



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/REBECCA BLACKWELL

The Two Sudans

A Tour of the Neighborhood

Omer Ismail and Annette LaRocco January 2012



enough

The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity

The Two Sudans

A Tour of the Neighborhood

Omer Ismail and Annette LaRocco January 2012

Introduction

Prior to South Sudan's independence in July 2011, Sudan was the largest country in Africa. At over one million square miles, Sudan stretched from the Sahara to Central Africa. As a unified country it bordered on nine other states. Today, after separation, the two Sudans share a diverse and critical geopolitical sub-region that links the Sahara, the Sahel, the Horn, and the Great Lakes.

While negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan are critical,¹ the broader regional context is important as well. The two Sudans do not exist in a vacuum; rather, their post-separation negotiations and bilateral relations will be situated within a regional context. Regional neighbors will impact the ways in which the countries relate to each other as well as the larger complex of geopolitical neighbors. That said, international actors, too, top among them, the United States, the European Union, and China, play a critical role in shaping the political and economic dynamics of the region. These influential international actors must continue to support, both politically and economically, initiatives of regional actors focused on maintaining peace and security between the two Sudans, and beyond, and promoting the development of the region as a whole. In many ways, the two countries are an important fulcrum around which regional political dynamics revolve. The Enough Project examines some of the two countries' most important neighbors and regional relationships.

The North and its Neighbors: Egypt, Libya, Chad, and Eritrea

Sudan's relations with its neighbors other than South Sudan are, in general, at a historically positive level, enabling the regime in Khartoum to focus its attention on the South without worrying about hostility on its northern, western, and eastern borders.

¹ For a comprehensive analysis of the North-South negotiations process see Enough's December 2011 policy paper, "[Negotiations Between the Two Sudans: Where They Have Been, Where They Are Going](#)"

Egypt and Libya are Sudan's two most important neighbors to the north. The ousting of Qaddafi and Mubarak as a result of the Arab Spring uprising will have effects on the Khartoum regime and the region.

In Egypt under Mubarak, Khartoum and Cairo had far-reaching ties based on the shared water from the Nile River as well as extensive trade relationships. These connections were vital to the security of both the Mubarak and Bashir regimes. Certainly, with continued unrest in Cairo and other urban areas and widespread dissatisfaction with the current interim military government, the Egyptian revolution is far from resolved.¹ As a result, since Mubarak's ouster it is unclear what direction Egypt will take in its relationship to Sudan. However, it is clear that through several rounds of voting the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood will be very influential in post-Arab Spring Egypt.² Although the first round of parliamentary elections took place in late November, the presidential elections will not be held until July. While it is not yet apparent what Mubarak's ouster will portend for Sudan-Egypt bilateral relations, an Islamist-leaning government, which appears likely, could be inclined to continue to support the Khartoum regime. However, it remains to be seen how post-Mubarak Egypt will conduct its foreign policy with Sudan.³

Unlike Egypt, the status of post-Arab Spring Libya vis-à-vis its neighbor Sudan is much clearer. The bilateral relations between the new Libyan government and the Khartoum regime have changed significantly since the rebels' victory against Qaddafi. Khartoum's decision to support the Libyan rebels appears to have reaped dividends. Perennially isolated Sudan, quite shrewdly, cultivated an ally on the international stage, and perhaps more importantly, within the Arab League. This could be useful, in particular because Libya is enjoying substantial post-Qaddafi good will around the globe.⁴

The revolution in Libya will have repercussions for internal Sudanese politics, especially in the Darfur region. In the years leading up to the revolution, the Qaddafi regime provided Darfuri rebels with safe haven. Following the fall of Tripoli, most rebels, including the influential leader of the Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM, Khalil Ibrahim, returned to the Darfur region of western Sudan after exile in Libya.⁵ His return to Darfur likely led to his death during an attack allegedly perpetrated by the Sudanese Armed Forces, or SAF, in late December 2011.⁶ Darfuri rebels are now without a powerful military leader and lack a safe haven in Libya, in addition to being deprived of access to a steady supply of armaments once provided by Qaddafi.

Sudan and Chad have a history of fraught relations, with each country accusing the other of harboring and assisting rebels bent on regime change in their respective countries. In particular, Chad has played an important role in the conflict in Darfur. As Sudan's western neighbor, Chad is home to over 300,000 Darfuri refugees⁷ who are often viewed as the "rear base" for the Darfur rebellion. In early February 2010, Sudan and Chad resolved to end hostilities and "put an end to all the problems."⁸ The Chadian-Sudanese rapprochement has lasted longer than many observers expected, and both countries are facing

internal challenges and would like to avoid renewed tension. Though there is still a level of distrust between the two regimes the situation is stable for now.

Eritrea typically has a volatile relationship with Sudan. It is a small country sandwiched in between two large states –Ethiopia and Sudan—and it cannot antagonize both at the same time. Therefore, when relations with Ethiopia deteriorate (which occurs relatively often), Eritrea’s relationship vis-à-vis Sudan improves. The Eritrean-Sudanese bilateral relationship is often defined by a third party, whether it be Ethiopia, Somalia’s Al Shabab Islamists, or the wealthy Gulf state, Qatar.

Currently, Eritrea’s support of Somalia’s Al Shabab Islamist group has caused Ethiopian-Eritrean relations to rapidly deteriorate, prompting an Eritrean rapprochement with Sudan.⁹ In addition to Eritrea’s need to avoid two hostile fronts, the Islamist government in Khartoum is happy to see Eritrea acting as Al Shabab’s patron. This has resulted in the thawing of a formerly frosty relationship between the neighbors.

On a similar note, the Government of Sudan is reluctant to irritate Eritrea too severely because of that country’s critical position on Sudan’s eastern flank. The East of Sudan is a restive region and is home to a marginalized and disgruntled population with a history of armed rebellion.¹⁰ Sudanese rebels from the Beja ethnic group, who reside in the East, are based on the Eritrean side of the border. As a member of parliament from the eastern city of Kassala notes, “[I]f relations between Sudan and Eritrea remain good, the border will stay safe and it will be very difficult for Beja fighters led by Cheikh Mohamed Taher to cross it.”¹¹ At the moment, due to aligned interests concerning Al Shabab and a Sudanese imperative to retain a closed eastern border, Sudanese-Eritrean bilateral relations are amicable for the time being.¹² However, the perennial caveat regarding geopolitics on the Horn remains: should Eritrea feel the need to triangulate its position vis-à-vis its archenemy, Ethiopia, policymakers and analysts should expect a sudden shift.

The South and its Neighbors: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Uganda, and Kenya

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (which in general is overwhelmingly concerned with its internal crisis), the Central African Republic, and South Sudan are plagued by the menace of the Lord’s Resistance Army, or LRA. In the lawless and volatile border region approximately the size of the state of California, the LRA continues to terrorize civilians with impunity.¹³

The rebel group once received military support and safe haven from the government in Khartoum, which viewed the LRA as a useful proxy in destabilizing Sudan’s rebellious southern states during the Second Civil War. Perhaps most troubling is the persistent speculation that Khartoum is once again supporting the LRA, which has been active in

South Sudan's Western Bahr el Ghazal state, relatively close to the border with Sudan. Should this indeed be true, Sudan would be implicated in destabilizing not just their southern neighbor but also impoverished Central African Republic and already war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo.¹⁴ On October 14, 2011, President Obama announced the deployment of U.S. military advisors to assist the armies of Uganda, South Sudan, Congo, and the Central African Republic to end the scourge of the LRA and increase regional stability. The following month, the A.U. authorized a new initiative to address the LRA crisis, which includes an A.U. special envoy on the LRA and a proposed Regional Intervention Force.

During the lengthy North-South civil war, Uganda served as a vital rear base for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army. Uganda's history of cooperation and alliance with the South can be attributed to various reasons, including the existence of ethnic groups that straddle the border as well as a long, positive relationship between the late Dr. John Garang and President Yoweri Museveni. This relationship and cooperation has extended to President Salva Kiir after Garang's death. This is compounded by an antagonism between Museveni and Bashir.

During the Second Civil War, President Museveni consistently aligned Ugandan policy with the South and viewed Khartoum's vision of an Islamic state as anathema to the demographic realities of the country. Now, after the South's independence, Uganda has continued this policy.¹⁵ The Ugandan government's deep-seated distrust of Khartoum is further evidenced in Uganda's role in denying Sudan membership in the East African Community. Uganda's minister for East African Affairs, Eriya Kategaya, explicitly cited "democracy, the way they treat women, and their religious politics" as grounds for rejection.¹⁶ Moreover, the independence of South Sudan has given Uganda a depth of influence inside the "old Sudan" from which to destabilize the North, and Uganda has been a base of operations for Darfuri rebel groups as well as the new alliance of rebel and opposition groups, the Sudan Revolutionary Front.¹⁷

Several European oil companies are considering a proposal to build an oil pipeline through Uganda to ship South Sudanese petroleum in a southeasterly direction towards the Kenyan coast, rather than through the North to Port Sudan, effectively cutting Sudan out of the region's vital oil industry.¹⁸ However, even if the project is undertaken, it will take years to be completed. It further signals the South's preference to align itself with the Great Lakes region to the south.²

Kenya, like Uganda, has had positive bilateral relations with South Sudan, also due in part to ethnic groups existing on both sides of the border. However, Kenya has a long history of diplomatic relationships with both the North and the South, especially since

² In a similar move to orient South Sudan to the East African Community rather than the North, the Government of South Sudan has chosen English, as opposed to Arabic, as the official language and language of instruction in schools.

the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was negotiated in the town of Naivasha, northwest of Nairobi. Despite its working relationship with Khartoum, Kenya served as a rear base for the SPLA during the Second Civil War. Now with South Sudan's independence, trade ties with their new neighbor are increasingly important. South Sudan is landlocked and relies on the Kenyan port of Mombasa and commercial hub in Nairobi, as well as Uganda, for international trade.

Unlike the more confrontational policies of Museveni in Uganda, Kenya attempts to avoid directly antagonizing the Khartoum regime. In fact, when the Kenyan High Court issued an arrest warrant for President Bashir, there was pushback from within the Kenyan government to avoid deterioration of Kenyan-Sudanese bilateral cooperation.¹⁹ The ruling precipitated a diplomatic spat in which Sudan threatened to expel Kenya's ambassador in Khartoum.²⁰ However, a Kenyan court has since upheld the decision despite the government's appeal. The ruling requiring Bashir's arrest should he set foot in Kenya still stands, altering Bashir's travel plans and furthering ostracizing him in the region.²¹

The North, the South, and their Shared Neighbors: Ethiopia and the Central African Republic

Sudan and South Sudan only have two neighbors in common: Ethiopia and the Central African Republic, and these two countries could not be more dissimilar in terms of regional political dynamics. Ethiopia is a regional powerhouse and the seat of the African Union. Central African Republic is woefully impoverished and much less significant geopolitically.³ Therefore, for many reasons, Ethiopia has taken up the role of regional mediator.

Ethiopia is intimately involved in North-South interactions. It has peacekeepers on the ground in the disputed Abyei Area, where Ethiopian troops and commanders make up the bulk of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, or UNISFA.²² Head of Mission and Force Commander, Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede Tesfay, leads a contingent of nearly 3,000 uniformed personnel deployed to this crucial flashpoint.²³

Moreover, Ethiopia is home to tens of thousands of Sudanese refugees fleeing aerial bombardment of civilian targets in Sudan's Blue Nile state. This significant influx of desperate civilians places a burden on Ethiopian resources and can exacerbate tension in areas hosting refugees.²⁴

Ethiopia, possibly more than other neighbors, suffers from the results of the conflicts between and within the two Sudans in the form of large refugee populations, the

³ See earlier section concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo for analysis of the impact of the Lord's Resistance Army on the Central African Republic.

deployment of troops, and effects of regional instability. However, due to its heavy reliance on Sudanese oil, Addis must work to promote North-South dialogue and negotiations in an impartial manner. In many ways, these divergent political necessities – both being dependent on Sudan’s petroleum industry and bearing the brunt of some of Sudan’s bad behavior – makes Ethiopia a crucial interlocutor in the negotiations process. It has played a critical role in post-CPA negotiations, not only with Addis Ababa functioning as the host city to some of the negotiation rounds²⁵ but also through President Meles Zenawi’s strong engagement with both sides. Ethiopia has a strong interest in a stable relationship between the two Sudans.

Policy Recommendations

The relationship between North and South is crucial to the stability of both states and the broader region. Two viable Sudans capable of normal bilateral relations would be a stabilizing force in a region that stretches from the Sahara to the Rift Valley. Conversely, two Sudans that continue to struggle with one another undermine the development of peace and prosperity along a large swath of sub-Saharan Africa.

As important as bilateral relations between the two Sudans are to creating and maintaining two viable states, regional considerations are also essential. North-South negotiations do not take place in a vacuum and the political calculi of both sides are moderated by regional considerations. Therefore, an accurate view of regional geopolitical imperatives is indispensable for understanding the broader dynamics and implications surrounding unresolved issues between North and South.

- To bolster the AUHIP’s role in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, regional neighbors should provide robust support, engagement, and intervention in the process to help ensure its success. While certain neighbors, in particular, Ethiopia, have been active in the negotiation process thus far, these efforts must be strengthened by the collective engagement of all of the two Sudans’ neighbors. Collective engagement may come through an existing entity, for instance, the Sudan Consultative Forum, or a newly created regional body specifically mandated to assist the AUHIP’s facilitation, similar to the “Friends of IGAD” model followed during the negotiation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
- Ethiopia, Kenya, and Egypt, being the neighbors with the most interest and capability to influence the outcome of future bilateral relations between the two Sudans, stand to play a unique role in organizing regional actors in a concerted effort to bolster existing efforts, both regional and international, concerning Sudan and South Sudan. These countries must continue to drive efforts forward within relevant regional bodies, including the AU and the Nile Basin Initiative, concerning issues of regional importance, in particular, border security and management and the Nile River. As

well, influential regional actors must push for a reduction of violence in and permanent solutions to the conflicts in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. Owing to the movement of Sudanese refugees into Chad, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, these conflicts have assumed a regional character and demand a regional response.

- Regional borders must be strengthened, particularly securing the borders of Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, and Uganda to stop arms infiltration and reduce incursions by the LRA.

Endnotes

- 1 "Egypt activists call mass rally against army rule" 22 December 2011 <http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFL6E7NM2WC20111222?sp=true>
- 2 "Egypt's Vote Puts Emphasis on Split Over Religious Rule" 3 December 2011 http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/04/world/middleeast/egypts-vote-propels-islamic-law-into-spotlight.html?_r=1&ref=middleeast, "Islamists seek to extend gains in Egypt run-off vote" 5 December 2011 <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOF7B400420111205?sp=true>
- 3 "Egyptian Vote in Final Round of Parliamentary Elections" 4 January 2012 <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Egyptians-Vote-in-Final-Round-of-Parliamentary-Elections-136648613.html>
- 4 "Libya vows to boost bilateral ties with Sudan" 27 November 2011 <http://www.sudantribune.com/Libya-vows-to-boost-bilateral-ties.40832>
- 5 "Libya leader, in Khartoum, thanks Sudan for weapons" 25 November 2011 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/25/us-sudan-libya-weapons-idUSTRE7AO1RO20111125>
- 6 "Khalil Ibrahim, powerful Darfur rebel leader, reported killed in Sudan" 25 December 2011 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/khalil-ibrahim-powerful-darfur-rebel-leader-reported-killed-in-sudan/2011/12/25/gIQAz3cCHP_story.html
- 7 "Refugees in Chad Won't Return" 27 November 2011 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201111281616.html>, "Why I Traveled to Darfuri Refugee Camps" 3 January 2012 <http://www.enoughproject.org/blogs/why-i-traveled-darfuri-refugee-camps>
- 8 "Sudan and Chad to end hostilities" 10 February 2010 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8507363.stm>
- 9 "UN Security Council Approves New Eritrea Sanctions" 5 December 2011 <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/East-Africa-Leaders-Appeal-for-New-Eritrea-Sanctions-135050723.html>
- 10 "In Sudan's Forgotten East, Conflict is Likely to Erupt" 14 December 2011 <http://www.enoughproject.org/blogs/sudan%E2%80%99s-forgotten-east-conflict-likely-erupt>
- 11 "Sudan: Security 'volcano' ready to blow in the east" 8 December 2011 <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=94421>
- 12 "Sudanese, Eritrean leaders review bilateral relations" 22 October 2011 <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-Eritrean-leaders-review.40495>
- 13 "After the advisers: What comes next?" 22 November 2011 <http://www.theresolve.org/blog/archives/3071031170>
- 14 "Over 40 Killed in Raga County" 2 January 2012 <http://www.oyetimes.com/news/105-africa/16725-over-40-killed-in-raga-county>
- 15 "Museveni Asks Bashir to Stop Aggression on South Sudan" 19 November 2011 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201111200036.html>
- 16 "Sudan's bid to join EAC quashed by Uganda and Tanzania" 28 November 2011 <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-s-bid-to-join-EAC-quashed-by.40840>
- 17 "Sudan Opposition Rallying Around Sudan Revolutionary Front?" 2 December 2011 <http://www.enoughproject.org/blogs/sudan-opposition-rallying-around-sudan-revolutionary-front>
- 18 "Total eyeing South Sudan-Uganda oil pipeline" 7 December 2011 <http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJOF7B607420111207?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0&sp=true>
- 19 "In Kenya, Divided Opinions on Arrest Warrant for Sudan's Bashir" 30 November 2011 <http://enoughproject.org/blogs/kenya-divided-opinions-arrest-warrant-sudan-bashir>
- 20 "Sudan delays expulsion of Kenyan envoy" 4 December 2011 <http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2011/12/sudan-delays-expulsion-of-kenyan-envoy/>
- 21 "Kenya court refuses to shelve ruling on Sudan's Bashir" 20 December 2011 <http://af.reuters.com/article/kenyaNews/idAFL6E7NK2DF20111220?sp=true>
- 22 "United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei" <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unisfa/>
- 23 "UNISFA Facts and Figures" <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unisfa/facts.shtml>
- 24 "UNISFA Leadership" <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unisfa/leadership.shtml> "UN: Sudanese fleeing conflict to Ethiopia, South Sudan to hit 100,000" 27 November 2011 <http://www.sudantribune.com/UN-Sudanese-fleeing-conflict-to.40829>, "Field Dispatch: Refugees from Blue Nile Recount Atrocities, Government's Targeting of Civilians" 1 November 2011 http://enoughproject.org/files/Overview%20Sherkole_0.pdf
- 25 "Sudan, South Sudan fail to reach oil revenue agreement" 2 December 2011 <http://www.theafricareport.com/index.php/2011120250176704/east-horn-africa/sudan-south-sudan-fail-to-reach-oil-revenue-agreement-50176704.html>

Enough is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on the crises in Sudan, South Sudan, eastern Congo, and areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army. Enough conducts intensive field research, develops practical policies to address these crises, and shares sensible tools to empower citizens and groups working for change. To learn more about Enough and what you can do to help, go to www.enoughproject.org.

