

Sudan's Darfur: Peace or more war on the horizon?

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by Dr Claude Rakisits

This year marks Sudan's fiftieth year of independence. Unfortunately, it has very little to celebrate. Sudan, the largest country in Africa—about the size of Western Europe—is best known for its long history of maladministration, human rights abuses,

coups d'état, twenty years of civil war between the Arab north and the African south, harbouring Osama Bin Laden in the 1990s, and for the past three years a ruthless government-backed assault on the people of Darfur in western Sudan.



In this ASPI *Strategic Insight*, we review the latest developments in Darfur—an area the size of France—and examine the factors that will determine whether there will finally be peace for the people of Darfur. We also examine the Australian Government's policy options for contributing to a possible UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

Background

About two years ago, shocking pictures started coming out of Darfur. They showed Khartoum's scorched earth tactics, used since early 2003 against the Darfurians. Well over 200,000 people have been killed since then, and about 2.5 million people are now living in refugee camps either in Darfur or in neighbouring Chad. There have been many UN and African Union (AU) reports confirming attacks, rapes and the destruction of villages by the Sudanese army and air force and by Sudanese government-backed 'Arab' militias, the Janjaweed, in a deliberate drive to push the locals out of the area. The US Government has called it genocide. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has described it as 'one of the worst nightmares in recent history'.

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The Sudanese Government continues to deny that it supports the Janjaweed, denies its own involvement in these attacks, and claims that the reports are all exaggerated. In its Resolution 1556, the UN Security Council demanded that Khartoum disarm

the Janjaweed and bring their leaders to justice. The Sudanese Government has not only ignored the UN demands, but has been incorporating the militias into its armed forces. In an attempt to put pressure on Khartoum, the Security Council imposed sanctions (travel restrictions and freezing of funds) on a Janjaweed leader and three armed forces commanders in April 2006. Needless to say, this soft touch is hardly going to persuade Khartoum to change its ways.

Notwithstanding the international public outcry, Khartoum correctly assessed that the UN Security Council wouldn't want to put too much pressure on it for fear of jeopardising the final stage of peace negotiations between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the rebels in the south of the country who had been fighting Khartoum for the past twenty years. In any event, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was eventually signed between the Sudanese Government and the SPLM/A on 9 January 2005, ending the longest and bloodiest civil war in Africa. But while the CPA was good news for the south of the country, it did not alleviate the suffering in Darfur.

Still, alongside UN diplomacy, the AU has tried to resolve the Darfur crisis. The AU helped Chad negotiate the April 2004 N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement between Khartoum and the Darfuri rebels, but it was broken by all sides almost immediately. In mid-2004, Khartoum agreed to allow the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to monitor the implementation of the N'djamena agreement. AMIS is not authorised to protect the civilians, intervene in fighting or disarm warring factions. This extremely limited mandate has suited all armed parties—rebels, Janjaweed and Sudanese Government forces—but certainly not the civilians, who have been the defenceless victims of the fighting.

In parallel to AMIS, the AU hosted negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria between a reluctant Sudanese Government and divided rebel groups, whose leaders seemed more interested in collecting their per diem than engaging in real negotiations. Still, after two years of slow and painstaking negotiations, the Darfur Peace Accord (DPA) was finally signed on 5 May 2006.

The Darfur Peace Accord is a weak and flawed document ...

A shaky peace agreement

The DPA is a weak and flawed document, but after two years of negotiations and heavy pressure from the US and the EU the parties probably felt that it was better to sign an imperfect agreement than to sign nothing. And while there are some positive aspects to it, overall it offers little to be optimistic about. We'll highlight some of the more obvious weaknesses.

The Janjaweed are to be completely disarmed by mid-October and contained in specific restricted areas, and the Sudanese Government must punish those who violate the ceasefire. Khartoum has announced that it will present a plan for the disarmament of the Janjaweed, but, given its failure to meet five earlier commitments to pursue the militias, there's little hope this will happen soon. And the Janjaweed fighters have to be disarmed before the rebel forces assemble for their own disarmament and demobilisation.

Although Darfurians are about 15% of the total Sudanese population, they will only be given 3% representation in the National Assembly. Under the heading of wealth-sharing the parties agreed to establish a Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund to which the Sudanese Government agreed to allocate US\$300 million in 2006 and not less than US\$200 million in 2007 and

2008, but there's no mention of oil revenues. Given the Darfurians demand an end to their marginalisation, this is a serious flaw.

Nevertheless ... the DPA creates an opportunity to move forwards.

Nevertheless, even with its weaknesses, the DPA creates an opportunity to move forward. A particularly important flow-on of the accord is that it meets the AU's condition for the transition of AMIS to a UN operation.

However, in addition to its inherent flaws, a number of factors alone or combined could easily derail the DPA before a UN operation finally arrives in Darfur.

Divided rebels

The most militarily significant Darfurian rebel group is the Minni faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), named for Minni Minnawi, the only SLA leader to have signed the DPA. While the SLA has a similar acronym as the SPLM/A, the two are completely separate. The other two Darfurian rebel groups—the al-Nur faction of the SLA and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)—haven't signed the DPA. They have now joined forces and formed the National Redemption Front to oppose the DPA. However, as a result of heavy pressure from the AU, the US and the EU, some members of the Front signed a declaration of commitment to the deal, particularly to the obligations relating to the ceasefire. This is good, but it still falls far short of full partnership in the DPA.

The fragility of these promises has already been shown. While the two SLA factions have had differences since last year, their differences have deepened since the signing of the DPA. The rebels are now consolidating their military positions by attacking each other's refugee camps and villages. According

to Jan Pronk, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Sudan, fighting has actually increased since the DPA. Similarly, according to the UN Secretary-General's 28 July 2006 report on Darfur, there are indications rebels of the SLA (Minni faction)

have been supported by the Sudanese armed forces in some attacks against the non-signatories of the DPA. And, yet again, civilians and aid workers have been caught in the middle. This is why the AU was so keen to have all rebel groups sign the DPA.

Who are the Janjaweed and the rebels?

Janjaweed means 'evildoers on horseback', and refers to Khartoum-backed mounted militias who mostly come from Darfur-based 'Arab' clans without land rights, as well as to the formal security services. For the past three years, the Janjaweed have pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing through wholesale rapes, killings, and bombings and burning of villages. The 'Arab' militias owe their allegiance to Sheik Musa Hilal, who had UN sanctions imposed on him in April 2006.

The Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) is the military wing of the Sudan Liberation Movement, which is the largest Darfuri rebel group. It draws its support from the three main ethnic groups of African ancestry, the sedentary Fur and Massaleit and the nomadic Zaghawa, but there are no reliable figures for the number of SLA fighters.¹ The group seeks greater autonomy for Darfur, a more equitable share of resources, and an end to the region's marginalisation. The SLA is divided into two major factions, whose members often clash with one another.

Abdel Wahid Muhammad al-Nur is the SLA chairman. Although his power base is the Fur, the largest ethnic group, his faction is the weakest militarily. As a result, the Fur have suffered the brunt of Janjaweed attacks. Al-Nur has refused to sign the DPA, demanding detailed provisions on compensation for the war's victims and a vice-presidency in the national government.

Minni Arcua Minnawi is the Secretary-General and de facto commander of the SLA. Although his power base is the smaller Zaghawa ethnic group, he has the strongest military faction. He has signed the DPA, and having done so is now Special Assistant to President al-Bashir for Darfur issues.

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the smallest and least powerful of the rebel groups fighting in Darfur, is a hardline Islamist movement. It is refusing to sign the DPA, demanding instead radical changes to the deal. Its main constituency is the small Zaghawa ethnic group.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was the rebel group in the south which fought the Sudanese Government for almost 20 years. It was founded and led by John Garang until last year when he died in an air crash. The SPLM/A signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with Khartoum in January 2005, ending the longest civil war in Africa. As part of the CPA, the leader of the SPLM/A, Salva Kiir, is the First Vice-President of the Government of National Unity in Khartoum. The SPLM/A is completely separate from the Darfur-based SLA.



Men belonging to the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) fighters from the faction of Minni Minawi who signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) take part in a military exercise during UNICEF Good Will Ambassador Mia Farrow's visit at Galap camp north of Darfur, Sudan, June 14, 2006.
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... the UN Secretary-General accused the Sudanese Government of breaking international humanitarian law...

An uncooperative Sudanese Government

In his report of 19 May 2006, the UN Secretary-General accused the Sudanese Government of breaking international humanitarian law by not allowing food and aid to be delivered in rebel-held areas of southern Darfur. Within days of the signing of the DPA, the media reported that government forces had attacked villages in Darfur—accusations rejected by Khartoum. However, more worrisome are reports, confirmed by the UN and the AU, that the Sudanese army and Janjaweed militias had attacked JEM-controlled areas on 4 August 2006.

Compounding these reports, the Sudanese Government was very slow to agree to an AU–UN assessment team going to Darfur.

The purpose of the team's visit was to assess how to strengthen the AU peacekeeping force in the next few months and examine the requirements for a possible transition to a UN mission. Moreover, as late as August 2006, Sudan still refused to accept a UN operation in Darfur, contrary to its obligations under the DPA and despite several direct pleas from UN Secretary-General Annan to Sudan President al-Bashir. And while international pressure may yet force Sudan to accept a UN operation, al-Bashir will no doubt insist that no Western troops be allowed in. As he bluntly stated at a press conference on 20 June, sending UN troops to Sudan under Chapter VII of the UN Charter would be tantamount to colonisation. He has the support of some tribal leaders for that position. If al-Bashir has to accept an international force, his preference has always been for an enlarged and strengthened AU force because, according to him, African states 'possessed a heritage similar to that of the people of Darfur'.²

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An ineffective African Union monitoring force

Notwithstanding the many accolades the AU has received for the work of AMIS, the 7,800-strong African force has been ineffective, too passive and unable to stop the fighting and killing in Darfur because it was given neither adequate capability (personnel, equipment and funding) nor the legal authority to do so. And this is where the DPA could collapse, as AMIS will be the only force on the ground until a UN force arrives, probably early in 2007. The AU agreed at its June summit meeting to extend AMIS's mandate until the end of the year, but AMIS will be asked to perform additional tasks in the implementation of the DPA—tasks for which it has little capacity or expertise. As AMIS Force Commander General Collins Ihekire stated, AMIS would need three times as many troops to perform these new duties. The AU has suggested that 3,000 additional troops, probably from Nigeria, Rwanda and Ghana, could be added to the current 7,800, leaving the mission well short of what would be needed to do the job effectively. Meanwhile, the African force is increasingly coming under criticism by the Darfurians who cannot understand why it does so little to protect them.

A meddling Chad

Complicating an already confused picture is the role of Chad in Darfur. There's a saying in Chad that 'power comes from the east'. Chadian President Idriss Deby overthrew his

predecessor by launching a rebellion from Darfur in 1990, and similar attacks were attempted against him by Chadian rebels in December 2005 and April 2006. According to an AU report, these rebels are co-located with Sudanese units, and Sudanese army personnel were reportedly captured in the December attack. Journalists have claimed that Chadian rebels have helped the Sudanese Government put down the Darfurian rebellion in return for Khartoum's hospitality. There's now increasing evidence that the Janjaweed are crossing the 900 kilometre-long border into Chad to attack non-Arab Chadians who have assisted the Darfurian refugees when they came across from Sudan. And even more worrisome is that the Janjaweed are reportedly being aided by Chadians in these attacks.

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There are over 200,000 refugees in camps in Chad, and President Deby has several times threatened to send them all back to Darfur unless Khartoum stops helping the Chadian rebels. Deby, who comes from the Zaghawa ethnic group, has in turn provided some military support to the Zaghawa-dominated JEM and the Minni faction of the SLA. Notwithstanding a Sudan–Chad accord signed on 26 July not to host each other's rebel groups, Chad will likely continue to support the Sudanese rebels as long as it feels threatened by Khartoum-backed Chadian rebels. This will further strain an already shaky DPA.

Increasingly worrying has been the effect the Chad–Sudan tension has had in recent months on internal developments in the

neighbouring Central African Republic (CAR). According to a report from the UN Secretary-General, the CAR is a victim of the tension between Chad and Sudan. The atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion between those two countries has paved the way for arms proliferation in the region, particularly in the northeastern part of the CAR. In turn, this has helped armed rebels opposed to the CAR Government to establish a foothold in the country and destabilise it. And, as a consequence of fighting between the rebels and the CAR army, 40,000 refugees have fled into Chad, further compounding the already difficult refugee situation in the east of the country.³

A fragile peace in the south

While the CPA signed between Khartoum and the SPLM/A in January 2005 is generally holding, there are nevertheless reports of militia activity in violation of the agreement. There are also some significant problems in the integration of former Sudanese Government-backed militias into the SPLM/A and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and delays in the withdrawal of the SAF from the south and of the SPLM/A from the north and east.⁴ While the south has begun to benefit from oil revenues (receiving more than US\$600 million last year), achieving a final agreement on the demarcation of the



Civilian militiamen from the Popular Defence Forces demonstrate against international interference in Sudan in front of the Sudanese Army headquarters in Khartoum, Wednesday, 8 March, 2006. EPA/PHILIP DHIL © 2006 AAP

oilfields and the sharing of the oil revenue remains a major hurdle. Also, little of the US\$4.5 billion pledged by donors a year ago for reconstruction has been disbursed so far. With thousands of refugees flowing back into the south—an area bigger than France but with only 14 kilometres of paved road, almost no schools and no hospitals—this is bad news.

To make matters worse for the rehabilitation effort in the south, the Ugandan-based Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been attacking civilians, the UN and NGOs with impunity and with greater sophistication. The SAF have been ineffective in stopping these attacks.⁵ While the LRA announced a unilateral ceasefire on 4 August 2006, the SPLM/A is keen to see the LRA expelled from the south. Sudan's First Vice President and president of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir, has stressed that mediation would be necessary to remove the LRA threat. Accordingly, Sudanese Government-hosted negotiations between the LRA and the Ugandan Government have recently begun in the south, but no-one is expecting a quick resolution of this problem. In the meantime, the International Criminal Court in The Hague has announced plans to investigate the LRA for war crimes.

So, all in all, if there's a perception in Darfur that Khartoum is not honestly implementing the CPA—in spirit and letter—this could have a negative spillover effect on the Darfuri rebels' willingness to adhere to the DPA. And importantly, as the UN Secretary-General has correctly assessed, the CPA in turn cannot be fully successful without peace in Darfur.

A weak and belated UN peacekeeping force

On 28 July 2006, the UN Secretary-General reported to the Security Council on the mandate, size and structure of a possible UN force in Darfur. He recommended that the

existing 8,000-strong UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which monitors the implementation of the CPA in the south, be expanded into the Darfur region as from 1 January 2007. The UN operation would still be called UNMIS, but would have two separate components: one for the south and the other for Darfur. The primary mission of UNMIS would be to protect civilians and assist with the implementation of the DPA.

The Secretary-General recommended that the mandate allow the force full freedom of movement and authorise robust action when required.

In his report (S/2006/591), Kofi Annan stressed the importance of establishing a stable and secure environment in Darfur. To achieve this, the UN force would need to be capable and ready to deal proactively with spoilers, including pre-emptively. The Secretary-General recommended that the mandate allow the force full freedom of movement and authorise robust action when required. The force would need to possess surveillance, reconnaissance and assessment capabilities, and air and ground reaction forces with sufficient military power and high mobility to deter or defeat spoilers.

The Secretary-General presented three options for the size of the UN mission, varying from 15,300 to 18,600 troops, depending on the number of helicopters and fixed-wing operational reconnaissance aircraft that would be available. The force would also have 3,300 police officers and sixteen formed police units deployed in more than a hundred locations. He envisages that the force, which would include AMIS's 7,800 African troops, would come mainly from African and Asian countries. NATO would most likely provide the necessary capability assets to enable the

troops to fulfil their mandate. If the Security Council decides for the largest contingent, it would make UNMIS the biggest UN operation, on top of the 73,000 troops now deployed in nineteen UN operations around the world. Interestingly, the Secretary-General made no mention of the costs of such an operation, even though he was required to do so according to UNSC Resolution 1679.

If the UN force in Darfur is to operate robustly, it will need to operate fully under Chapter VII.

While Kofi Annan's recommendation for a robust, proactive force is highly commendable, currently UNMIS operates in the south under Chapter VI, with only Chapter VII elements to enable about 7,000 troops to protect 780 observers. If the UN force in Darfur is to operate robustly, it will need to operate fully under Chapter VII. Perhaps the Secretary-General has deliberately left this aspect of the report vague, as Khartoum has consistently opposed a UN operation in Darfur, let alone one that would operate under Chapter VII. However, anything short of that will simply mean a repeat of the hapless AMIS.

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The timing of the force's arrival is critical. While the Secretary-General has recommended that the UN operation be in place by the beginning of 2007, Khartoum is in no rush to give approval to such an operation. And the longer it takes to have the blue helmets in place, the greater the chances for the DPA to collapse.

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A precarious humanitarian situation

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, Sudan is 'the most challenging humanitarian problem we face today in the world'. And while on the whole large-scale attacks on civilians by government forces have ceased since the signing of the DPA, attacks by rebels and bandits continue, as do problems relating to humanitarian access, intimidation, harassment and human rights abuses carried out by law enforcement agencies. The lack of security outside the camps has prevented significant numbers of 'internally displaced persons' from returning to their villages, as well as village reconstruction. There's growing instability inside the camps, where displaced people are forced to live in appalling conditions of intimidation, harassment, with widespread sexual violence against women, and always in fear of falling victim of the increasingly brutal disputes between the various opposing rebel groups.⁶ As a result of rebel infighting, thousands more people have been driven from their homes and at least 250,000 can't be reached with humanitarian assistance, mainly in western Darfur but also elsewhere in the region. To make matters worse, only 50% of the US\$648 million humanitarian requirement for Darfur for 2006 has been pledged or received, according to a report from the Secretary-General.

Major outside interests

Darfur has been a major priority for the Bush Administration over the past two years. Even before the Darfur crisis began, Sudan had

been of considerable interest to American religious organisations that support the Christians in the south. The then US Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, made many trips to Sudan to try to find a resolution to the crisis; he was instrumental in getting the parties to sign off on the DPA. The US called for a special UN Security Council meeting of foreign ministers on 9 May to discuss Darfur. Washington has spent about US\$2 billion on humanitarian assistance in Sudan, and has contributed about 85% of the World Food Program's available food supplies. At the latest Sudan donors' conference in Brussels on 18 July, the US announced a commitment of US\$116 million to AMIS. This was in addition to the US\$247 million already contributed by Washington since 2004.

President Bush met Sudan Vice President Salva Kiir in Washington on 20 July 2006 to reaffirm US commitment to the full implementation of the CPA, which Washington was instrumental in finalising. Bush met Minni Minnawi, the only SLA leader to sign the DPA, six days later. The meeting was an opportunity for President Bush to stress that the DPA should be fully implemented and that Minnawi's fighters should stop instigating violence.

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The main objective of the US in Sudan has been to avoid having another failed state in a critical region bordering the Middle East. Such an outcome would potentially mean a significant setback in the War on Terror, as an unstable Sudan could host terrorist groups. Given Sudan's strategic location, it could quite conceivably be used as a springboard

for terrorist acts across the Red Sea into Saudi Arabia. Already, Yemen has been used as a staging area for al-Qaeda attacks, and, as the recent victory of the Islamists in Somalia so starkly confirms, things can quickly change on the ground. The US and the West wouldn't want to see a whole swathe of land in the Horn of Africa potentially hostile to the pro-Western countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

Because Washington has invested much political capital in the drafting of the DPA, as well as the CPA, it's not keen to see those efforts wasted. Accordingly, it's been pushing hard for the UN operation to be in Darfur as soon as possible, preferably before the end of the year.

Since the Darfur crisis began, the EU and its member states have contributed more than €800 million in humanitarian aid and €212 million to support AMIS. The EU has trained, equipped and transported the African troops and it has sent European military experts and police officers into the field. While the EU has been disappointed by AMIS's ineffectiveness and wants a UN operation to take over as quickly as possible, it agreed to commit an additional US\$30 million to AMIS. All in all, two-thirds of AMIS's external funding has come from the EU's African Peace Facility. So, having invested a substantial amount of aid in Sudan, and particularly in Darfur, the EU has an interest in ensuring that the DPA works.

More importantly, Europe has geostrategic interests in Sudan: it doesn't want it to become another failed state, and the situation in Darfur has already had spillover effects in neighbouring countries. France is particularly interested in Chad and the CAR, both of which are former French colonies, and has extensive oil interests and about 1,000 defence force personnel stationed in Chad. In the CAR, the EU has been providing financial and material assistance to the Multinational Force of the

Central African Economic and Monetary Community (FOMUC), which is helping the CAR armed forces deal with the rebels in the east of the country, and will continue to do so until June 2007. Because of the increasing interconnections between events in Darfur, Chad and the CAR, France has emphasised the importance of approaching the situation in Darfur in terms of regional peace.

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As Europe has recently seen, economic hardship in African countries leads to sudden, large flows of refugees in search of a better life. Press coverage suggests that this is why the EU is keen to respond positively to the AU's request to develop crisis prevention and management capabilities on the continent, especially in the education, training and equipping of African armed forces. It explains why the EU agreed to send a 2,000-strong security force to the Democratic Republic of Congo to assist with the first presidential and legislative elections in over forty years. It also sets a precedent for possible EU participation in a UN operation in Darfur.

Not all major powers have been constructive, however. China, which has a close relationship with Khartoum, is a case in point. When analysing China's approach to the Darfur issue, one needs to see it in the context of Beijing's strategic interests in Africa, which is an increasingly important and reliable source of energy for China's expanding economy. Africa is now the source of 25% of China's imported oil, and almost 30% of it (between 7% and 10% of China's total oil imports)

comes from Sudan. So, not surprisingly, China has a major stake in Sudan's oil as the consumer of about 60% of the country's oil exports (275,000 barrels per day). Southern Darfur, like south Sudan, is rich in oil, and the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation holds some of its largest oil concessions.

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The media have reported that China has provided Khartoum with three arms factories in return for the oil exports. China has continued to provide military equipment to Sudan, and is also the only major arms exporter that hasn't entered into any multilateral agreement setting out criteria, including respect for human rights, to guide arms export licensing decisions. Amnesty International report that Chinese-supplied materiel has included helicopters used to attack villages, and military trucks used to transport Sudanese troops and Janjaweed militia.⁷ All this is in violation of the international arms embargo on Sudan imposed under UN Security Council Resolution 1591.

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It's not surprising that Sudan has described China as its 'most important partner'. And, referring to China's relationship with Sudan, China's deputy foreign minister has stated that 'business is business ... we try to separate business from politics'.⁸ Accordingly, China has regularly been supporting Sudan's cause at the UN, often stalling measures on Sudan put forward by Western members of the Security Council.

Finally, and most certainly not coincidental with developments in Darfur, Chad broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan and established them with Beijing instead on 4 August 2006. China is reported to be providing arms to the Chadian rebels based in Darfur. With the diplomatic shift in favour of Beijing, China may now be willing to put pressure on the rebels to stop harassing President Deby's government. Moreover, given that Chad is a significant oil exporter since 2003, such *quid pro quo* may well be taken into account in commercial negotiations between the two countries and China's quest for oil sources in Africa.

Australian policy options

Like other Western countries engaged in the War on Terror, Australia has an enduring interest in not seeing another failed state in an already unstable region, so it's very much in our interest to help in whatever

way possible with the reconstruction of the country, whether in Darfur or the south. As the international community has now learned in Afghanistan, it's essential that assistance for reconstruction and rehabilitation begin immediately the fighting ends.

Australia will most likely be approached to contribute further assets to an enlarged UNMIS.

The Australian Defence Force is already involved in Sudan. It's been contributing to UNMIS since 2005, having sent nine staff officers who specialise in air movements and logistics support, and six military observers to monitor the implementation of the CPA. Also as part of UNMIS, the Australian Federal Police has ten personnel working closely with the Sudanese police as mentors, advisers,



An Australian Defence Force Officer makes friends with the local children in Sudan, 2005. Photo courtesy SQNLDR Elsley, reproduced with the approval of RAAF

and providers of training in general policing practices, leadership and management skills.

Australia will most likely be approached to contribute further assets to an enlarged UNMIS. Unfortunately, given our extensive commitments (particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands and East Timor) and our need to be ready for any new regional contingency, the Australian Defence Force has very little spare capacity. However, if possible, the Australian Government should consider increasing slightly the current Australian deployment in the south, for even that would relieve some pressure on the UN. Similarly, while the Australian Federal Police is heavily involved in our region, were it able to send additional personnel to UNMIS the Australian Government should give it serious consideration.

In addition to the military and police presence, the Australian Government has contributed \$47 million to humanitarian assistance in Sudan (\$12 million to south Sudan and \$35 million to Darfur) since May 2004. The most recent contribution was announced in May 2006, when Mr Downer said Australia would give \$7 million to Sudan (\$2 million to the south, \$5 million to Darfur) as part of an \$11.5 million aid package to help alleviate food shortages in Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Due to the situation in Darfur, AusAID has concentrated on channelling assistance through international organisations, especially the World Food Programme (with NGO partners like World Vision operating on the ground) in delivery of humanitarian assistance. However, given the continuing dire situation in Darfur and Australia's limited available military capability to assist the UN, the Australian Government should consider providing additional funds or emergency aid (such as blankets, water and food), particularly during this very delicate period of transition to a UN operation.

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For longer term assistance, Canberra should consider funding projects in education, dry farming and road building—three areas that will require special attention in Darfur, as well as in the south, once the reconstruction begins, and in which we have demonstrated expertise.

Conclusion

The signing of the DPA is good news, but peace will only come if all parties really want it. As we've seen, several factors could easily derail the DPA. An important one is the non-implementation of the text of the accord: all deadlines have already been missed, and this alone could unravel the whole agreement. It's particularly worrying that, apart from the Minni faction of the SLA, the other two rebel groups haven't signed up; given Khartoum's refusal to revisit the DPA, it's unlikely that they will, despite international pressure. This is compounded by the weakness and ineffectiveness of AMIS, whose mandate must now be changed, whose troops must be increased, and whose capability must be boosted until a UN force arrives.

It will be vital that the UN operation that eventually takes over from AMIS is strong enough and large enough to ensure that the DPA is fully implemented. The UN Secretary-General has stated that a UN mission would need to be larger and more mobile than AMIS, with a stronger civil protection mandate. It will be essential that such a force is able to provide genuine, robust protection for the returning refugees. Until the UN operation

arrives, AMIS will need to be strengthened in the areas of command and control, logistics and manpower, with an increase of between five to eight battalions. While a Chapter VII UN operation doesn't require the agreement of the Sudanese Government, agreement would be highly preferable—an uninvited UN force would face significant security challenges, and the Security Council would be unlikely to agree to it.

... the UN must seriously consider imposing real sanctions against Sudan, including on its export of oil.

Unfortunately, given the time-lag before the UN's arrival, there'll be many opportunities for mischief by all sides, so the UN will need to monitor the situation closely until then. If Khartoum doesn't cooperate fully, the UN must seriously consider imposing real sanctions against Sudan, including on its export of oil. Until now, the Security Council has put no real pressure on Khartoum. While China wouldn't support such sanctions, for public relations purposes it might not want to

go so far as to use its veto. The international community has been very patient with the Sudanese Government, but Khartoum must not be allowed to continue acting with impunity against its own people.

Unfortunately, 'Darfur fatigue' has settled in, and interest in the issue and the sense of urgency have diminished. Khartoum will take advantage of this to stall on allowing a UN operation into Darfur. The current crisis in the Middle East has compounded the problem, particularly if NATO or EU countries are considering participating in an international force along the Israel–Lebanon border. Nevertheless, Darfur can't be ignored.

... the Darfurians are the ones paying in lives for the West's lack of action.

Jan Pronk, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan, has admitted that the previous international strategy in Darfur failed. Let's make sure the international community gets it right this time—and quickly, because the Darfurians are the ones paying in lives for the West's lack of action.

What's the Darfur conflict about?

The Darfur conflict has its genesis in the unrest that followed a major drought in 1984–86, which led 'Arab' nomads, in search of new land, to encroach on 'African' pastoral and farming land. The government supported the 'Arabs' and disarmed the Africans.

The clash between nomads and farmers progressively worsened as droughts continued to plague the region over the years. The first armed clash with the government was in February 2003.

The media often simply characterises the conflict along racial lines (blacks versus Arabs), but the dispute is more complex. It's really a fierce competition over ever-diminishing natural resources—land and water—between African Muslims (Arabic-speaking), who are both nomads and farmers, and Arab-'identified' Muslims (also Arabic-speaking), who are also mainly nomads. Complicating the issue is that, as a result of extensive interracial marriage, many of the 'Arabs' are actually African and both groups are generally physically indistinguishable.

Sudan: A chronology of key events:

1956—Sudan becomes independent.

1958—General Abbud topples the civilian government elected earlier in the year.

1962—Civil war begins in the south.

1969—General Numayri leads the “May Revolution” military coup.

1972—The south becomes a self-governing region, ending the civil war.

1983—Civil war breaks out again in the south, involving government forces and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), led by John Garang.

1983—President Numayri introduces Sharia law.

1989—General al-Bashir takes over in a coup.

1999—President al-Bashir dissolves the National Assembly and declares a state of emergency.

2002 July—The government and SPLM/A sign the Machakos Protocol on ending the civil war. Khartoum accepts right of south to seek self-determination after a six-year interim period.

2002 October—Government and SPLM/A agree to a ceasefire for duration of negotiations, but fighting continues.

2003 February—Rebels in Darfur rise up against Khartoum.

2004 January—Army moves to quell rebel uprising in Darfur; thousands of refugees flee to neighbouring Chad.

2004 April—The Government and the Darfur rebels sign the N’djamena Ceasefire Agreement, which includes allowing an AU force to Darfur to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

2004 September—UN says Sudan has not met targets for disarming the Janjaweed militias and must accept outside help to protect civilians. US Secretary of State Colin Powell describes Darfur killings as genocide.

2005 January—Government and the SPLM/A sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

2005 April—UN report accuses the government and Janjaweed militias of systematic abuses in Darfur, but stops short of calling the violence genocide.

2005 9 July—Former southern rebel leader John Garang is sworn in as First Vice President. A constitution giving a large degree of autonomy to the south is signed.

2005 1 August—John Garang dies in an air crash. He is succeeded by Salva Kiir.

2005 September—A Government of National Unity (north and south) is formed in Khartoum.

2006 April—The UN Security Council imposes sanctions against a Janjaweed leader and three army commanders.

2006 May—Khartoum and the main rebel faction (SLA/ Minnawi faction) in Darfur sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Two smaller groups reject the deal.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DPA	Darfur Peace Accord
EU	European Union
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda)
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan

Endnotes

- 1 The DPA does refer to 8,000 combatants to be integrated into the army and police and provided education and training.
- 2 Report of the Security Council Mission to the Sudan and Chad, 4–10 June 2006, S/2006/433, p. 4.
- 3 Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic, S/2006/441, 27 June 2006, p. 6.
- 4 Author's interview with UN officials, April 2006, New York and Report of the Security Council Mission to the Sudan and Chad, p. 5.
- 5 Author's interview with UN officials, April 2006, New York.
- 6 Report of the Security Council Mission to the Sudan and Chad, p. 12.
- 7 Amnesty International Report, *'People's Republic of China Sustaining conflict and human rights abuses: The flow of arms accelerates'*, 11 June 2006, p. 9.
- 8 Jim Fisher-Thompson, "China's Economic Focus on Africa is Mixed Picture", Washington File, US Dept of State, 26 June 2006.

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