



OFICINA DO CES

ces

Centro de Estudos Sociais
Laboratório Associado
Faculdade de Economia
Universidade de Coimbra

DANIELA NASCIMENTO

**SUDAN: BETWEEN THE PROMISE OF PEACE
IN THE SOUTH AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF WAR
IN DARFUR**

**Outubro de 2008
Oficina nº 316**

Daniela Nascimento

Sudan: Between the Promise of Peace in the South and the Uncertainty of War in Darfur

**Oficina do CES n.º 316
Outubro de 2008**

OFICINA DO CES
Publicação seriada do
Centro de Estudos Sociais
Praça D. Dinis
Colégio de S. Jerónimo, Coimbra

Correspondência:
Apartado 3087
3001-401 COIMBRA

Daniela Nascimento¹

Faculdade de Economia, Universidade de Coimbra

Sudan: Between the Promise of Peace in the South and the Uncertainty of War in Darfur

Abstract: For more than two decades, Sudan experienced a violent conflict, opposing the Northern Arab Muslim dictatorial government and the Southern Christian and Animist rebels. Often considered as an example of the ‘clash of civilisations’, this conflict is actually characterised by deep political and socio-economic inequalities. For the largest country in Africa, the promises of peace came with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on 9 January 2005. But peace in Sudan is still uncertain, challenged by obstacles to the implementation of the Agreement, by genocidal violence in Darfur and an increasing instability in the East. Through a rigorous analysis of the complexities of war and peace in Sudan, this paper aims to analyse the recent developments of the peace process and the challenges posed to the prospects for a more peaceful and prosperous future in the country.

Introduction

The conflict in Sudan, opposing the Northern dictatorial Muslim government and the Southern Christian and Animist rebels, has long been considered one of the longest and most violent in Africa.

For the largest country in the African continent, the promises of peace have been materialized in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed on 9 January 2005, which has put a formal end to the North-South war, and in the Darfur Peace Agreement, signed on 5 May 2006. Despite these efforts, Sudan still lives an uncertain peace, made difficult not only by the many and complex obstacles to the implementation of the peace agreements, but also because it has been severely challenged by the escalating violence in Darfur and by an increasing instability in the Eastern parts of the country.

Through a rigorous look into and analysis of the complexity of war and peace in Sudan, this paper seeks to evaluate the recent developments of the Sudanese peace process and understand the challenges to the prospects for a more prosperous and peaceful future in the country. For this, I will resort to a theoretical framework that distinguishes and analyses

¹ Teaching Assistant at the Department of International Relations of the Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra (Portugal). PhD student, International Politics and Conflict Resolution Program, University of Coimbra.

several perspectives on the role of ethnic and/or religious cleavages as a source of conflict: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism.

The role of ethnicity and religion in the Sudanese conflicts: A theoretical interpretation

Conflicts in the South and in Darfur and the latent violence in the Eastern regions of Sudan seem, in this context, to be seen as part of a same trend, shared by the various rebel movements, in which the ‘enemy’ is a particular Arab-Muslim elite that has been controlling the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country, neglecting and repressing a significant part of the Sudanese population. Sudan is, therefore, particularly interesting and illustrative of the theoretical debate on the role of ethnic and religious divisions as a cause of conflict. This debate opposes three different perspectives: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. Although there are some important divergences in relation to a direct relation between ethnic and/or religious diversity and the emergence of conflict between groups within the same State, conflicts in Sudan have for long been interpreted as a perfect example of the primordialist argument, according to which such differences are the most important independent variables for explaining internal conflicts. In this view, conflicts become inevitable in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies due to the existence of different interpretations of what is sacred or culturally acceptable by those groups (Hasenclever e Rittberger, 2000: 644).

Instrumentalists, on the other hand, tend to recognise the importance and role of ethnic and religious differences, as well as their impact in conflicts, but refuse to consider them as their main causes. It is admitted therefore that conflicts may be aggravated, but rarely, if ever, caused by divergent religious beliefs or ethnic identities (Hasenclever e Rittberger, 2000: 642). In the quest for alternative explanations for the emergence of conflicts, instrumentalism focuses on the crucial and often determinant role played by deeper and structural causes, such as political and socio-economic inequalities that characterise these contexts. In this approach, elites play a fundamental role, in the sense that they frequently use these identities to explain group inequality and discrimination, resorting to and justifying the use of violence to achieve, maintain and increase political and economic power. From this point of view, the governing Arab-Muslim elite in Sudan has been feeding this process, often using religious and ethnic identities as inclusion and exclusion factors for the rest of the Sudanese population, and feeding a war that lasted about four decades.

The constructivist thesis, on the other hand, suggests that there is nothing inherently conflictual about ethnicity or religion, but that, in certain circumstances, this type of identity may well move from a relatively neutral organisational principle to a powerful instrument for mobilisation and legitimisation of violence (USAID, 2005). According to this view, social conflicts are intimately linked to cognitive structures, such as ideology, nationalism, ethnicity or religion, structures that attribute to certain social actors certain conceptions of themselves and, consequently, affect their behaviour within the society (Hasenclever e Rittberger, 2000: 647). Constructivists thus propose to consider religion and ethnicity as an intervening variable between a certain conflict and the option for conflicting behaviour, but its impact may be ambiguous: it can either make violence more likely or reduce it significantly (Hasenclever e Rittberger, 2000: 649).

Drawing from this analysis, one of the main causes allegedly behind such persistent conflicts in Southern Sudan that have spilled over to Darfur has been, in my opinion, the equally persistent marginalisation of, and disrespect for, the groups and population that have been opposed to the repressive and discriminatory policies of the Sudanese government.

But unlike what a more simplistic interpretation might assume, conflicts in Sudan – a country that has been leading the Failed States Index since 2006, with some of the highest indicators of political, economic and social instability from a list of about sixty countries² – do not correspond to a ‘*clash of civilizations*’³ made inevitable simply because ethnic or religious diversity is seen as an almost natural obstacle to people’s peaceful coexistence. This approach thus hides a more complex history of asymmetries and inequalities at the political, economic, social and cultural level altogether, made unbearable by a rich and sectarian elite and victimising an impoverished Sudan, in particular the South, Darfur and East. It is thus defended that sustainable peace in a country where underdevelopment and war have apparently become endemic and irreversible, depends mainly on the recognition of those inequalities and asymmetries and of the perverse use of ethnic and religious identities made by the various Sudanese governments.

² These indicators are, for example, number of refugees and displaced persons, human rights violations, unequal development, lack of State legitimacy, public services, and corruption, among others. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3420&page=1]

³ Expression used by Samuel P. Huntington (1996) to characterise the new paradigm of international conflicts after the end of the Cold War. According to this argument, the new world conflicts would oppose different identity and religious civilisations.

I will now try to understand whether and how dominant, internationally defined conflict resolution strategies have been able, or willing, to respond to and tackle such complex causes and dynamics of conflict in Sudan.

From Addis Abeba to Naivasha: Three decades of a complex North-South peace process

Immediately after independence in 1956, Sudan was thrown into conflict as a result of discriminatory policies during the colonial rule by the Anglo-Egyptian administration⁴ but also, and to a great extent, of the independence aspirations of the Southern states which were not equally considered by the government in Khartoum.

Torn by war ever since independence, Sudan has only experienced about eleven years of an extremely unstable peace between 1972 and 1983, as a result of the Addis Abeba peace agreement. The period of peace was always fragile due to the maintenance of an aggressive policy towards the South that culminated with President Nimeiri's decision to suspend the agreement and impose the *Shari'a* law to the whole territory of Sudan, including the predominantly Animist and Christian South. The governmental strategy of conscious social, political and economic neglect of the Southern regions of Sudan continued after independence and was even reinforced after the 1989 military coup that put General Omar-al Beshir in power and who, until today, heads a particularly repressive and authoritarian regime, based on a very strict vision of Islam.

Ever since then, political instability and internal conflict have been a trend in Sudan, resulting in a generalised impoverishment of the Sudanese population. At the same time, Southern claims were crystallised around the *Sudan's People Liberation Movement/Army* (SPLM/A), the only rebel group capable of confronting, both militarily and politically, and putting pressure on the Arab- Muslim government and its aggressive nationalist and radical Islamic project.

Like the war, the Sudanese peace process has also been particularly long and complex. Absent, for decades, from the international agenda, it was only after the mid-90s that the Sudanese conflict managed to garner enough international involvement and attention, crucial to initiate and support a credible and sustainable peace process. With George W. Bush as

⁴ During the Anglo-Egyptian rule, there was the establishment of a *Southern Policy*, which implied a separate political, educational and socio-economic system for the North and the South and which formally treated Southerners as 'second-class' citizens.

President of the United States in 2000, there was a significant shift in international attention to Sudan not only as a result of oil-related interests, but also of the significant internal pressure by the Christian groups and communities which pushed the U.S. administration to a more leading role in the peace process. Washington then became more actively involved in the conflict, considering Sudan as a central piece of American involvement in Africa, a position that was reinforced in 2001.

In fact, the Sudanese government, which had been the target of bilateral sanctions imposed by the Clinton administration since 1997,⁵ desperately wanted to improve its international image as well as its relations with Washington, an opportunity that came after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Khartoum used the subsequent *war on terrorism* to offer its support, including the opening of its air space – something that was not immediately guaranteed by many of the European allies – and authorisation to conduct investigations on the existence of terrorist training camps, allegedly created when Osama bin Laden lived in Sudan between 1990 and 1996, under protection of the Sudanese government. After nominating John Danforth as U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan in 2001, Bush decided to condition the suspension of the sanctions to the signing of a final peace agreement, becoming actively and directly involved in the peace process, with an important achievement with the 2002 Machakos Protocol.

Following Machakos, the CPA, officially signed on 9 January 2005, under the auspices of IGAD (*Inter-Governmental Authority on Development*) and the Troika, composed by the USA, Norway and the UK, aimed at putting a definite end to a conflict that had caused more than two million deaths and about four million refugees and displaced persons over more than two decades. This agreement is indisputably important due to the inherent complexity of this conflict and to a history characterised by decades of frustrated attempts to negotiate peace and of failed cease-fires between the main belligerents –the government led by General Omar-Beshir ever since 1989,⁶ and the rebels of the SPLM/A, led by the charismatic John Garang.⁷

⁵ A year after the UN had imposed international sanctions that lasted until 2001.

⁶ Omar Hasán al-Beshir took power in 1989 following a military coup supported by the National Islamic Front, proclaiming a fundamentalist Islamic regime which has been in power since then, on the basis of unfair and fraudulent elections.

⁷ John Garang was the historic leader of Southern rebels. His death in a helicopter accident in July 2005, just a few months after the signing of the CPA and his nomination as Vice-President, deeply affected the still fragile prospects for peace in the territory.

From the 1972 agreement, signed in Addis Abeba, to the 2002 Machakos Protocol and the CPA in 2005, both parties showed a clear and continuous disrespect for the established provisions and cease-fires. It is exactly this past of failures and lack of commitment by both parties that render Sudan's future so uncertain when it comes to sustainable peace.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement: ambitions and ambiguities

The Naivasha Agreement is a complex and ambitious one, and it includes protocols on fundamental issues related to the State and religion, self-determination, power and wealth-sharing, security and the special status of the border areas of Abyei, Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile (also known as the 'Three Areas'), as well as a separate set of implementation mechanisms. It establishes, above all, the adoption of a new national Constitution as well as a six-year interim period, with elections in 2009 and a final referendum in 2011, to decide on the future of the South as an independent state or its continuation as part of a united Sudan.

The CPA also involves an oil sharing protocol resulting from the oil production, which establishes an equal share to both North and South,⁸ as well as the sharing of seats in government.⁹ From an economic point of view, it is expected that during the interim period two currencies coexist within a dual banking system; the same logic applies to the military area, with the creation of two distinct armies for both territories, and a mixed army for the three sensitive areas.¹⁰

In what concerns legislation applicable to the territory – by far one of the most controversial issues and often the cause of radicalisation of the conflict, due to a severe Arabisation policy and strategy imposed by Beshir's fundamentalist government – it is

⁸ The oil reserves, mainly concentrated in Southern territories, have been ever since the beginning a fundamental element of conflict, leading to Northern incursions for their control. Until the CPA, the gains were channelled exclusively to the Northern Muslim governing elites, excluding the Southern regions as well as other regions of the country (Darfur, East). With the peace agreement, a wealth sharing protocol is established and accepted according to an equality principle (50%/50%).

⁹ The seats in the transitory government of national unity would be divided according to a 70:30 principle favouring the government, and 55: 45 in favour of the government in what concerns the disputed bordering areas of Abyei, Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. When the agreement was signed, Beshir was reinforced as head of government and Garang was nominated Vice-President.

¹⁰ The status of the three regions is important but fragile within the CPA. Although these are mainly Christian and Animist areas, they were put under Northern administration with the Addis Abeba agreement of 1972. Supported by the local population, the SPLM/A has claimed the inclusion of these regions as constituting parts of the South, contradicting the governmental position aimed at maintaining control and authority over such oil-rich areas (Prunier, 2002). In relation to Abyei, for example, the agreement gives the population the right to decide, through referendum, under whose authority it prefers to stay, at the same time recognising the possibility of double citizenship during the interim period, creating a 'bridge' area between North and South Sudan (Deng, 2006: 160).

established that the Islamic law (*Shari'a*) will only be imposed in the North and not to the non-Muslim communities of the South. The status of the *Shari'a* in the capital, Khartoum, was to be decided by an elected Assembly.¹¹

From a political point of view, however, the CPA is ambiguous, since even though it establishes a government of national unity, it also clearly opens the way to secession, allowing a scenario of a political and territorial independent Southern Sudan to which it actually contributes by recognising the right to an autonomous army, banking system, currency and flag. The possibility of secession of the South, as it is established within the CPA, poses important challenges to current strategies for conflict resolution, namely in Africa. In fact, the principle and practice of self-determination of territories as solution to end conflicts in divided societies has been, for decades, absent from national and international agendas due to a fear of opening a 'Pandora box' that could undermine and put at risk the already fragile stability of a continent whose borders have been, for centuries, questioned in what concerns the correspondence between national State and the groups within it. For the first time in African history, a peace agreement establishes the possibility and the right of a territory to secede, thus calling into question and eroding the basic rule adopted by the Organization for African Union (currently African Union), following the wave of independence, that African borders should never be changed.¹² As Gwynne Dyer remarks, after independence African borders became sacred not because they made sense but exactly because they didn't. Considering that these borders essentially correspond to arbitrary lines, mixing different cultural, ethnic and linguistic peoples in defined and unitary spaces, any attempt to change borders is feared to result in regional instability, since there is no single border in Africa that could not be, justifiably, subject to change (Dyer, 2005).

In the case of Sudan, the question of self-determination and independence of the South is even more complex and less consensual. The official goal of the SPLM/A was always a struggle for a different Sudan, free from discriminatory Islamic policies and where the various regions could have active, effective and equal participation. The Sudanese government itself, aware of the risks of an eventual territorial partition, always defended a united country, especially because the main oil reserves are located in the Southern regions. Therefore, the

¹¹ In what concerns legislation, the status of Khartoum was one of the most controversial issues during the negotiations, since the government demanded the maintenance of the *Shari'a* since it is situated in the North, whereas the SPLM/A defends the religious neutrality of Khartoum as the capital of a religiously heterogeneous country.

¹² Even the case of Eritrea and Ethiopia, in the 1990s, must be seen as an exception, since even during colonialism the territory was considered and treated as a separate entity.

acceptance of an interim period, which has as a final goal the referendum, may contradict Khartoum's aspirations and desires, and had as a fundamental basis the expectation that in the following six years the government would, through rhetoric and development projects supported by the international community, try to convince the Southern population that they would no longer be treated as second-class citizens and that it was 'safe' to choose for unity instead of secession. In fact, it was believed that the government in Khartoum would do everything possible to make 'unity attractive'. And although the 2002 Machakos Protocol, which served as a basis for the negotiation of the following protocols and agreements, considered the possibility of secession after a defined and agreed timeline, it also incorporated the idea of a united Sudan as an Islamic state, with a separate Southern regional administration and government, allowing the creation of conditions capable of 'seducing' the Southern populations to voluntarily decide to continue as part of a united Sudan.

Besides these important and fundamental issues, the CPA is also quite fragile in relation to the legitimacy of the actors involved and to the absence of references to some fundamental issues. One of the most controversial aspects has been the fact that, ever since the beginning, the negotiations involved only the two main belligerent parts, with the particularity that none of its leaders had been democratically elected by the population they both claimed to represent. The multiplicity of actors involved in the conflict – ~~and~~ which also reflects the enormous diversity of Sudan – not all recognised and having their own agendas and claims, would certainly make the negotiations even more difficult. It was probably this awareness of the obstacles posed by multiple and different actors involved in the negotiations that lay behind the international decision of limiting the negotiations to both government and the SPLM/A, in a clear attempt to facilitate a consensus in the main questions in dispute.¹³ This does not prevent, however, the remaining groups to consider that as long as they are excluded from the negotiations, these will not be more than mere agreements between two dictators, without any legitimacy (Rone, 2003).

The final outcome of these intense negotiations between North and South is also fragile because of the absence of any reference to criminal responsibility and accountability mechanisms of the parties in terms of human rights violations, in a conflict where massive violations have been an intrinsic part of the strategies of both parties. This vacuum ends up

¹³ Besides that, there was the fear that recognising legitimacy to some other groups to participate in the negotiations would result in a 'domino effect', leading to similar demands by other unsatisfied regional movements.

crystallising impunity and the maintenance of power in the hands of the same individuals who, for decades, were responsible for a particularly violent and brutal conflict.¹⁴

Despite President Beshir's openness in some issues and of the main public statements in favour of the freedom of choice by the Southern population to decide their own future, there are reasons for scepticism since none of the parties seem to be actively and truly committed to peace. And there is a growing conviction, reinforced by evidence in the implementation phase, that the negotiations focused more on the balances of power than on the deeper causes of the conflict that devastated the country for decades (Johnson, 2004: xx). It then follows that, in a conflict that did not end with the military victory of one of the parties, the agreement basically guaranteed a fragile compromise in terms of power sharing, with all the limitations that such a compromise originates when it involves actors who do not trust each other.

At this level, there are important challenges to both parties: on one side, the profound change in the party currently in power and responsible for an authoritarian and repressive policy of Arabisation of the Christian and Animist South; and on the other side, the conversion of a military rebel group into a political party capable of democratically governing the South. The death of John Garang, the charismatic leader of the SPLM/A rendered these challenges even more difficult, since the South will hardly find a leader equally capable of contradicting all the internal tensions within Southern movements and this may undermine the prospects for a sustainable peace in the territory. Salva Kiir, current Vice President of the Government of National Unity following Garang, has proved already not to be capable of uniting the South or even challenging Beshir's authoritarian behaviours. It is also worth underlining that the Sudanese government has always known how to use such Southern divergences to its own benefit, by successfully using the ethnic and religious hatred discourse and by arming the opposing militias (Hamilton, 2005).

Three years since the signing of the CPA nothing structural seems to have fundamentally changed in order to create the conditions for overcoming conflict and building peace, especially in Southern Sudan. Millions of people are still displaced and deprived of socio-economic conditions to survive, while corruption seems to be spreading among the

¹⁴ The government of Khartoum has been particularly reluctant to accept any initiative that may lead to the criminal responsibility for crimes committed during the conflict. This position was reinforced recently after the Security Council decided to initiate investigations under the ICC for crimes in Darfur (SC Resolution 1593, April 2005). President Beshir made clear that he rejected the Resolution and would not cooperate with the ICC since Sudan has not yet recognised the Rome Statute.

main political leaders in the Southern government who are enjoying the massive oil dividends guaranteed and managed within the framework of the oil sharing agreement.

In this scenario, it seems that despite creating the conditions for political accommodation of the parties in conflict, the impact of international involvement has been seriously limited by a simplistic perception of the real causes of conflict between Northern and Southern Sudan. Therefore, it is yet to be proved that the CPA will actually be able to open the way to sustainable peace, a peace that goes beyond the simple absence of armed violence.

Darfur and the East: Perils and promises of peace in Sudan

Despite some developments and advances in the political peace process in the South, the prospects for peace in the whole country and the success of the CPA are also to a great extent dependent on the dramatic situation in Darfur, characterised since 2003 by a violent conflict that opposes Muslim communities (nomadic Arabs and sedentary Africans) and which has become one of the latest chapters in the history of civil wars in Sudan. In February 2003, as the Southern peace process evolved, reports released by several humanitarian organizations in the field drew attention to massacres and forced displacement of Darfurian population, perpetrated by the Janjaweed, an armed militia allegedly supported by the government of Khartoum, as well as to confrontations between the two main rebel groups in the region – the *Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA)* and the *Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)* – and the government.

Both conflicts are different but related, and this relation results from an escalation of violence in the whole territory of Sudan since 1998 and from an increasing and indisputable polarization of these conflicts around the ideas of race and ethnicity. Violence in Darfur increased when the rebel groups in the region tried to get some benefits from the peace process in the South, especially in terms of wealth and power-sharing. It is even considered that the decision of the Darfur Liberation Front to change its name to Sudan Liberation Army in March 2003, with the declared goal of gaining a more significant national and international profile and support, was largely influenced by the rapid pace of the peace negotiations in the South (Johnson, 2005: ix).

The Darfur rebel groups also contested decades of political and socio-economic marginalisation by the central government. Once one of the most prosperous regions of Sudan, Darfur was progressively subjected to political and economic neglect by the

successive governments and regimes, but in particular by the dictatorial and sectarian government of Beshir. Besides this marginalization and neglect, the region has also been frequently affected by intense and recurrent droughts that destroyed, in certain areas irreversibly, an important part of its agricultural and cattle activity. The reaction of Khartoum to the alleged genocide being committed in Darfur has been one of denial of any involvement of its military forces in the attacks to the population, considering them as mere 'tribal' clashes. At the same time, it has progressively and increasingly limited the access of humanitarian organizations to the territory.

Initially, the main international actors involved in the Southern peace process, namely the USA and some European countries such as Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom, chose to ignore what was going on in Darfur, fearing that such atrocities and the humanitarian crisis could have a negative impact on the outcome of the peace negotiations. Only when violence arose and the humanitarian crisis was clear and actually directly affected the viability of an agreement with the South, did the international community threaten to intervene to solve the conflict through political and economic sanctions by the United Nations. In July 2004, pressure involved the classification of what was going on as 'genocide' and the threat of a more firm action if the Sudanese government did not control the militias.

These pressures led only to the acceptance of the presence of a reduced military contingent from the African Union without a sufficiently strong mandate, and in a fragile cease-fire between the government and the rebels, signed in N'djamena in April 2005, but which was violated shortly after due to new attacks on the population. In mid July 2004, Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State, circulated a project Resolution at the United Nations Security Council where the Khartoum government was threatened with non-specified sanctions if it did not comply with the Joint Action Plan agreed upon between the Sudanese government and the UN Secretary General on July 3rd 2004. According to this plan, efforts would be undertaken to protect refugees and displaced persons, disarm militias and bring to international justice those responsible for human rights violations and atrocities in Darfur. The difficulty in reaching an agreement within the Security Council led Washington to withdraw the reference to sanctions in the Resolution text due to the clear opposition of eight of its fifteen members, including China and Russia. In its final text, the Resolution established a thirty-day deadline for the Sudanese government to comply with the promises; in case of non-compliance the Resolution left open the possibility of other actions by the Security

Council, including measures under article 41 of the UN Charter.¹⁵ The Resolution was adopted on July 31, with the abstention of China and Pakistan.

The lack of consensus within the Security Council in relation to the type of intervention to be undertaken in Darfur,¹⁶ as well as many broken promises by the government in terms of disarmament and control over the militias and putting an end to the massacres in the region, have resulted in a total absence of strong international action in face of such a grave and obvious humanitarian crisis. Adding to this complexity, the regime in Khartoum declared at the time that any international decision to undertake military intervention would be considered an act of aggression to and interference with the national sovereignty of Sudan, and the government would respond accordingly. The threat went even further: in case of non-consented military intervention, Darfur would become a 'grave' for international forces.

After four years of significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Darfur and numerous stalemates in a peace process involving the highest representatives of the international community and some of the belligerent parties, a peace agreement was finally signed on 5 May 2006 in Abuja. Led by the African Union representatives and by the then U.S. Under-Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, and representing a relative success of American voluntarism for Darfur, this agreement established, for the first time, the acceptance of a UN force to support the insufficient African Union force in the territory. The most important points in the agreement included also restrictions on the movements of the Popular Defence Forces, as well as a decrease in their contingents, the integration of the leader of the major rebel force (SLA) in the government of National Unity, the establishment of buffer zones around the refugee camps and humanitarian corridors.

Although indisputably important in the attempt to put a formal end to the violence in Darfur and promote the improvement of bilateral relations with Chad (which had been deteriorating ever since instability in the region started due to massive waves of refugees who crossed the border), this agreement was implemented with a prudent optimism. First of all, because it was signed only by the Sudanese government and one of the rebel groups in the region (the majority faction of SLA/M), undermining its implementation and risking a very

¹⁵ Which excludes military action, but allows economic and diplomatic sanctions.

¹⁶ China threatens to veto any resolution that legitimises a UN military intervention in the region, or even the imposition of sanctions to Beshir's regime. Chinese interests in Sudan are based on a privileged relation with Khartoum and on benefits from oil exploitation.

limited impact in the field.¹⁷ Secondly, because, like in the CPA with the South, both parties ended up giving in significantly to the external pressure, making the success of the agreement dependent also on the real and active commitment of the international community in making parties comply with the agreement.

If, at a first sight, this international pressure could become a fundamental element to putting an end to such a humanitarian crisis in the region, the truth is that it did not happen, mainly because effective pressure implies that peace and the success of the agreements depend significantly on continued attention and real commitment by the international community in guaranteeing compliance and respect for the agreement. And as the past decades and years have painfully shown in relation to the events in Southern Sudan and Darfur, this attention and commitment are not always guaranteed. The direct involvement of isolated countries or regional organizations (like the European Union or the African Union) has been, ever since the beginning, seriously limited by the different interests involved. In fact, the interests of the several external actors involved are many and, above all, highly incompatible. The United States, China, the European Union and the African Union have different assumptions and play on different grounds when it comes to the priorities and responses to the crisis. With this attitude they keep calling into question and undermining any possibility of consensual position when it comes to the importance of imposing real pressure on the Sudanese government. The latter has proved to be expert in misleading and ‘playing’ with the various international actors, making demands on the composition of a hybrid peacekeeping force in the region, as well as on the time frames for its deployment, and the international community has complied with these demands by accepting them or simply by not acting. The Sudanese government has managed, progressively, to accomplish two of its main goals: disarm rebel groups, and win time, without being held directly responsible for delays and failures of peace agreements.

In the case of the United States, for example, there is clearly a cautious strategy vis-à-vis the type of pressure imposed in order not to affect its cooperation with the *war on terrorism*, where the Sudanese government has been an important ally, sharing information and opening its air space. Only these strategic concerns can explain why, even after considering the situation as constituting genocide, no action was taken in order to comply with the international legal responsibilities.

¹⁷ For example, the Janjaweed militia were not even represented in the negotiation, reinforcing the idea that they did not feel compelled or constrained to respect the agreement at all, seriously undermining its viability.

The European Union, in its turn, has assumed a very ambiguous position without any real pressure mechanism that may lead to an effective resolution of the conflict. The several declarations condemning the atrocities committed by the militias in the region, allegedly with governmental support, have not been followed by any firm action, thus undercutting the credibility of Europe's common position in relation to the most appropriate responses to such conflicts. Nevertheless, the decision not to leave the Darfur problem out of the recent EU-Africa Summit, even if without any specific measures (except for the common declaration on the need for the rapid deployment of a hybrid military force), may well result in a European foreign policy that puts more pressure on the Sudanese government.

Finally, and in relation to the role of the African Union, it is not easy to demand a firmer attitude from an organization where most member states have a very doubtful record when it comes to respect for and compliance with fundamental human rights. Despite its great potential, the political reality of the African Union makes it an extremely fragile organization in what concerns its capacity to maintain regional peace and stability. Nevertheless, there has been some effort in consolidating the presence of an African Union peacekeeping force that has been clearly limited and insufficient to respond to the challenges and problems in the field.

With the possibility of an armed humanitarian intervention out of the question due to the threat of China's veto at the Security Council, committed as it is not to damage its good relations with the Sudanese government (which has allowed China full access to Sudanese oil and a large participation in the main Sudanese oil companies), the perspectives of resolution in the short-run are not very optimistic. It is clear that the economic, geostrategic and political constraints that have fed the continuous paralysis of the Security Council are the main obstacles to effective solutions to the crisis.

In this scenario, the future of the country and the prospects for peace in Darfur remain uncertain. It seems clear, though, that the sustainable resolution of the conflict depends mainly on the international community's ability to recognise and respond to the deeper causes of violence and on the capacity to reach an agreement within the Security Council in relation to the type of pressure to impose on the Sudanese government and the other belligerent parties.

Besides Darfur, the Eastern regions of Sudan have also been kept outside the CPA's peace dividends. An important centre of the Sudan's economy and with a population of around four million people, composed of Arab and non-Arab populations, Eastern Sudan is one big paradox: although it is one of the most prosperous and rich regions, thus justifying a

military presence three times bigger than the one in Darfur,¹⁸ its people is one of the poorest of the country, subject to underdevelopment and governmental neglect (ICG, 2006: 1-2). The struggle for more autonomy and wealth sharing has been a reality ever since independence, led by the Beja Congress,¹⁹ which has resorted to violent confrontation to respond to the imposed fundamentalist Islamic policy of the government and the strategy of forced evictions for economic purposes (namely the construction of dams along the Nile). In the past few months, the instability in the region significantly increased reflecting a feeling of exclusion by the main regional groups, and directly harming the peace process.

As long as the government in Khartoum continues to enjoy total impunity in the face of continuing atrocities, due to a 'chronic' incapacity to reach an agreement within the United Nations as to the need for more coercive and firm actions, the situation will obviously worsen. And if nothing is done, then we run the serious risk of losing interest for what is happening in Darfur. And it was exactly that same oblivion and lack of interest that the international community, after the genocide in Rwanda, promised to never repeat again. One of the lessons to be learnt both from the failures of the past and the current crisis in Darfur is that it is important that we are able and willing to keep that promise.

Conclusion

One of the fundamental lessons that can be drawn from this case is that the causes of conflict are highly complex and deep, with processes in which religious factors, although present, tend to assume a more subordinate role as a source of conflict (Hasenclever e Rittberger, 2000: 673).

In the current scenario that characterizes Sudan, to evaluate whether the CPA and the Darfur agreements will effectively result in a sustainable and stable peace in the country, depends essentially on the capacity to recognize and tackle the deeper causes of these conflicts and, at the same time, to guarantee that both parties are truly available and willing to implement the provisions (Johnson, 2005). If the unity of Sudan depends on the equal and fair treatment of all its citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs or ethnic identities, then it becomes fundamental that the regime undertakes profound changes in its politics and applicable legislation, by adopting a more inclusive strategy. Any agreement that simply

¹⁸ Eastern Sudan is especially rich in oil, gold and fertile land, having also good access to the main port in the Red Sea and many of the pipelines that cross the country coming from the South.

¹⁹ The Beja Congress is a political organisation created in 1985 to represent the largest tribal group in the region, Beja. In 2005, the Congress was associated to a smaller insurgent group know as Rashaida Free Lions.

reorganizes the current government, reinforcing it, will certainly put at risk any possibility of effective implementation in the future.

It must be recognized, however, that despite some scepticism, peace in Sudan could have its opportunity and momentum. In fact, although the CPA and the other peace agreements seem to ignore some broader structural imbalances, these may also serve as a basis for a political and economic solution to the conflict in Darfur and the instability in the East, based on significant levels of regional autonomy and larger political participation at the national level. In this scenario, the best solution for peace in the country may well be not secession, but rather a restructured and more equal Sudan where all ethnic and religious groups are included and treated on an equal footing. In this scenario, next year's elections and the following years until the referendum in 2011 will be crucial to guarantee stability not only in the South, but also in the whole country. As Douglas Johnson wisely states, "we live in hope, but a hope tempered by experience" (Johnson, 2004: xx). And in the case of Sudan, experience does not always lead to optimism.

References

- Deng, Francis M (2006), "Sudan: A Nation in Turbulent Search of Itself", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 603(1), 155-162.
- Dyer, Gwyne (2005), "Sudan Deal, a Pandora's Box on Borders", *The Canberra Times*, available at <<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article7596>>, 18 January [Last accessed on 15 February 2006].
- Hamilton, Rebecca (2005), "Sudan after Garang: Saving the Peace", *International Herald Tribune*, available at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/08/03/opinion/edhamilton.php>>, 4 August [Last accessed on 15 de February 2006].
- Hasenclever, Andreas; Rittberger, Volker (2000), "Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict", *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 29(3), 641-674.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- ICG – International Crisis Group (2006), *Sudan: Saving Peace in the East*, Africa Report, 102 (5 January 2006).
- Johnson, Douglas H. (2004), *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*. Oxford: The International African Institute in association with James Currey.
- Johnson, Douglas H. (2005), "Comprehensive Sudan Peace Agreement: Playing for Time", *Parliamentary Brief*, available at <<http://sudanwatch.blogspot.com/2005/03/douglas-h-johnson-parliamentary-brief.html>>, 28 February 2005. [Last accessed on 15 February 2006]
- Prunier, Gérard (2002), "Sudan: Irreconcilable Differences: Oil, Islam, Chinese Weapons and American Money", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December, available at <http://mondediplo.com/2002/12/06sudan> > [Last accessed on 15 February 2006].
- Rone, Jemera (2003) 'Rebels, Religion and Oil', *The World Today*, available at <<http://www.mafhoum.com/press6/174P52.htm>>, 27 December 2003. [Last accessed on 15 February 2006]
- USAID (2005), *Conducting a Conflict Assessment: A Framework for Strategy and Program Development*, available at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_ConflAssessFrmwrk_8-17-04.pdf. [Last accessed on 15 February 2006].