



Center for Strategic & International Studies
Washington, DC

America's Sudan Policy: A New Direction?

Testimony of Dr. J. Stephen Morrison

Director, Africa Program
Center for Strategic & International Studies

Before the House Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on Africa &
Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights

28 March 2001

Introduction: The CSIS Task Force on U.S.-Sudan Policy

From July 2000 until February 2001, the Africa Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies sponsored a Task Force on U.S.-Sudan policy, funded by the U.S. Institute of Peace. The purpose was to revitalize debate on Sudan and generate pragmatic recommendations for the new administration. I co-chaired that effort with Francis M. Deng, distinguished professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center. Regrettably, Francis is out of the country and hence unavailable to join us here today.

The Task Force operated on an inclusionary and bipartisan basis, and relied on the active participation of more than 50 distinguished individuals of highly diverse backgrounds and perspectives on the Sudan: congressional staff, human rights advocates, experts on religious rights, academic authorities on Sudan, former senior policymakers, refugee advocates, representatives of relief and development groups, and officials of the Clinton administration and United Nations, among others. Task Force members are listed in the report, and include individuals now serving in senior positions in the Bush administration. The Task Force final report was released on February 26 at an event at the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. The report is easily accessed on the CSIS web site: www.csis.org.

Despite differences of opinion among its members, the Task Force ultimately reached a strong, sharply cast consensus, in its findings and policy recommendations. One predominant factor accounts for this remarkable outcome. Task Force members shared both a deep frustration that U.S. policy has failed to generate any meaningful results and a conviction that a new approach is urgently needed that reaches beyond unilateral efforts to contain and isolate Sudan. Hence they were motivated to seriously re-think positions and seek a new consensus on a realistic, pragmatic way forward.

Key Findings

1) In Sudan, the central problem on which virtually everything else hinges is the devastating internal war that has raged since 1983.

Until the war is ended in a durable and just manner, we will not see genuine progress with respect to terrorism, gross human rights abuses, humanitarian crises, and regional instability.

2) Sudan matters to U.S. interests - on human rights, humanitarian, and security grounds - and has attracted a substantial constituency in the United States.

Sudan's war has left over 2 million dead, displaced within its borders 4.4 million persons and destroyed the physical and moral fabric of southern Sudanese society. The war features the government's aerial bombardment of humanitarian relief sites; the systematic denial and manipulation by Khartoum and opposition forces of relief to imperiled civilian populations; religious persecution; failure by the government to combat slavery and abductions of children and women into servitude by Arab tribal militias; and mounting allegations that the aggregate consequence of this pattern of violence is genocidal.

Since 1989, the U.S. has expended over \$1.2 billion on humanitarian relief to Sudan. In this period, U.S. media attention has risen, and important members of Congress, faith-based institutions, and advocacy groups have substantially raised the profile of Sudan in the United States.

3) Oil is fundamentally and quickly changing the nature of Sudan's internal war in favor of the north. An outstanding policy issue is how, or whether it is possible, to apply meaningful pressures now and in the future on international energy firms operating in Sudan.

Oil is shifting the balance of military power in favor of Khartoum, and has prompted Khartoum to focus its military efforts, including mass displacements of civilians, on oil fields and the pipeline. Oil now earns Khartoum \$500 million per year, and will double in the next two years as new fields become operational. This is widening the strategic imbalance between the government and the opposition; over time, the south's threat to the government's core interests will steadily weaken. At the same time, Khartoum will not be able to win definitively on the battlefield as it will continue to confront a guerilla insurgency in the south. Khartoum also continues to grapple with its own internal rifts; as a result, its coherence and internal strength remain uncertain.

If war persists, future exploitation of other promising energy fields in populated areas in the south will predictably involve more forced displacement and increased intervention by advocacy groups to disrupt access by Sudan's corporate partners to U.S. capital markets.

More analytical work is needed on capital market sanctions to examine their technical feasibility, likely impact upon Khartoum, and implications for global financial markets, U.S. energy policy, and other critical foreign policy areas where their impact will likely be felt. The jury is still out on whether these sanctions are a technically and politically viable instrument.

4) The U.S. policy of unilateral isolation and containment of Sudan has largely failed to achieve results.

The Clinton administration's policy of isolation and containment was a response to threats to U.S. national interests from Khartoum's export of international terrorism in the early and mid-1990s. It was also grounded in moral outrage over the conduct of the war. U.S. policy did generate some leverage over Khartoum: a web of sanctions has contributed to its isolation. However, the U.S. has made little headway in ending Sudan's war, reforming Khartoum, or ameliorating Sudan's humanitarian crisis.

Throughout the Clinton era, U.S. policy did not match means to ends. Ambiguities persisted over true U.S. intentions: whether the preeminent U.S. aim was to force a regime change, to press for reform of Khartoum, or to achieve a sustainable end to Sudan's war. The United States pursued these multiple ambitions simultaneously, with little attention paid to whether regime change was achievable or how these diverse and seemingly contradictory policies would be reconciled. These ambiguities encouraged the mistaken belief in Khartoum that the United States was engaged in a covert war to overthrow the Sudanese government. For every heavily advertised dollar of non-lethal assistance the United States provided Sudanese in rebel-controlled territory, Khartoum was reportedly able to leverage several dollars for its lethal campaigns against those imperiled civilians.

The withdrawal of a full-time diplomatic presence at the U.S. embassy in early 1996 left Washington with weak information flows and no voice or platform to exert its influence. The U.S. cannot effectively advance U.S. interests in Sudan under this handicap.

Ultimately, U.S. policy did not significantly weaken Khartoum, strengthen southern and northern opposition, moderate the conduct of Sudan's war, enhance humanitarian access and deliveries, or promote a process of genuine peace negotiations. Instead, in the late 1990s, as neighboring states and European Union member states steadily normalized relations with Khartoum, the United States found itself in conspicuous self-isolation with effectively no partners.

5) The United States today possesses significant leverage in regard to the Sudan crisis. The question is whether it uses that leverage effectively to achieve concrete results.

Altering the balance of power to effect either a regime change or a substantial strengthening of the south's military hand would require the United States to make a massive military and material investment. That option is neither advisable nor politically feasible. Realistically, only one viable course of action remains: pursue a hard-nosed strategy based on diplomacy, a mix of inducements and punitive measures, and multilateral initiatives.

Among major powers, the United States is the lone holdout in renewing a dialogue with Khartoum. It is also the principal external backer, in humanitarian and diplomatic terms, of the southern Sudanese opposition. In combination, these create considerable inherent leverage. Khartoum cannot reacquire full legitimate standing in the international community until its has persuaded the United States to lift its bilateral sanctions, acquiesce to the lifting of UN Security Council sanctions, and support the full renewed involvement of the World Bank, IMF and Paris Club.

6) Regional peace initiatives hold little promise for ending Sudan's war. A new extra-regional peace initiative is essential to end Sudan's war.

Although the InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace initiative has had certain achievements upon which any future initiatives should build, IGAD cannot be relied upon to persuade Sudan's warring principals to enter into serious negotiations. The Egypt/Libya initiative is essentially intended to checkmate IGAD, specifically on the issue of self-determination of the south. A new, robust extra-regional mediation agency is required if a credible peace process is to begin in Sudan.

Recommendations

The Task Force recommends that the Bush administration exercise leadership on Sudan in the following areas:

1) **Establish a goal of ending Sudan's war.** The United States should concentrate on this single overriding objective.

2) **Create an international nucleus.** The United States should actively join with the UK, Norway, and Sudan's neighboring states in establishing an international nucleus to press for serious and sustained talks between Khartoum and the southern opposition. Its aim should be to end the war as the central means to restoring fundamental human rights, stability and improved democratic governance, and regional security.

3) **Use the Declaration of Principles.** The new extra-regional initiative should build upon prior agreement by the Sudanese government and the opposition on the Declaration of Principles as the basis of negotiations.

4) **Implement "One Sudan, Two Systems."** The United States should seek first to reach agreement on the creation of an interim arrangement - a "One Sudan, Two Systems" formula -

that preserves a single Sudan with two viable, self-governing democratic regions, north and south.

5) **Strengthen carrots and sticks.** The United States should devise enhanced multilateral inducements and pressures that move both sides to participate in peace negotiations in good faith.

6) **Lay international groundwork for a self-governing south.** The United States should catalyze the launch of a high-level international plan for a viable self-governing south, including commitments of substantial bilateral and multilateral resources towards its eventual realization. This should involve Sudanese experts, the World Bank, United National Development Program (UNDP), the EU, USAID, and other bilateral donors.

7) **Pursue confidence-building measures.** The United States should assign top priority in negotiations to early, confidence-building measures: improvements in human rights and humanitarian access; revenue-sharing mechanisms; clarification of the north-south border; definition of regional and central powers; and international guarantees.

8) **Strengthen diplomatic capacities.** The United States should resume full operations of the U.S. embassy in Khartoum, expedite the appointment of an ambassador, and appoint a high-level fully empowered special envoy with a robust mandate to expedite a just end to Sudan's war. The envoy should be charged with conducting roving consultations in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, and sustain consultations with Capitol Hill and interest groups in Washington.

9) **Reach consensus on terrorism.** The United States should aggressively seek the successful conclusion of ongoing U.S.-Sudan negotiations on terrorism.

Closing comments

We've learned several tough lessons in recent years that should be fully weighed in the current review of U.S. policy towards Sudan.

Hubris, posturing and rhetorical excess, unbacked by sufficient political will and material resources to meaningfully strengthen the south's hand in its war against the north, play straight to Khartoum's advantage, feed false hopes in the south, and undermine U.S. policy interests. To avoid repeating the mistakes of the Clinton administration, the Bush administration will need to be disciplined, realistic, and honest with itself about what its real options are.

The United States is not going to assume responsibility for changing the overall military and security situation of the south. To pretend otherwise is to be irresponsible and unrealistic.

Expanded humanitarian aid, along with expanded non-lethal assistance such as trucks, radios, and boots, may help the south survive for the moment but will not offset the north's ever-larger security advantages, fed by its expansive energy sector. Larger questions loom in the south: what is its future, what is its vision, and how is it to overcome internal ethnic fragmentation and avoid marginality? It is fantasy to believe that humanitarian and other non-lethal assistance will effect a regime change in Khartoum and reverse the south's declining fortunes. Further, unilateral action by the United States, and particularly unilateral sanctions, have little hope of achieving these results.

There are significant doubts that capital market sanctions are politically or technically feasible. If so, we should not pretend the case is otherwise, but begin developing alternative, realistic options to bring greater pressure to bear upon Khartoum's corporate partners.

In closing, the time has come for the United States, in league with others, to make a strong push to end Sudan's war. Officials in Oslo, London, Addis Ababa, and the UN Secretariat in New York have signaled loudly their interest in joining with the new administration in Washington to advance

a new extra-regional peace initiative. The next ninety days will be critical in defining the course for U.S. policy.

It will be difficult to achieve results.

It is uncertain whether the Bush administration has a sustained commitment to end Sudan's war.

It is uncertain what leverage the United States actually has over Khartoum, whether the United States will be at all effective in getting results, and whether Khartoum has sufficient coherence and stability to be able to act upon U.S. overtures, if it in fact is inclined in that direction.

It is uncertain what leverage the United States actually has over the southern opposition, and whether Washington would be inclined to use it.

And, it is uncertain whether key European partners can be persuaded to move towards the American perspective on Sudan and apply greater pressure upon Khartoum and its corporate partners.

All of these uncertainties are critical, and all of them can and should be addressed systematically in the coming months. But none is so large as to undermine the case for a concerted effort to end Sudan's war.

What is certain is that there really is no credible, feasible alternative to a concerted multilateral diplomatic effort to end Sudan's war. At the end of the day, what we have in our tool kit to stabilize Sudan is diplomacy and U.S. sway in the world.