporters of Khartoum. Failure to generate popular legitimacy among the Arab and African ethnic groups in these disputed territories will most likely result in a continued cycle of border clashes between Sudanese-government forces and SPLA-supported local militias. These regions are tinderboxes, ready to ignite a new round of fighting between the North and the South.

After Partition

It is impossible to predict with certainty whether the North and South will eventually resume fighting, but there is little question that tensions between the two will continue, as will clashes between the southern fac-

tions. Moreover, given the history and nature of Sudan's civil war and the country's lack of genuine democratic reforms, there is a strong likelihood of future conflicts along the border as well as within the two new nations. It remains to be seen whether July 2011 will mark the peaceful emergence of two new independent states, or whether partition will spark violence. The outcome will depend in part on whether or not negotiations over water, debt, wealth sharing, citizenship, and, most important, the placement of the North-South border (particularly with regard to Abyei) have concluded peacefully prior to July 2011. Indeed, in the short-term peace in Sudan hinges largely on an agreement over who will be eligible to vote in the referendum in Abyei on the crucial issue of the demarcation of boundaries, as well as on the popular legitimacy of local elections in South Kordofan and Blue Nile State. In addition, the North and South still must agree on the future of citizenship, currency, the sharing of oil revenues, and security arrangements along the borders.

In the longer term, however, the postpartition state of governance in the North will be the single most important factor in determining whether Sudan moves toward peace and stability or increased conflict. Inspired partly by the prodemocracy protests in North Africa, in January 2011 thousands of northern Sudanese in Khartoum and the central state of Gezira protested the imposition of new economic-austerity measures that resulted in rising food and fuel prices. Rather than addressing the grievances of the population through peaceful means, however, the regime has used increasing violence to stifle ongoing protests and has accused the Darfur rebels of instigating them.

The root cause of Sudan's multiple regional conflicts has been a commonly shared grievance that too much political and economic power has been concentrated in Khartoum and its immediate environs. Consequently, regardless of the South's impending secession, the state of Sudan's governance will be a crucial issue in any future attempts to resolve the Darfur crisis or to maintain peace and stability in the border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. How these issues are resolved and whether a resolution will be pursued within a national reform agenda or one that is more narrowly focused will in part determine whether Sudan moves toward a sustainable peace or plunges further into conflict.

The flawed implementation of the CPA has been perhaps the greatest obstacle to peace in Sudan. The CPA was intended to facilitate reforms of national scope, including the decentralization of power and the sharing of resources, a more inclusive and representative national civil service, the reform of national laws, and, ultimately, free and fair national elections. Few points on this agenda were achieved, however. The Bashir regime resisted for fear of losing its grip on power, and the SPLM focused exclusively on the independence referendum and the winning of international recognition for South Sudan.

Even if the South's impending secession proceeds peacefully, there is

still no guarantee that peace will last. Khartoum's refusal to embrace national reforms almost surely means that rebels in Darfur and the east will again resort to violence in order to secure the same types of rights that the South gained from the CPA. As other cases of secession have shown, the more open, democratic, and transparent the central government, the greater the likelihood of a sustainable and durable peace. Sudan's prospects for peace—with the South, in Darfur, and in the east—would increase dramatically if Khartoum were to take steps toward democratization. Moreover, the reform of political institutions in both Khartoum and Juba would facilitate cross-border ties and encourage peaceful coexistence between the two states based on a real commitment to the postreferendum arrangements.

Finally, the problem of how to share oil revenue poses a high risk of renewed warfare if mutually beneficial arrangements are not brokered peacefully prior to southern independence. Oil is the reason for Sudan's rapid economic growth over the last decade—averaging 7 percent annually in aggregate terms. In 2008, oil revenue accounted for 15 percent of GDP, and upwards of 75 percent of the state budget.¹⁶ Although Sudan is predicted to continue increasing its oil production in the coming years, the oil boom has been concentrated narrowly in the service sector and has not improved the harsh conditions under which most Sudanese people live.

Not surprisingly, the regime in Khartoum has been reluctant to hand over oil revenue. So far, South Sudan has received only half its allotted share, and the lack of transparency surrounding these transfers has badly strained relations between Khartoum and the SPLM. With revenue-sharing issues unresolved and no agreement on borders, the oil question promises to be a thorny one for a long time and could easily lead to another North-South war. Once again, external actors—particularly foreign stakeholders in Sudan's oil industry—could help to end the impasse. Although China refuses to get involved, India—a multiethnic state, the world's largest democracy, and a country with firsthand experience of partition and its troubles—could, along with Western powers and neighboring Arab and African states, assume the role of mediator and peacemaker. In the end, however, both parties must understand that the only way to secure a stable flow of oil revenue—and to secure a lasting peace—is through cooperation. They have more to gain by working together than by fighting, if only they would see it.

NOTES

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