

**Sudan at the Crossroads at The Fletcher School
Presentation on March 11, 2004
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The Triumph of African-Led Negotiations? Brokering Peace in Sudan

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In a very brief way, let me share with you some sort of geography and history about Sudan, and the relevance of that to the current conflicts that the country is facing nowadays.

The northern part of Sudan, precisely the area that extends from about 20 kilometers south to our national capital Khartoum, was an integral part of the old world. So it has been known and also exposed to the influences of that world. Great Kingdoms of Kush, Merowe and others flourished there. Ancient Greek historians and even the bible mentioned that land. Turco-Egyptian rule, and later, Anglo-Egyptian rule, established a number of modern institutions such as schools and hospitals. On the other hand, the southern part of Sudan remained, for the most part of its history, unknown to the outside world, and therefore, underdeveloped.

The British colonial rule contributed a great deal in isolation of that part through the so-called "Southern Policy" which had two goals: Firstly, the pacification of the south, which meant the pacification of the hostile tribes that revolted against the colonial rule on many occasions; Secondly, the "Closed Areas Ordinance", based upon which, the entire south was administered separately from the north and through which the trade and movements of the Sudanese was restricted. A northern Sudanese could not travel to the south without a permit from the colonial authorities and later on, the northern merchants in the south were forced to leave and were replaced by Greeks, Italians and Christian Syrians and Armenians. The indirect rule pursued by the colonial authorities, based on the philosophy of protecting what they saw as primitive societies against outside influences contributed a great deal to the economic backwardness of the south. The British Governor of the Upper Nile Province in his report for 1925 wrote as follows:

"To provide means for the present generations to acquire sufficient wealth to enable them to obtain all the various luxuries civilization brings and to make it possible for such comparative wealth to be easily gained, would in my opinion be disastrous. For this reason, I am anxious that the price given for cotton should not be too high." (Sudan Government, Reports of Governors of Provinces, 1925 Khartoum p.9)

My intention of including this introduction is to stress the economic disparity between the two parts of the country as a major factor in our civil war that started in August 1955, five months before we got our independence on January 1st, 1956, and which has survived all forms of government that Sudan has up to this very day.

Now the title of this session is "The Triumph of African-led Negotiations? Brokering Peace in Sudan" I would like to say that we are very hopeful and optimistic about reaching a comprehensive and just deal for peace through the African-led IGAD negotiations. But before getting into the factors and reasons that have made this IGAD initiative more promising and successful, I would like to commend some previous successful African-led initiative toward peace in Sudan.

I am referring here to the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement which ended the first phase of the Sudanese civil war and gave peace to the country for eleven years before the current phase of the current civil war started on May 16, 1983. The Addis Ababa Agreement was brokered by our African neighboring country - Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie and representatives of All-Africa Council of Churches were witnesses to that agreement too. On May 26 to June 4, 1992 President of Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida, hosted a Sudanese Peace Conference known as Abuja 1. That was the first time ever that both the SPLM/A and the Government of the Sudan came together at a negotiating table. In the following year of 1993, both parties met again in Abuja in what later on known as Abuja

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2. Those two conferences were very promising as both parties declared their conviction that the conflict could be solved only through peaceful means.

In the quest for peace again, President Bashir took the issue to the African sub-regional organization for east Africa, the then Intergovernmental Authority of Drought and Development (IGADD) which was renamed Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD) in 1993. In May 1994 the second round of IGADD was convened to promulgate the Declaration of Principles, or DOP, which served as the basis for the significant Machakos Protocol, signed between the two parties in July 2002 and which resolved the issue of State and religion.

Now since the question alluded to by the title of this session is why these efforts seem successful this time and not previously, this presentation intends to elaborate a little bit on that. In a nutshell, the answer is that non-African factors were the major cause for the failure of the previous African efforts. This is how former President Jimmy Carter, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, explained it in April 2001,

“The people in Sudan want to resolve the conflict. The biggest obstacle is the U.S. government policy. Any sort of peace effort is aborted, basically by policies of the United States...Instead of working for peace in Sudan, the U.S. government has basically promoted a continuation of the war.”

Then on October 29, 2003 President Carter said to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution:

“When President Clinton came into office, he had, I think, a very misplaced policy of trying to overthrow the government in Khartoum. So every time we tried to have a balanced mediation between the north and the south, the U.S. government would intercede and subvert the efforts.”

One of the many testimonies to that was the imposition of the economic and trade sanctions on Sudan issued on November 3rd, 1997 by President Clinton. These sanctions were declared while the Government and SPLM/A were negotiating in Nairobi, a negotiation during which the government had accepted the IGAD Declaration of Principles containing the Principle of self-determination for Southern Sudan. The American intervention served only to disrupt those negotiations in particular and the Sudanese peace process in general. This action was one amongst many by the Clinton Administration which prolonged the war.

A number of groups, organizations and individuals in the U.S. and Europe were working and some are still working to subvert any efforts to peace in Sudan. Demonizing the Government of the Sudan has become a multi-million dollar industry providing a career and fame for many in the West. Newsweek International reported in its issue of August 18th, 2003 that the Christian Solidarity International (CSI) along with mercenaries from Archangel Corp., a Colorado-based security firm with military advisors “once served with the most elite units in the world - U.S. Special Forces, Russian Spetsnaz, British SAS” were all determined to ignore the ceasefire signed by the SPLM/A and the GOS to train troops under Commander Paul Malong Awan, a warlord “who is at odds with the SPLM leadership negotiating peace settlement, in order to enable them to continue their military campaign against the north.” It is a sad fact that with the exception of President Bush’s bold initiative on Sudan and the courage of Senator John Danforth post-2001, American involvement in Sudan has merely served to prolong war in our country.

Now why do the current efforts of IGAD seem so much more likely to realize peace in Sudan?

First and foremost, in the words of Jimmy Carter: “the people in Sudan want to resolve the conflict.” People in the north as well as in the south are war-weary and tired of a conflict that has dragged on for the best part of five decades. Both the Government and the SPLM came to the conclusion that military means would only worsen the situation.

The second major factor is the change in policy of the current American Administration, a change which sought

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to encourage a negotiated settlement. Great efforts have been exerted by President Bush's Special Envoy for peace in Sudan, Senator Danforth, Secretary Colin Powell and his team at the State Department. This constructive engagement, so much more different to the Clinton Administration's policies, have resulted so far in total peace in the south, the east and the Nuba Mountains, with unfettered humanitarian access for the first time in two decades to different parts of the country. Efforts of other IGAD partners should not be overlooked: the British, Norwegians and others have played a significant role which much be recognized and commended.

The third factor is the dedication of the IGAD Secretariat, and especially the leadership of the Kenyan Government and the sincere efforts of General Lazarous Sumbeiywo. It is worth mentioning that the IGAD member states have a stake in the peace in Sudan which will contribute to the stability and the security of the entire Horn of Africa. The public support of the neighboring countries especially that of Kenya, Ethiopia and Egypt was, and is, a great encouragement to the negotiating parties.

As mentioned earlier, we have great expectations that we will reach our goal of peace in Sudan. The Government is very much determined to work hard to realize that long-awaited dream of all Sudanese people. Between 85 to 90 percent of peace making has been done. With respect to the difficult remaining issues, we would say that maybe the most difficult stumbling block is the status of Abyei. The IGAD Declaration of Principles which is accepted by both parties defines the north and the south of the Sudan according to the administrative boundaries inherited from the Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule on January 1st, 1956. According to those boundaries the three areas, the southern Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains and Abyei are integral parts of the northern Sudan. Hence, they are outside of the mandate of the IGAD initiative for peace in Sudan. To show its good will, the government accepted to negotiate with them within that framework, with understanding that in the final analysis they are part and parcel of the north. The Machakos Protocol signed by both parties in July, 2002 again defines the north and south of Sudan according to the boundaries left by the Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1956.

Due to the lack of any legal or historic grounds, it is extremely difficult for the government to re-negotiate the boundaries of the country. Any such attempt will open wide the door for the disintegration of the country. However, the government is ready for any solution short of self-determination to any of these three areas.

We hope that the spirit that enabled both sides to the conflict to overcome the difficult issues of wealth sharing, security arrangements and cessation of hostilities will prevail to overcome whatever difficult issues that remain. It will be unjustifiable to squander this opportunity of peace for only one or two issues. We hope that the Bush Administration's even-handed approach will continue to encourage both parties to be flexible and reasonable. If the issue of self-determination was not there, it would not make much of a difference where those three areas would belong.