INSTITUTE FOR
JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

SUDAN

Executive summary

Sudan has experienced two civil wars since obtaining independence from Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule in 1953. A decade of peace (1972-1983) separated the two wars, with a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) being signed between the north and south in 2005 effectively bringing an end to the second civil war. Sudan has a history underpinned by enduring identity issues between an Arab-Islamic culture in the north and a largely African-traditional and Christian culture in the south. The eastern and western parts of the country that experience their own sense of alienation from the north are not included in the CPA. These multiple divisions are fuelled by a classic centre-periphery pattern of governance and development, which locates political and economic power in Khartoum in the north, and can be traced back to Sudan's pre-colonial period. It was entrenched under the Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule and systematically promoted in the post-independence period.

This *de facto* separation continues in the post-CPA period. It threatens to undermine the cautious peace that exists in the country, with the Darfur crisis and the disputed ownership of the Abyei oilfields being symptomatic of the struggle for power that continues in Sudan. These and related issues have impacted on the delayed election which eventually took place in April 2010 and a referendum scheduled to take place in 2011 when Southerners will decide on whether to secede from the north or be part of a united Sudan under an inclusive secular constitution.

Abbreviations

ABC	Abyei Boundary Committee
AU	African Union
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
EU	European Union
GNU	Government of National Unity
ICC	International Criminal Court
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NCP	National Congress Party
NIF	National Islamic Front
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
SLA/M	Sudan Liberation Army/Movement
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SSIA/M	South Sudan Independence Army/Movement
SSLA/M	Southern Sudan Liberation Army/Movement

Introduction

Sudan has fought two devastating civil wars since independence in 1956. The first war started at the time of independence and lasted until 1972. It was followed by a cautious peace that held until 1983 when the second war broke out. This continued until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Despite different proximate causes of war, shifting alliances and localised conflicts, Sudan's history of near-constant war is rooted fundamentally in a centre-periphery dynamic. The centre is located in the capital Khartoum, in the north of the country, with a powerful Arabic-Islamic identity. Khartoum also has ample political power, military strength and an economic infrastructure to control and manipulate a less than integrated periphery – characterised by a fractious fifty-year struggle for political rights, and for resources and a determination by local communities to maintain separate identities in the face of the demands of Khartoum.

On the one hand, the separation of the north from the rest of Sudan has been a defining characteristic of the country since long before Sudanese independence, with Khartoum emerging early on as the epicentre of development. On the other hand, the struggles of the people of Sudan's south, east and west against the north have been plagued by deep tribal and other divisions – exploited by Khartoum through a strategy of divide-and-rule.

Early history

The earliest history of the area that is today known as Sudan indicates the presence of African hunter-gatherers living in the vicinity of Khartoum. Despite contact with civilizations to the north, the arid areas separating Egypt from its neighbour discouraged the pre-dynastic Egyptians from settling in the area. This eventually changed following Egyptian military expeditions into the area in search of slaves and building materials for the royal tombs. The result was the emergence of an Egyptian-Nubian culture in areas around Khartoum, with indigenous African groups settling around Aswan in the north and Kush in the south. The separation of what is today northern and southern Sudan was further entrenched by the Assyrian invasion of Egypt in the seventh century that resulted in the Kushites withdrawing deeper into the south to escape the might of the Assyrian army.

This separation endured as Christian and Islamic influences spread through the region, with a series of small independent kingdoms, principalities, tribal entities and clans living in uneasy coexistence until Egypt conquered and unified the northern part of the country in 1821. In time, Muhammed ibn Abdella proclaimed himself the Mahdi ("the expected one"), uniting sections of central and western Sudan. He then led a successful rebellion that resulted in the fall of Khartoum in 1885. The Mahdi died a short while later and an invading Anglo-Egyptian army, under Lord Kitchener, regained Khartoum. This resulted in a condominium, or joint Anglo-Egyptian authority, with the administration being left to the British. They sought to do this by drawing the established Arab elite in Khartoum into the administration process, while governing the south according to British and Christian ideals.

This situation prevailed until 1953 when Britain and Egypt concluded an agreement providing for Sudanese self-government and self-determination, which led to independence in January 1956 under a provisional constitution. The constitution agreement failed for two crucial reasons: there was no agreement on whether the new state would be secular or Islamic in character, and it was not clarified whether it would be federal or unitary in structure. The commitment was that an independent Sudan would be a federal state but the Arab-led Khartoum government reneged on this undertaking. This resulted in a mutiny by southern army officers, leading to a civil war that broke out on the eve of independence.

The scene was set for the first civil war that endured from 1955 to 1972, ending with the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement (1972) aimed at appeasing the demands of the south. This resulted in a decade of peace which lasted until 1983 when President Gafaar Mohamed el-Nimeiri retracted the concessions made in the Agreement and imposed *Sharia'h* (Islamic Law) throughout the country, leading to a second war that lasted until the signing of the CPA in 2005. The political, economic, social and security dimensions of what has effectively been near-constant armed conflict and war throughout Sudanese independence are complex and intertwined.

In the pages that follow, consideration is given to these overlapping causes that fuel and sustain the Sudanese conflict to this day. This is followed by an assessment of attempts to overcome this conflict. Finally, the opportunities and difficulties involved in the pursuit of peace are evaluated.

Politics

Given the infrastructural development in Khartoum, when the colonial masters merged the two halves of the country at the time of Sudanese independence, power was inevitably vested in the political elite in the more developed north. This entrenched the underlying tensions that to date mar relations between the north and the south.

While the south had advocated a system of governance that would grant it representation and influence in an independent Sudan, there was little agreement among those who resisted domination by the north on what form this should take. Some advocated a federal constitution favouring a degree of autonomy and self-determination. Others promoted secession from the rest of Sudan. It was the latter option, favoured by the southern military movement, Anya-Nya, which gained support as the demands for southern representation in the emergent Khartoum government intensified. Anya-Nya later united with other groups in the south to form the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) in the 1970s.

The impact of the war on the north as well as the south was extensive. The war, alongside the merging of the political groupings and the armies in the south, eventually created a situation in

which the signing of the 1976 Addis Ababa Agreement became possible. This granted autonomy to the south.

Within a few years of the Agreement, however, the Khartoum government under President Gafaar Nimeiri, who had seized power in a military coup in 1969, succumbed to pressure from the north to violate the Addis Ababa Agreement – not least as a result of the discovery of large deposits of oil in the south. In 1983 President Nimeiri imposed *Shari'ah* in all of Sudan, including the non-Muslim south. Tensions again intensified, resulting in the outbreak of the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1983 and the formation of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) under Dr John Garang, an ethnic Dinka. Rather than simply advocating for southern autonomy, the SPLA demanded that Sudan become a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-ethnic democratic state.

This was rejected by Khartoum and when General Omar al-Bashir seized control of Sudan in 1989, he banned all political parties and dismantled the Sudanese Parliament. This inflamed the conflict between the north and the south. During the years that followed, Sudan was devastated as a result of the uncompromising rule of al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP), as well as the in-fighting between the SPLM/A, led by John Garang, and a break-away faction called SPLA-United under Lam Akol and Riek Machar. The latter group later defected to the side of Khartoum, with the SPLM/A continuing to fight for self-determination and control of the oil fields. In 1994 the SPLA-United sought to overcome internal divisions in its ranks, renaming itself the South Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIM/A). Divisions, however, intensified and Riek Machar withdrew his cooperation with Khartoum. In January 2002 Machar and Garang were reconciled and Machar was drawn back into the SPLA.

The involvement of the international community, including the African Union (AU), resulted in the signing of the CPA in 2005. There were, however, several issues that threatened the agreement from the time of its inception. Not least among these were the slaughter and displacement of civilians in the western state of Darfur and the control of oil fields in Abyei.

While agencies of the UN and the AU were seeking to promote peace in the country, the al-Bashir military moved to brutally suppress a revolt in Dafur under the leadership of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Initiated in response to an intensification of human suffering caused by drought and militia raids on the community, the government responded by arming the Janjaweed militias involved in the raids. The outcome was a mass campaign that cut off water supplies and access to grazing land, which resulted in the starvation and forced evacuation of Darfurian villagers as well as rape, torture and the massacre of a large section of the African population in Darfur.

Human Rights Watch has estimated that 450 000 people have been killed and 2.5 million people (half of the local population) displaced in the past five years. The Khartoum government rejects

the accusation of involvement in the Darfur conflict, although many in the international community accuse the al-Bashir government of gross violations of human rights. This has resulted in a referral of the matter to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the United Nations Security Council, and the subsequent issue by the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber of an arrest warrant against President al-Bashir.

Another major point of tension threatening the CPA concerns the ownership of the Abyei oilfields. Given the importance of a peaceful resolution to the dispute to ensure Sudanese peace, it was agreed to establish an international Abyei Boundary Committee (ABC) to resolve the matter. It ruled against the claims of the north, with al-Bashir rejecting the outcome. This further enhanced tensions in the area, resulting in several military clashes between the north and south, with civilians fleeing the area in the wake of the destruction of large sections of Abyei. On the positive side, an agreement was reached in June 2008 between the north and south to refer the border dispute regarding Abyei to the Hague-based International Court of Arbitration.

Friction regarding the Abyei oilfields is, however, further aggravated by the fact that the CPA also allows for the residents of Abyei to decide in the 2011 referendum on whether to retain their special administrative status in the north or become part of the south. This has resulted in agents of Khartoum, as well as the south, competing for control of the Abyei population.

In brief, the struggle for political control in Sudan, access to oil reserves and the right to cultural and religious rights continues to plague the CPA and undermine the possibility of sustainable peace.

Economics

Sudan's economic realities are clearly central to the political challenges facing the country. The economic asymmetry that existed at the founding of an independent Sudan in 1956 continues to exist. This is both a cause and a consequence of the Sudanese conflict. It allows Khartoum to continue to fund the arms, corruption and bribery needed to maintain control of the country. It also contributes to resentment, desperation and frustration, as well as a renewed commitment by marginalised communities to bring decades of submission to an end.

The most decisive economic battle is about oil. Discovered in the 1970s, it contributed to the breakdown of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement when President Nimeiri deployed troops in the oil-rich regions of the south. It was disagreements about oil that again worsened the conflict in 1999 when a 1 600-mile pipeline was opened to transport Sudanese oil from the oilfields to Port Sudan. This allowed Sudan to begin making hefty profits from its massive oil reserves. Within a year Sudan was making over US$500 million in oil revenue per year, with the hugely unequal distribution of the new source of income becoming a flashpoint in the north-south conflict. This factor continues to be at the centre of the Sudanese conflict today. The situation is further

complicated by the fact that Khartoum refuses to make the 50-50 distribution of oil revenues, as required by the CPA, a transparent process. This leaves considerable doubt as to whether the south is receiving its share of this resource.

South Sudan's mineral wealth, together with its considerable agricultural potential, has failed to transform this highly-impoverished region economically. This, together with continued armed cattle raids, child abductions and resource-based conflicts in the south, makes the economic situation a major cause of conflict.

Khartoum has exploited both natural and politically-driven suffering in the country by manipulating people who have lived alongside each other for generations despite their differences. In high conflict areas, such as Abyei and Darfur, nomads who are largely Arab and Muslim have historically co-existed with African farmers who are also mostly Muslims. As these relationships have come under pressure due to climate change and desertification, they have been exploited by Khartoum in the interest of destabilising key regions – particularly those which are oil-rich – for their own benefit. The resultant divisions have, at the same time, weakened community ties, making resource exploitation easier for the central government.

Social demography

Sudan comprises one of the most diverse populations on the African continent, with a substantial variation in religion, culture, race and ethnicity. Its population is estimated to be 42 million people, with approximately 65% Africans and 35% Arabs. Inter-marriages and other forms of social integration between Arabs and Africans blur these distinctions. Sudan is ethnically divided into the Dinka, Nuer, Beja and Nuba peoples, to name only the larger ethnic groups. 70% of Sudanese are Muslim, 5-10% are Christian and the remainder are mostly traditional or animist believers. The regional spread of the Sudanese population is, however, changing. Approximately two million southern Sudanese are now living in the north and further millions continue to live in exile outside Sudan. Any attempt to describe the ethnic demography of the country is further complicated by uncertainty as to which parts of Sudan fall into the "north" and which into the "south". Sudan's western and eastern regions, which include Darfur, have not been included in the CPA.

In brief, Sudan's social composition is highly varied and complex. This has given rise to widespread ethnic conflicts as a result of the central government's deliberate efforts to impose a fixed Arab-Islamic identity on the entire population. When General Ibrahim Abboud seized power in Khartoum in 1958 he embarked on an "Islamisation" campaign in the south and in 1983 President Nimeiri officially declared Sudan an "Islamic state" – imposing *Shari'ah* on the entire country. The government of General Omar al-Bashir continues to impose Islam as an official cornerstone of Sudanese identity, while moving away from many of the NIF's more radical plans for the spread and imposition of Islamic law throughout Sudan.

Not only has the government of al-Bashir failed to accommodate Sudan's social, religious and racial complexity, it has also exploited these social divisions to destabilise and weaken communities in the south in pursuit of financial and political power. The most obvious example is the current situation in Darfur, a conflict widely believed to constitute gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, with some arguing that a form of genocide has been going on in Sudan since 2003.

The government has further been accused of deliberately stirring tensions over land and grazing rights between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka groups in Abyei in order to destabilise the region for oil exploitation. This suggests further evidence of the deep ethnic differences and resource needs in the south being exploited by Khartoum and the different groups in the south being unable to find the level of unity to resist this exploitation effectively.

Security

Local dimension: Assurances of local economic and physical security that were almost non-existent during the fifty-year civil war in Sudan continue to destabilise the entire country. This has given rise to the escalation of "self-defence" militia groups as well as cattle rustlers and armed bandits raiding villages. The uneasy relationship with Ethiopia, who provided support to the SPLA and other groups in the pre-CPA period, has resulted in cross-border engagement with former mercenaries and bandits. This has, in turn, resulted in the retaliatory attacks against these children. Abductions of children by militia and other groups persist and slave trading continues. All this fosters fear, solidifying divisions within factions of Sudanese society.

National dimension: Khartoum's perceived security fears partially explain its determination to crush any rebellion, uprising or unrest against its dominance. It speaks, for example, of its response to the Darfur crisis as a "counter-insurgency strategy", with some government officials expressing concern that the Dafur conflict could result in Khartoum making the kind of concessions to those already made to the south in the CPA. Al-Bashir also faces opposition both from within his own NCP party and other more radical groups. This, together with the 4 March 2009 ICC warrant for his arrest and the history of coups and power-seizures in Sudan, places issues of security high on the national agenda. In addition, after the fraudulent and irregular 2010 elections were boycotted by a number of opposition parties, the question is whether the 2011 referendum process will be wholly democratic, free and fair. This, coupled with concerns about access to the Abyei and other oilfields, is highly likely to make the maintenance of power by military means a priority for the north.

Regional dimension: Sudan borders nine other African countries. The conflict since independence in 1956 has impacted on the security of the entire region. When President Nimeiri decided that Sudan should join the Arab Federation shortly after independence, the Khartoum regime received support from Egypt and Libya. Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda supported rebel movements in Sudan. Khartoum supported rebel movements in both Ethiopia

and Uganda while the SPLA found safe haven in Uganda from where it has waged war against Sudanese government troops. One of the goals of the Juba talks between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a northern Uganda-based rebel group, was to end Ugandan and Sudanese support for the rebel movements. The conflict with Chad has intensified, with Sudan accusing Chad of supporting the rebel movements fighting against Janjaweed and Sudanese government forces.

International dimension: In addition to regional involvement in the Sudanese conflict; other countries further afield, including Israel, Iraq, Iran, countries in the Arab League, the then Russian Federation and the United States have all been drawn into the conflict. Sudan's strategic location and Red Sea access made it of critical importance during the cold war, with Khartoum aligning itself with the then Russian Federation in exchange for Moscow providing military resources for its war against the south. At the same time tension over increasing Arab control and forced Islamisation has alarmed Israel and, at times, the US.

Within the context of these developments, the US and the West have come to see the Sudan as providing support for terrorism and Islamic extremist groups, with Khartoum becoming a focus of the "war against terror", mostly as a result of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda forces using the city as a safe haven during the mid- to late-1990s. These tensions came to a head with President Bill Clinton ordering the bombing of the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in 1998 for the alleged manufacture of chemical weapons and in retaliation for attacks on US embassies in several African countries by extremist Islamic groups. While Sudan has taken steps to distance itself from these groups, the attacks on Darfur by agents of Khartoum have raised questions as to whether the US and other Western countries are doing enough to stop the violence of the al-Bashir government.

Responses to the conflict

Civil society: The response of local organisations of civil society to the Sudanese conflict has been muted by government restrictions. The tragedies of war led to a proliferation of civil society groups in the 1980s, but when al-Bashir seized power in 1989 he introduced severe restrictions on the political involvement of all NGOs, allowing only those organisations involved in the delivery of humanitarian aid and services to continue to operate. The work of even these groups was closely monitored, with several aid workers being forced to leave the country. Following the issuing of an ICC arrest warrant, al-Bashir has expelled a number of international aid organisations from the country. The fact that the most vulnerable groups affected by the Sudanese crisis are almost entirely dependent on these organisations for survival is particularly concerning. In April 2010, the United Nations declared Akobo, in Jonglei State, the 'hungriest place on earth'. Here 46% of children under five are malnourished - 15% severely so, placing immense pressure on humanitarian agencies to provide food and supplies.

Political parties: The signing of the CPA between the NCP and the SPLM/A was an important step toward potential peace in Sudan. The challenges facing the government were immense, with indications that Bashir's NCP would continue to resist the implementations of some aspects of the settlement. Bashir claims that most of the requirements have been implemented and that the complaints of the SPLM and other groups are simply attempts to distract their people from the growing internal differences within the south. Bashir further denies all complicity with the Janjaweed militias in Darfur and refuses to address the challenges presented by Abyei.

International community: Southern Sudanese organisations and parties have been divided throughout the conflict, and tensions continue to exist. While indications are that the SPLM, under the leadership of Salva Kiir is working closely with other parties and there is apparent internal cohesion in the SPLM and in other southern groups, there are two distinct conflictual visions for a post 2011 Sudan. Some favour the pursuit of self-determination or secession for the south, while others prioritise the late John Garang's vision of a "New Sudan" that is democratic and inclusive of all. Effectively this is a division between those who believe that the essence of Sudanese political identity and governance can be changed to favour the existence of a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-ethnic democratic state, and those who consider the NCP position to be final. As the 2011 referendum draws closer and the ICC arrest warrant looms, the tension between these two positions is likely to intensify, with these divisions enabling Khartoum to further exploit the situation.

The involvement of the international community was central to the negotiation process and the signing of the 2005 CPA. However the same community is finding it difficult to oversee the implementation of the Agreement. International attention has also shifted from a total Sudanese solution to a focus on Darfur. This is understandable, given the scale of devastation in Darfur, Abyei and elsewhere. It is, at the same time, necessary to recognise that these crises are unlikely to be resolved adequately outside a total Sudanese settlement. International agencies and charitable foundations have given considerable attention to providing aid to all parts of Sudan. This could, however, fail to have the desired effect if the root causes of the Sudanese conflict are not addressed. To ensure a holistic and integrated approach to the crisis there needs to be serious re-engagement by international bodies and world governments in efforts to implement the CPA.

Risk factors

The challenge of human suffering: Suffering in Darfur, in other historically marginalised communities and in neighbouring countries cannot be ignored. The danger is that a focus on any particular conflict to the neglect of the underlying centre-periphery dynamic, vested in Khartoum's political and economic intransigence, will undermine any possibility of sustainable peace. The question is how to respond to the crisis in Darfur, fighting in Abyei and attacks in the Kordofan province and elsewhere, without losing sight of the need to address the overall political conflict in Sudan. The CPA offered the best chance for this to be done at probably any

point since independence. For it to have had a deeper impact however, the Government of National Unity (GNU) ought to have been more involved in and committed to the implementation of the settlement.

Economic exploitation: Central to the resolution of the Sudanese crisis is the restructuring of the Sudanese economy vested in Khartoum. Though the CPA provides for the equitable sharing of oil revenues, the lack of transparency in this regard has prevented the kind of mitigated tension and increased trust required to settle the dispute. The vast economic disparity between Sudan's marginalised communities and its centre will undoubtedly continue to fuel tensions and resentment in peripheral regions until a more balanced economic picture exists. Though Khartoum currently sees oil and its economic revenue as its lifeline, it may indeed prove to be its downfall. Economic development in the south, initiated with the signing of the CPA, is essential for peace to be sustainable. This requires an equitable redistribution of oil wealth.

ICC arrest warrant and expulsion of aid agencies: al Bashir continues to be defiant in the face of the ICC. He claims that, firstly, Sudan has not signed the ICC Statute and hence is not bound by its decisions; secondly, that the UN Security Council cannot purport to subject a sovereign nation to an institution it has not accepted; and thirdly, that Sudan is in a position to address the situation in Darfur through its own independent and competent institutions. Following the arrest warrant and the ensuing expulsion of international organisations upon which much of Sudan is heavily reliant, Bashir announced the nationalisation of all humanitarian efforts. Analysts expect these moves to severely impact North-South relations as well as relations between the two main parties. The decision to expel the agencies was made without consultation with the SPLA/M.

Race and religion: Sudan's historic religious, racial, cultural and ethnic diversities have resulted in political groupings finding it opportune to exploit these divisions. The consequent hatred, resentment and prejudices created by pursuing political gain through the demonisation of others has not only inflamed Sudan's wars but also resulted in unspeakable levels of brutality, including allegations of genocide in Darfur. Sudan's conflicts have never been a simple Arab vs. African, Muslim vs. Christian, or north vs. south affair. These divisions have rather been used as instruments of war to cover up a range of injustices that are overlooked while the wars of identity continue to rage.

Inter-tribe micro-level conflicts: An abundance of illegal arms, the absence of organised law enforcement structures and the partial breakdown of social and traditional norms due to ongoing war and ensuing socio-economic deprivation continue to fuel the ancient conflicts between tribes such as the Dinka, Nuer, Murle and others. These conflicts are often economically driven and arise over access to grazing land and water, over the trade in children and over cattle raids. The use of increasingly sophisticated weaponry enhances lawlessness, thus increasing the vulnerability of communities to conflict.

Climate change and diminishing resources: The effects of climate change and the diminishing natural resources available in Sudan have heightened tensions among local communities. Large swathes of the country are arid, desertification is on the increase and the reduction in available arable land puts increasing strain on relations between nomads and established farmers. These strained relationships become all the more vulnerable to exploitation when linked to issues of race, religion or ethnicity. The perpetuation of war makes any attempt to ameliorate or redress these situations impossible – a tragedy epitomised by the situation in Darfur. This again emphasises the importance of the CPA as a mechanism for addressing other concerns.

Marginalised communities: Whether for religious, ethnic or ideological reasons, political and rebel movements in the south have rarely been able to remain unified in their struggle to assert their needs. Latent divisions amongst organisations in the south, and the failure of northerners to trust the intentions of the south, have consistently undermined peace initiatives in Sudan. The CPA can only succeed through trust-building between groups separated by generations of hostility and by assuring those in isolated sections of the country that they will be included in the peace on offer.

Elections and the referendum: One reason for Khartoum's failure to move forward with the requirements of the CPA is that it may not be in the interests of al-Bashir's NCP to do so. The future of the southern oilfields, the threat of southern secession, the possibility of a complete regime change as a result of an election and now the issuing of an ICC arrest warrant for al-Bashir on counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes, are all factors that contribute to the impasse in Sudan.

Future Options

Several scenarios present critical risks for the future of Sudan:

Abyei oilfields: Abyei arguably constitutes the most explosive conflict in Sudan. The legendary Ngok Dinka Chief, Deng Majok, is said to have claimed that Abyei is "the thread that stitches the north and south together". The cumulative level of human suffering in Abyei is equal to that of any other part of Sudan, including Darfur. Its waterways and savannas made it an area of conflict between migrating tribes and clans long before the colonial period. It was central to disputes between the north and the south during the condominium administration and an arena of war between competing tribes during the first and second Sudanese civil wars.

The major contemporary dispute in Abyei is whether its oilfields fall into the territory of the north or the south. The intransigence of Khartoum in refusing to accept the border delineations handed down by the ABC makes the Abyei dispute a festering wound that has the capacity to infect the entire Sudanese body. In 2008, the NCP and the SPLM agreed to develop a Marshall Plan for Abyei in an attempt to pull the region back from the brink of war. Funds were

committed for a new administration to govern the oil-rich area. Neither the plan nor the funds have materialised and international agencies have now been forced out. This has left some analysts suggesting that while the alleged genocide in Darfur could be the prologue to a war that engulfs all of Sudan, the war itself will focus on Abyei, with its oilfields as the ultimate prize. The referral of the Abyei dispute to the ICC is an important step in resolving the Abyei conflict. The question is whether the Court's ruling will be enough to unravel the tensions inherent in the Sudanese centre-periphery conflict.

New conflicts in Kordofan, the East and the Far North: There are clearly many potential conflicts in Sudan besides Abyei and Darfur. Conflicts include those of the Nubian people of the Nile River valley who face dam-building projects that have already given rise to violent responses. A similar project faces the Mannassir tribe of the north who threaten rebellion against what they see as unjust compensation and resettlement. In the east the Beja and Rashaida reached a peaceful settlement on land issues with Khartoum in 2006, but the failure to meet local demands has led to a significant deterioration in the peace process. Kordofan and the Blue Nile states were tragically neglected during the CPA decision-making, with allegations that Khartoum was deliberately undermining alliances between groups in these regions. The failure to address adequately the demands of the people of Darfur during the CPA negotiation process led to an outbreak of violence; there are similar threats to the CPA in other parts of the country.

2010 elections and 2011 referendum: An important challenge facing the CPA was the necessary preparation of free and fair elections in 2010 and the 2011 referendum. The fact, however, is that many of the goals of the CPA remain unimplemented – including the Abyei Protocol, other border delineations, oil revenue transparency and census challenges – meaning that progress towards the elections remained dangerously behind schedule. Elections eventually took place from 11 to 16 April 2010 and were predictably won by al Bashirs' NCP with a 68% majority. Despite having withdrawn its' presidential candidate from the national race on the basis of supposed electoral fraud in Darfur, the SPLM's Yassir Aman gained 22% of the presidential vote- his withdrawl had come too late for his name to be removed from the ballot paper. Still, the SPLM's Salva Kiir won a 93% majority in the South. Strengthened, both north and south now turn their eyes to the referendum. Despite al Bashir's public claim that the referendum will be held on time, the SPLM fears a delay. The party has already made it clear that if the referendum is delayed it will unilaterally declare independence; increasing the possibility of renewed conflict in the region.

Heightened tensions over the failure to make progress on CPA implementations led to the SPLM withdrawing from the government of national unity in Khartoum in 2008. Although the SPLM has rejoined the government of national unity, the risk of the escalation of conflict continues to hang over the settlement. The response of the al-Bashir government, should the proposed ICC indictment against him be implemented, could in turn have its own set of consequences for the referendum. The threat hanging over the 2010 elections has now been muted. More important,

however, is whether the outcome of the planned referendum will be accepted by those who lose the poll.

Each of these scenarios suggest that extensive work is required to build a sense of civic trust and reconciliation between Khartoum and the rest of the country. Equally important is the need for the people of the south and other parts of Sudan to develop tolerance among themselves and a willingness to resolve differences in a peaceful manner.

Sudan factsheet

Basics[1]	
Capital	Khartoum
Total population (millions), 2009	41.1
Population distribution, 2005	
Urban	43%
Rural	57%
Population annual growth rate (%), 2005-15	2.1
HDI (ranking out of 179 countries), 2005[2]	150
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older), 1995-2005	60.9
Health	
Life expectancy at birth (years), 2005	57.4
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births), 2005	62
HIV prevalence (% aged 15-49), 2005	1.6

Demographics[3]			
Ethnicity		Religion	
Black	52%	Sunni Muslim	70%
Arab	39%	Indigenous	25%
Beja	6%	Christian	5%
Foreign	2%		
Other	1%		

---

[1] Information taken from the UNDP Human Development Report 2007/8, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_SDN.html [accessed 21 May 2010]
[2] The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI) is calculated using the following indicators: Gross enrolment ratio (GER), Adult literacy rate, Life expectancy at birth and GDP per capita (PPP US$).
[3] Information taken from the Central Intelligence Agency, Government of the United States of America, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html [accessed 21 May 2010]