

United States Institute of Peace  
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Sudan Experience Project

**Interview # 36 – Executive Summary**

*Interviewed by: W. Haven North*  
*Initial interview date: October 23, 2006*  
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The interviewee is not very optimistic about meaningful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) until and unless the Darfur situation is resolved.

The South in terms of the protocols got a reasonably good deal, on the condition that the protocols actually be implemented. Implementation is, however, very lacking -- largely the responsibility of the North. The South has tremendous needs in building up its administrative capacities. Moreover, there is a perception that the South is just biding its time until the referendum. For the South, staying in Sudan could be made more attractive, which was supposedly one of the premises of the CPA.

The fundamental weakness of the CPA was that, in spite of the “C” meaning “comprehensive,” it was not really comprehensive. It provided a framework, but did not draw in an adequate diversity of key players in the society. Darfur has to be fixed first as a predicate to making the CPA viable, and building a bridge from two narrowly base parties to the larger society.

The interviewee points out that in the North, it is an elite at the center that controls most of the national wealth, resources and power. The real issue is having the elite center — and only a small section of the elite—negotiating with one slice of the periphery. Questions remain as to whether those who have the power in the center now can ultimately be the best interlocutors or not.

One of the strengths of the CPA was that it was a tightly controlled process with two parties at the table. The problem was that the Northern government and the SPLA/M were narrow dictatorships without a clear way to a more open and democratic society— that is where they are hindered at this time.

The essence of the dispute is about power, wealth and security. The weakness of the CPA process was that it only resolved those particular issues at best, and it was not applied evenly and more broadly to other parts of the country.

On lessons learned, the interviewee pointed out that, in a case where many thought the situation was not ripe for settlement, international action managed to reverse this sentiment and convince the parties that it was ripe. The negative side is the difficulty

dealing with a large complex society's problems comprehensively through very narrowly based negotiations, with the view of transforming society comprehensively.

Another lesson: the CPA process came about because of pressure on the Bush administration primarily from conservative Christians. This got the U.S. President personally interested and drove a focus that might otherwise not have occurred. Ironically, U.S. domestic constituencies' preference emerged for confrontation and isolation of the Northern regime instead of negotiation. On the one hand, the level of engagement by the U.S. under the Bush administration was higher than during the Clinton administration. Second, it was different in nature pushing for meaningful negotiations.

Addressing the question of additional steps for U.S., the interviewee stated that the goal should be to generate a high level of public interest and engagement in events on the ground. But apparent progress in public engagement can lead to policies that are not realistic and which lead to unproductive confrontation; understanding the link between public pressure and actual policy is important.

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*Q: Let's start off with an introduction about your association with Sudan and the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) so we have a context for the interview.*

[A: My position is staff director on the Committee on Conscience at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. The mission of my program is to alert the national conscience about genocide or threats of genocide, potential genocide. I started there in 1999 at the museum. I created this program, as it didn't really exist before. One of the first issues we started dealing with was the situation in Sudan, which we felt presented a threat of genocide because of the violence against civilians. There are a variety of things we looked at, but, in particular, the government's manipulation of ethnic grievances to promote violence among ethnic groups, its bombing of civilians, the impeding, at times, of humanitarian assistance, etc., etc.

We had a program on Sudan; for example, in February of 2001, we hosted a forum on Sudan policy that Bill Frist spoke at. The Center for Strategic and International Studies presented a task force report that they had generated. The Task Force was chaired by Steve Morrison and Francis Deng. Several people respond to that report including Roger Winter and a man whose name has escaped me now who worked for the World Bank but who is from Sudan, a northern Sudanese.

Our goal is not to recommend specific policies but to generate awareness and concern and a focus on the issue. Over the course of the period from 1999 to 2002 we were periodically doing programming with regard to Sudan. In terms of the actual negotiations, we were not involved. As the effort that resulted in the CPA gained steam, we felt we really had little left to do, since ours was not the goal of necessarily making the policy, just to generate a constructive and sustained engagement that was being accomplished by virtue of the process that led to the CPA.]

*Q: What triggered the CPA? What brought it to the point where parties agreed to negotiate?*

A: My perspective would be why would the government negotiate more than the rebels. **The rebels** probably have a stake in a meaningful process to some degree but what was it that pushed the government to negotiate in **somewhat greater depth**? There had been negotiations all along; the results of those negotiations have been called **the "Literature of**

Accord,” but they were not undertaken with any seriousness, especially by the government.

What was different was the level of engagement by the United States, which was actually at a higher level than it had been during the Clinton administration. Secondly, it was of a different nature where the engagement was focused on pushing forward a meaningful process of negotiations which the Clinton administration had not done at all and, in part, because of that my perception was that the Bush administration or the U.S. government at that time was able to get itself and key European actors more closely aligned than they had been before. So that helped to bring a certain amount of pressure on the government of Sudan that they had not felt before. Then on the other side, there were some carrots that were held out to them in terms of regularizing the relationship with the United States that was something that.

*Q: You are talking about the North or the South now?*

A: The North. The government or what was then the government. Regularizing their relationship with the United States and particularly regularizing their relationship with international financial institutions, which would be made possible by having a more regular relationship with the United States. That was my perception.

*Q: The CPA process itself, how do you see that working out? What were the mechanisms that seemed to work well or not?*

A: As quite an outsider I cannot speak with any amount of authority on this, but as an outside observer who cared about what was happening one of the strengths of the CPA was that it was tightly controlled in a sense that you had two parties at the table and so in terms of getting an agreement having two parties negotiating is easier than having a bunch of parties. But then that was also a problem with the process because from my perspective both the government but also the SPLA/M (Sudanese People’s Liberation Army/Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement) were narrowly based dictatorships. To the extent that the goal was an outcome that was not just stopping fighting between those two parties but creating a broader, more open dynamic for Sudanese society, it was not clear how you could get from negotiations between two narrowly based dictatorships to a more open and democratic society; that is where they are stuck right now — a more representative society where you had greater participation by various elements of society.

Besides the idea of having a democratic process, the issue, from my perspective of Sudan was not just that it was the North against the South or Muslims versus Christians as some people refer to it, it was very much an issue of an elite at the center that was in control of most of the national wealth and resources and power.

*Q: You mean in the North?*

A: Right, the center being Khartoum, which happened to be in the North of the country. In other words, this idea that they represented the “North” never really made sense to me.

Now, in retrospect it is easy for me to say that because it is so obvious, but even then and to people who were really Sudan experts, they would have told you the same thing. To me, it seemed that the premise of the CPA negotiations was that this was a conflict between the North and the South rather than a conflict between the center and the periphery. If you thought of it as being a conflict between the center and the periphery, just having the center negotiate with one slice of the periphery could create problems. Now the people who are involved in it are very smart people; they recognize that and they had a rationale for how this process could be spun out into broader progress, but I was never that convinced and unfortunately the events in Darfur suggested that it was much more difficult **than many had supposed**.

*Q: And when you are speaking of the center you are talking really about an elite rather than the whole of the North government.*

A: Exactly, right, an elite that in the most immediate sense is actually even a small section of that elite. The people who control the Khartoum government and controlled it during the CPA negotiations did not even represent the totality of the elite that had traditionally controlled the country; but, at the same time, that is where they were coming from so, yes, it was a center based on very narrow part of the whole country.

*Q: Do you have any impression about the process during the negotiations?*

A: I was too far removed. I followed them from the outside, but I never went there, and I did not interact with that many of the different people who were involved.

*Q: Did anything stand out from what you heard about it that suggested that it was an effective process or mechanism?*

A: Given those larger flaws, which were endemic. But once you brought these particular parties together, it did seem like the contribution of the Kenyan mediator was very, very important, so that was one thing. He played a very energetic role and brought a high level of both competence and commitment and credibility to the process.

Then I also had the impression—again a lot of my interlocutors were in the U.S. government so it may be biased—that the role of the U.S. in particular was very important in both... let me step back for a second. If you had negotiations that are between Khartoum and the SPLA/M, one issue is that the historical experience is that the people at the center are very sophisticated negotiators, very capable of giving with one hand and taking with the other. That is something that would be an impediment to negotiations because a tremendous lack of confidence on the part of the Southerners. There was a fear that, one, they would not be able to hold their own in the negotiations to the extent that they thought about it that way and, second, whatever they got would not ultimately come to them. So the U.S. played a very important role in both of those ways of giving them greater negotiating capacity through workshops and through direct support and things like that. But also a certain amount of confidence that there would be some prospect that what they agreed to they would ultimately get.

*Q: There was an intermediary group, which was called the Troika,, did you get an impression of what they contributed?*

A: The key part of the Troika was the United States and its perspective. The other thing that the Troika contributed, and the other two members of the Troika obviously being European, was that they helped convey a sense of alignment between the U.S. and the Europeans. That was one of the things that motivated the government to participate.

*Q: The CPA came up with a number of protocols for security, wealth sharing, oil boundaries and so on. Have you had any observations on those?*

A: I just know what I am told which they are way behind. They were the essence obviously of the dispute. The dispute was about power, wealth and security and so that is what had to be resolved. This highlights to me one of the weaknesses of the process: to the extent that the protocols resolved those issues vis-a-vis the center and the South and not vis-à-vis other parts of the country. In terms of the actual terms of the protocols, it seemed that the Southerners got a pretty good deal, if they could be implemented, but my understanding is that the implementation has been very, very lacking.

*Q: If they were implemented, the others would do well?*

A: That was my perception.

*Q: What is your impression on how the implementation is being monitored and how the implementation is going itself?*

A: The implementation in terms of monitoring or outside influence on the implementation is complicated by the events in Darfur. So that is number one. Number two my perception is that the implementation is very much lagging. This goes back to what I was saying just a minute ago that it is one thing, especially for folks at the center who are largely responsible for the lagging of the implementation. It is one thing for them to agree to something and it is another for them to actually follow through on it. My understanding from people involved in the process from the U.S. government perspective was that they were not under any illusion **about that**. But that their ability to apply meaningful pressure to the NCP (National Congress Party), to the—I don't know what to call them, because they are only part of the government — folks at the center is, one, just attention span. The U.S. has a lot of other things to deal with plus to the extent that they are dealing with Sudan they are trying to deal with the Darfur catastrophe. That does not leave a whole lot of capacity or leverage to push on these implementation questions.

*Q: That goes back to the question of the role of the international community; what more could they do to speed up the implementation or move it along, or are they so distracted it is not possible?*

A: I have questions of whether the particular folks who have the power in the center now can ultimately be dealt with. That does not present many good options because they are there. I do not know that there is an ability to get rid of them right now but it is just hard for me to think that real progress can be made on implementation until the situation in Darfur is resolved, which is, in part, going to involve folding Darfur into the implementation of the CPA. **They made a big go of reaching a political agreement in Darfur in May** and now that has fallen apart for a number of reasons. The fault there is not entirely the fault of the NCP folks, in contrast to the SPLA, the rebel movements in Darfur are even less sophisticated politically, they are less organized, they never developed much of an agenda. The SPLM under Garang's leadership had a pretty coherent agenda that he was able to articulate with "buy-in" from the whole array of people who were involved in the movement, even though the movement, as a whole, is fairly narrowly based. And probably because it was narrowly based, it had a coherent agenda where as that does not seem to exist in Darfur. That is a long-winded way of saying: I am not very optimistic about meaningful implementation of the CPA until and unless the Darfur situation is resolved.

*Q: Is there anything more specifically that the international community should be doing?*

A: What I am saying goes back to my original observation that the fundamental weakness of the CPA is that, in spite of the C meaning comprehensive, it is not really comprehensive. Theoretically, it provided a comprehensive framework, but it was not comprehensive in involving key players in the society. There certainly could be pushing on the revenue sharing between the government and the Southern authority and the Southern government. Things like that but there has to be some more meaning given to that C and that involves Darfur, that involves the East, that involves having a more **comprehensive buy-in from the whole country**.

*Q: Does that suggest that the international community should be pushing a new comprehensive approach?*

A: I am not really qualified to talk about the modalities, but there has to be a bridge built somehow from this agreement, which is between two relatively narrow parties and the larger society. But the thing that is most in the way of building such a bridge is Darfur, the violence in Darfur and the underlying political conflict in Darfur that was the predicate of the violence. So the U.S. President or Kofi Annan or Condoleezza Rice or whomever asks my advise, as humble as it is, it is that the Darfur situation has to be fixed as a predicate to really making the CPA comprehensive and then the steps have to be taken to make the CPA comprehensive.

*Q: From your perspective are they thinking of other initiatives that you would be trying to promote or efforts made from your role?*

A: That is of such overwhelming centrality both to addressing the humanitarian cost of what is happening in Darfur but also to creating stability and peace in all of Sudan.

*Q: And what about providing assistance: development and humanitarian assistance. Is that moving along? Would that be constructive?*

A: Definitely to the South; they have tremendous challenges in terms of building the capacity even if the CPA works perfectly. Obviously, there is a tremendous need for administrative capacity in the South and the resources that they expected have not been as forth coming as they should be or as they expected they would be. Then, if the CPA does not work out presumably, one outcome could be that the South is on its own, in which case then they also need the capacity to run itself.

*Q: In terms of overall prospects, are they heading for elections and a referendum?*

A: Everything that I have heard and perceived is that, from the Southerners perspective, they are just biding their time, and they hope to have their referendum and **secede**. One of the premises of the CPA was that staying as part of a unified Sudan could be made more attractive than seceding, so the problems in implementation prevent that from happening. Whether the folks at the center will allow that to proceed or whether they will be in a position to not allow it to proceed is still difficult to say.

*Q: Looking out over the process up to this point, does anything stand out as lessons about what was done right or should have been done differently*

A: One positive lesson (which may be outweighed by the negative and I'm willing to turn back to it in a second) is that it is a case where you had a situation that many people would have said was not yet ripe for settlement where international action made the parties feel that it was ripe and it helped push the situation toward **ripeness**. So that's a good thing.

I have a very vivid memory one time of a meeting in 2001 where Jendayi Frazer, who at that time was the senior director for Africa in the National Security Council, was talking about Sudan and said "one day someone came in, whether it was the President or Condoleezza Rice whoever came in and said, "Well you know, Sudan is at the top of our agenda, we need peace in Sudan." This was in large part the President's personal interest; it was driven, in particular, by the interest of a lot of his conservative Christian base. So there was this interest from the top and she recounted her responses being, "Sudan? What are you saying? Sudan is not ripe there is nothing we can do about that." But because of the political emphasis, it was pushed towards ripeness at least vis-à-vis the two parties who ultimately were brought to the table.

*Q: But you implied that that might have been premature?*

A: No, no, no, I'm saying that is a good thing. That would be a positive lesson: the ability of outsiders with some effective and creative diplomacy to create a sense of ripeness, where it might not be evident, is good. Maybe that can be applied in other situations in looking at the ways that pressure was brought to bear, that carrots were dangled out there.



But, on the other side, the ripeness was really predicated on the idea that, if they had an agreement between the center and the Southern rebels, that that could help transform the whole society or—transform is too broad a word— but that it could be comprehensive. The lesson on the negative side, that I would suggest, is that it is difficult to deal with large complex societies problems comprehensively through very narrowly based negotiations.

*Q: Anything else that comes to mind on this?*

A: No, that's the main lesson.

*Q: Are there any aspects from your perspective that we haven't touched on that we ought to cover?*

A: One aspect, that perhaps the people who ultimately write this, is the interaction, which I touched on between domestic interest in the issue and the international diplomacy. One of the things that I thought was ironic about the CPA process is that the process came about because of domestic political pressure on the Bush administration, primarily from an important part of their base, those conservative Christians. That is what got the President personally interested in the situation and really drove a focus on it that it might not otherwise have had. But, at the same time, the policy that was pursued was not the one that most of these domestic constituencies were calling for. **Primarily, they** preferred greater confrontation with Khartoum instead of negotiation.

I find it rather ironic that there is an interesting disconnect between domestic pressure, creating a political imperative to act, but, then, the policy that is undertaken is probably less to the liking of those domestic constituencies than the ostensible policy that was being followed by the Clinton administration, which was one of confrontation and attempted isolation of Khartoum. The practical problem was that they did not succeed in isolating Khartoum.

*Q: Does the domestic group have some reason to believe that their approach would have been more effective or was that just their own delusions?*

A: It was their delusions because they thought that that was the appropriate way to deal with a regime that was guilty of large-scale crimes, international crimes against humanity against a civilian population. It is a very difficult thing; it is something that comes up in all of these. One thing that was not present in the CPA — I should have talked about this earlier — but it was not present is any sense of accountability. Of course, that was in part because again you had two narrowly based dictatorships; they were both responsible for violations of international humanitarian law, so neither one of them had any great interest in having robust accountability mechanisms. To the extent there is any reference to accountability, it was at the insistence of American diplomats.

*Q: Do you have an understanding what a more direct confrontation might mean or what it would be?*

A: What it would have been from the perspective of 2001?

*Q: Yes*

A: The most extreme part would have been regime change or some other form of coercive pressure against the center, the Khartoum regime, as opposed to an extended negotiation process.

*Q: From your perspective, and you are very interested in moving the U.S. domestic- side this agenda, are there things that you intend to do?*

A: Intend to do going forward?

*Q: Yes, in terms of keeping the pressure on, keeping the U.S. interest engaged.*

A: Our greater focus has been on Darfur now for a couple of years. Going forward our goal would be to continue to generate a high-level of public interest in what is happening; this goes to what I was saying about that period in 2001. In the absence of any apparent progress a high-level of public engagement can lead to calls for policies that are not necessarily realistic whether they would be the best policy or not. So one thing that would be interesting to see is: what the connection is between increased public pressure and actual policy that's pursued.

*Q: This interview has been very, very worthwhile.*

A: Thanks.

*Q: Thanks very much.*