

## Watching Brief

### QUICK FACTS

**Climate:** Arid desert in the East, tropical in the West

**Population:** 18 million (estimates as there has been no official census since 1983 and the beginning of the civil war)

**Area:** 230,000 sq km

**Capital city:** In the west along the main river and on the border

**Infant mortality rate:** 87 deaths/1,000 live births

**National language:** Arabic in the north and east and English in the west and south

### Age Structure

**0-14 years:** 41.1% (male 8,451,576/female 8,093,609)

**15-64 years:** 56.4% (male 11,407,233/female 11,275,685)

**65 years and over:** 2.5% (male 518,822/female 471,530)

**The Maqqara (40%)** – Pastoral ethnic group (traditionally sheep, cattle, goat-herding), generally reside in the East and other urban centers. Most Maqqara practice Islam. The Maqqara have close ties to the pastoral minority in the south of Country B.

**The Akola (30%)** – Agricultural community that has historically resided in the West and central regions of the country. Akola were heavily influenced by Christian missionaries and most practice Christianity or a mixture of Christian-animist traditions. Akola land stretches into the Northern territories of Country D.

**The Ragat (16%)** – Pastoral ethnic group (traditionally camel-herding) residing in the East and North. Ties to the ethnic majority in Country B.

**The Kou (8%)** – Agricultural community that has historically resided in the East of the country. The Kou hold a variety of religious beliefs, with the majority practicing Islam. The remainder are animist. The Kou have strong ties to Country C where there is a Kou majority. The Kou are linked ethno-linguistically to the Akola, although due to their geographic location they have more recent cultural ties to the Maqqara and Ragat.

**Other (6%)** - There are more than 100 distinct ethnic groups in Nimpala.

**Country B (North):** A civil war has been going on in Country B for the past ten years. The Maqqara are a small ethnic minority in Country B, while the Ragat are an ethnic majority. The Ragat dominated government has been accused of war crimes and waging an ethnic cleansing campaign against the Maqqara. The ruling Ragat political party is considered extremist by the West and Western governments have listed Country B as a state sponsor of

terrorism. In the most recent flare-ups in Nimpala's far Eastern districts, the Ragat have been fleeing to Country B and are allegedly being recruited into terrorist training camps.

**Country C (East):** Country C has a large Kou population and provided political asylum for current President Ndgogo during his exile.

**Country D (South & West):** Country D is a regional powerhouse with a dominant Akola majority. The government has been accused of arming the Akola Defense Force (ADF) during Nimpala's civil war. The country has historically had a tense relationship with Nimpala due to competing claims to trade routes along the Nile.

## **ECONOMY**

Civil war and government mismanagement have destroyed much of Nimpala's economy as most have businesses fled the country, taking capital and expertise with them. The conclusion of fighting and the installation of a democratically elected government in 2007 has led to some of these businesses returning.

Nimpala is one of the wealthiest countries on the continent in terms of natural resources, including significant land for crops, pastures, and livestock.

President Ndgogo has taken steps to reduce corruption, build support from international donors, and encourage private investment. He is also working to lift an embargo on timber in order to open up a new source of government revenue.

Nimpala is heavily dependent on foreign aid and vulnerable to fluctuations in world prices for cotton, its main export. Worker remittances and external trade routes for the landlocked country have been jeopardized by continued unrest in neighboring Country B.

### **Basic Facts for 2007**

**GDP (ppp):** \$39,830,000,000

**GDP/Capita:** \$1450

**Exports:** \$8,102,000,000 (principle exports include: wheat, wood products, gold, cotton, horticulture products, mangos, bananas, sheep, livestock, sugarcane, sorghum, and coffee)

**Imports:** \$4,230,000,000

**External Debt:** \$3,159,000,000

**Labor Force:** 16.1 million

**Agricultural Products:** coffee, tea, cotton, potatoes, corn, millet, livestock,

**Stock of Money:** \$0.85 billion

## **TIMELINE**

**1300s** - Trade between Nimpala region and North Africa begins; Islam introduced.

**1500s** - The Nimpala Sultanate is established and Islamic institutions govern everyday life.

**1800s** - European explorers and missionaries begin arriving in the region. Many Akola convert to Christianity.

**1880** - British traders found the Greater Nimpala Trading Company.

**1908** - Nimpala becomes a protectorate of the British Empire with policy of indirect rule.

**1940s** - Several violent uprisings against the colonial administration.

**1962** - With British support, Nimpala declares independence; Robert Salawi (from the Akola ethnic group) chosen to serve as interim president.

**1963** - Just before scheduled elections, President Salawi and his advisors are assassinated in a military coup d'état led by General El Bardi.

**1963 - 1983** - Military dictatorship of General El Bardi who oversees a crackdown on opposition groups and free press.

**1970** - Joseph Fawa forms the Nimpala Liberation Movement (NLF), an Akola dominated rebel group.

**1975** - Free Land Act

**1983** - El Bardi assassinated by a member of the Nimpala Liberation Movement (NLF), which ignites a civil war.

**1983 - 2006** - Nimpala civil war; warring parties are divided primarily along ethnic and religious lines with the Akola fighting for the Southwest and the Maqqara and Ragat (the Northeast Brotherhood) fighting for the Northeast.

**1986-1988** - The Great Drought. Competition between the Maqqara and Ragat lead to a split in the Northeast Brotherhood with the Ragat splintering and forming the Ragat Patriotic Army (RPA)

**2006** - Nimpala Liberation Movement (NLF) decisively defeats the NOB and parties agree to a ceasefire. The United Nations Mission in Nimpala (UNAMIN) is established and sent in to monitor the ceasefire. NLF leader Joseph Fawa serves as interim president.

**2007** - Nimpala's first post-independence presidential elections held, resulting in a surprise victory for human rights activist, Henry Ndongo from the Kou ethnic group.

**2008** - Your UNCT team arrives.

## **HISTORY**

### **Pre-colonial History**

Extensive trading with Northern Africa began in the 1300s and with it came the introduction of Islam to Nimpala. By the 1500s the Nimpala Sultanate had been established and Islamic institutions and laws governed every aspect of the region's culture. This period lasted until the early 1800s when European explorers and missionaries began arriving in the region. Most missionaries focused their efforts in the South and the West where the Islamic tradition was slightly weaker. During this period many Akola converted to Christianity.

### **Colonial History**

British traders founded the Greater Nimpala Trading Company in 1880, which focused on extracting high-value natural resources such as rubber and minerals. They also established a teak plantation in the North. In the early 1900s the company's territory came under the control of the British Government and in 1908 Nimpala became a protectorate of the British Empire.

As with its other African colonies, the British instituted a policy of indirect rule in Nimpala. This allowed the British to govern through the indigenous rulers that they defeated (either through negotiation or military action). Under this policy, an indigenous ruler that accepted British authority and cooperated with British officials would be confirmed in office. Uncooperative rulers would be deposed and replaced, somewhat arbitrarily, with a new "traditional authority". Indigenous rulers became agents of the British government with the primary responsibility of maintaining order and collecting taxes.

The British Governor divided the country into two provinces—the Northeast and the South West, each with its own Lieutenant Governor. The provinces operated autonomously with very little overlapping interests outside of modest trade arrangements. In the Northeast, the British found it useful to work through existing Islamic institutions, as there was a clear hierarchy in which to carry out indirect rule. In the Southwest (Akola land), the British attempted to work within existing Akola kingdoms.

The Northeast, with much of its pre-colonial character intact (including Sharia Law), was initially able to

dominate politics in Nimpala at the national level. The British, however, were always fearful of the emirs acquiring too much power and made a concerted effort to keep Western education and culture out of the region. In the Southwest, however, due to heavy influence and activities from missionaries, public services increased dramatically during the colonial period. The British built roads, hospitals, schools and numerous universities throughout the Southwest. As a result, an Akola elite began to emerge.

## INDEPENDENCE

In response to growing Nimpala nationalism and several violent uprisings in the 1940s, the British began to move Nimpala toward self-government. With British support, a new constitution was signed and independence was declared in 1962. Robert Salawi, an Akola ruler from the West, was elected to serve as the country's first President and to oversee a transition to democratic rule.

In 1963, several months into Salawi's first term in office, Hasan El Bardi led a military coup d'état and assassinated Salawi and his top advisors. General El Bardi toppled the government with the help of a large majority of the Nimpalan armed forces, most of whom belonged to the Maqqara ethnic group. El Bardi claimed that Salawi was a puppet of the British with no intentions of holding future elections. He further alleged that the British had rigged the elections to allow for continued Akola hegemony. El Bardi claimed that only under Maqqara rule could the region develop and free itself from British imperialism. El Bardi enjoyed tremendous support from those residing in the Northeast province who had become increasingly bitter about the region's lack of services.

El Bardi's regime faced stiff opposition at home and abroad due to allegations of human rights abuses and corruption. During his twenty-year rule, El Bardi banned all political activity and maintained government control of the press.

During this time, Joseph Fawa—a former university professor and a member of the Akola ethnic group—formed the underground Nimpala Liberation Movement (NLM) with the stated aim of toppling El Bardi and forming a multi-ethnic government. While the NLM initially started as a non-violent political group, it eventually formed a military wing, the Nimpala Liberation Force (NLF). The NLF started launching guerrilla attacks against towns in the Northeast province, which resulted in both military and civilian casualties.

On October 1, 1983 a member of the NLF assassinated El Bardi at a political rally in the capital. Military units across the country responded by killing thousands of Akola civilians. These events sparked the beginning of a twenty-three year civil war that would prove to be one of the deadliest conflicts in recent history.

## CIVIL WAR

During the civil war, the government was toppled five times with alternating Maqqara and Akola victories. Maqqara battles were generally fought by ethnic groups in the Northeast, (including the Ragat), that were bound by a common colonial history and religion. Together these groups formed the Northeast Brotherhood (NOB).

More than two million people died in the Nimpalan civil war. The conflict also extended beyond the country's borders with Country B and C intervening on behalf of the NOB and Country D intervening on behalf of the NLF. Country B to the north was also struggling with internal violence and ethnic disputes between the Ragat and the ruling party of Country B. Many of the Ragat are fleeing south into Nimpala for refuge. With the conflict playing out during the Cold War, the NLF received arms from the United States while the NOB received arms



from the USSR.

A drought in the East lasted from 1986-1988, leading to local conflicts between the Ragat and the Maqqara over grazing rights and access to water. The extended drought also led to massive internal displacement as people were forced to leave their homes in search of food. At this point, the Ragat split from the NOB and formed the Ragat Patriotic Army (RPA), and maintained support from Country B where there is a Ragat majority.

The split in the NOB weakened its forces and with Western support, the NLF decisively defeated the NOB in 2006. NLF leader Joseph Fawa took power and the warring factions agreed to a ceasefire. The United Nations Mission in Nimpala (UNAMIN) was established and sent in to monitor the ceasefire. With support from Western allies and security provided by UNAMIN, Fawa oversaw the country's first post-independence elections in 2007.

In a surprise victory, Henry Ndgogo from the Kou ethnic group won the Presidency. (Note: Ndgogo was raised in the Northeast but attended university in the Southwest where he formed the All Peoples Coalition (APC). The APC was a multi-ethnic political party consisting primarily of liberal university students running on a human rights platform. General El Bardi quickly disbanded the group and sent its leaders, including Ndgogo into exile. While in exile in Country C, Ndgogo became a vocal advocate for peace in Nimpala and returned to his country for the first time for the 2007 Presidential elections.)

## COLONIAL LEGACY

British colonialism had several noteworthy impacts on Nimpala.

First, there is currently a strong division between the Northeast and the Southwest, making it difficult for Nimpala to unite under one flag. The Maquarra tribe in the North makes claims to a historical superiority over other tribes in the country with roots going back to the Nimpala Sultanate.

Due to the educational and economic opportunities created by the British in the Southeast, the Akola are typically wealthier and better educated than other ethnic groups.

With these ethnic and geographical divisions, conflicts since independence are rooted in ethnic and religious tensions.

It should also be noted that during the colonial period, the Maquarra were often trained and recruited to serve in the British military, giving the Maqqara a long and distinguished history in the Nimpalan armed forces and control over the military.

## LAND TENURE

The estates system was introduced in Nimpala in the 17th century. During this period, Sultans offered plots of land to entice preachers and scholars to settle and spread Islam, as well as to merchants in appreciation of their contributions to the state. Two types of estates were granted by the Sultans: the administrative estate, usually given to tribal leaders and granting them limited taxation rights, and the estate of privilege, which gave these holders rights to gather taxes and religious dues. The administrative estate legitimized a chief's authority over those who lived on his estate, which was defined as his group's territory.

The estate system formalized citizens' relationships to their land, thereby linking identity, land, and privilege.

While Maqqara cattle herding pastoralists were granted estates, the Ragat camel herding pastoralists were not. These nomads were “guests” in other estates and followed customary rules such as seeking grazing and other permissions from the authorities of the estates through which they passed. These customary land tenure arrangements have historically been harmonious and even provided for a degree of interdependence between the pastoralist and sedentary groups. Pastoralists, for instance, would keep animals for their sedentary friends in exchange for agricultural goods. Under the Sultan’s control, land-rights, water, and grazing were very carefully monitored.

The British Colonial Administration kept the estate system more or less intact with two major differences—all ‘tribes’ were fixed in their estates or homelands as if they had immutable boundaries. Colonial administrators legislated land-use and ownership as ‘tribal’, ignoring the sultanate’s practice of granting land as freehold. The Colonial interpretation of the estate system was particularly problematic as British settlers arrived en masse to take advantage of the good soil and growing conditions. The settlers cultivated huge cotton and coffee plantations.

British settlers received 900-year land leases from the colonial administration, covering approximately 40% of the arable land in Nimpala. The original occupants of this land, primarily from the Maqqara and Ragat ethnic groups were physically relocated to “native reserves”. These new settlements were considered by the Colonial administration to be the groups’ traditional homelands.

The Kuo tribe, who were the farmers in the Northeast, were allowed to stay and assist with cultivating the land, although they were never granted leases from the colonial administration. In 1975, El Bardi enacted the Free Land Act, which abolished all colonial land arrangements and claimed government ownership over all land.

In the post civil war era, when trying to work through all the claims to land, the process had been further complicated by the emergence of charter-holders issued by the Sultanate. Much of the land being laid claim to was already inhabited by others.

These tensions over land have been inextricably linked to increasing environmental degradation and market forces - leading to new claims from both pastoral and settled groups.

## **POST-CONFLICT ERA**

Nimpala is going through a period of massive reconstruction and reconciliation. The civil war had disastrous impacts on the country’s economy. Throughout the war, vital infrastructure was deliberately attacked. Additionally, general deterioration has set back the development of rural water systems and contributed to the loss of key natural resources like trees, crops and pastures. Indirect impacts of the war have left 12% of the population displaced. IDP camps have led to an assortment of complex environmental consequences, such as deforestation around the camps and unsustainable groundwater extraction. The conflict also disrupted infrastructure development and funding from international sources, limiting management of natural resources and setting it as a lower priority. President Ndgogo has successfully lobbied Western governments to forgive Nimpala's debt so that he moved forward with economic reforms. The United Nations Development Programme is sending a multi-agency country team to conduct a post-conflict assessment that will help prioritize where aid and relief operations are most needed.

During the civil war, hundreds of thousands of members of the Akola tribe fled south into Country D. Now they are trying to return home but have found that their land has been taken over by squatters, rich landlords and

pastoralists that have migrated west. Further, refugee camps caused by the ongoing war in Country B are putting a strain on land, water, and forests. Northern regions of the country are experiencing large numbers of returnees to regions already constrained by limited resources. Early indications show significant deforestation around major IDP camps due to slash-and-burn agriculture and charcoal production.

During the civil war, the Akola set up their camps in the far Western bush. They funded their campaign through the illegal export of teak and mahogany timber. Their primary export partner was Country D. The UN Security Council enacted a trade embargo against timber from Nimpala and Country D in an effort to stop the rebel's financing.

The international embargo on timber exports remains in place despite efforts from the current Nimpalan Government to lift the sanctions. The Nimpala Government has poured resources into the creation of the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture. The newly appointed minister ordered a review and evaluation of all commercial logging activities. The review found that most of the logging contracts issued were done so illegally and resulted in poor logging practices. The minister is considering implementing a ban on all logging until the government can re-issue legitimate licenses and scale up its monitoring efforts. Despite increased resources, the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture remains weak and non-operational in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country, lacking qualified forest managers, expertise, and enforcement capability.

Main public infrastructure was destroyed or deteriorated during the civil war, leaving many areas without adequate basic services. As a result, Nimpala has one of the world's lowest rates of sanitation coverage. International organizations, currently the primary provider of humanitarian assistance, estimate that only 48% of Eastern Nimpala has access to improved water sources. Sanitation coverage is estimated to be much lower: only 30% of the population has access to improved sanitation services. Recent studies have indicated extremely poor hygiene, finding 44.3% of children under five to have high prevalence of diarrhea and 60% of the world's remaining reported guinea worm cases.

There are a variety of NGOs and UN agencies working on the ground, focusing on humanitarian relief, but at a very limited scale. The ability to reach most regions has only opened in the past few months. There are critical outstanding needs for immediate interventions.

Finally, President Ndgogo is evaluating the best way to deal with increasing clashes between pastoral groups in the East, particularly between the Maqqara and Ragat. In the past five years precipitation levels have dropped 30%, while population has dramatically increased. This trend has greatly altered land use patterns in the East.

## **ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES**

- The prolonged drought has been drying up water sources for animals and reducing agricultural productivity.
- Population growth has been straining all resources and increasing the number of pastoralists wishing to settle.
- An increase in animal stocks has led to overgrazing and further desertification.
- Conflict and climate-induced migration have stressed the customary land tenure agreements between pastoralists and farmers and led to the blocking of animal migration routes.
- Increased commercial farming has spilled over onto pastures needed by pastoralists.
- Increased market-oriented livestock breeding (i.e. the shift from cattle to sheep) has altered migratory routes, encouraged nomads to settle, and led to competition with farmers who have also taken up the sheep business.
- Nimpala's civil war and conflicts in the region have led to a proliferation of small arms that are making

- clashes between the Maqarra and Ragat increasingly deadly.
- Sufficient and continued foreign aid is not guaranteed.