CONTENTS

Alan Schwartz

Scenarios for Sudan
Avoiding Political Violence Through 2011

Summary

- Absent a change in current trends, further political violence in Sudan will be hard to avoid.
- Lack of governance capacity in the South and failure to resolve key issues between the North and South are important factors that can lead to political violence surrounding the referendum, slated for 2011, on whether the South secedes or remains part of a united Sudan.
- The parties need a shared sense of confidence about post-2011 futures.
- The North should be encouraged to cooperate in the referendum process and accept the outcome.
- The Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) should devote more energy and resources to governance and service delivery rather than building military capability.
- The international community needs an assistance strategy focused on enhancing the GOSS's capacity to deliver services through local governments.
- The United States and the international community should pressure and assist the parties to promptly pass referendum legislation and address fundamental issues (e.g., oil and boundaries) *before* the referendum.

Introduction

More than two decades of North-South civil war in Sudan ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) by Sudan's two dominant political forces: the northern-based National Congress Party (NCP) and the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). The CPA called for a six-year interim period, during which the NCP and SPLM share control of a Government of National Unity and at the end of which southerners have the right to vote on whether to remain part of a united Sudan or secede. The CPA also calls for nationwide elections during that interim period, now scheduled for April 2010, and it makes special provisions for Sudan's "three areas"—the states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and the Abyei area, which abut the border between North and South and are

especially contentious. Sudan has a heightened risk of political violence as it navigates this challenging environment through 2011.

Participants in three workshops at the U.S. Institute of Peace explored underlying forces and trends and the uncertainties related to their development and effects in order to anticipate the obstacles and opportunities for preventing political violence in Sudan through 2011. Scenario analysis, unlike most academic and intelligence analyses, focuses on uncertainties as well as facts and deals with factors or forces whose development or effects are impossible to forecast accurately. The participants in this exercise focused on plausible developments over a two and a half year period. They considered multiple potential outcomes and the developments that produce them rather than forecasting a single outcome in an obviously complex environment. The resulting scenarios represent only a slice of the wide array of potential outcomes. They are intended to describe potential storylines and not be comprehensive. One purpose of the exercise is to provoke further discussion of the key driving forces, possible scenarios, and strategies for preventing violence.

Key Assumptions and Factors

The workshop participants initially identified and tested key assumptions and evaluated the forces and factors affecting political violence in Sudan. Two important questions arose concerning the scope of the inquiry and the definition of terms. First, the participants clarified that the period of analysis extends through 2011 to encompass the anticipated elections, the planned referendum on secession, and the initial months following the referendum. Second, the participants defined violence in this context as encompassing political violence of any material scale. Political violence of interest was not limited to North-South violence but included significant violence in the North or the South associated with the elections, the referendum, governance of Sudan writ large or of the North or the South, the "three areas," and the migration or disposition of displaced persons. Organizers chose not to focus specifically on violence in Darfur. While violence in Darfur is certainly a matter of concern, the workshops considered only the impact of events and developments in Darfur on the spread of violence elsewhere in Sudan.

The participants initially identified possible key assumptions about Sudan, indicated their confidence that each assumption was valid, and evaluated the relative importance of each assumption to the issue of political violence in Sudan through 2011. Four key assumptions emerged: (1) absent a change in the status quo, most of the important substantive issues between the North and South (e.g., oil revenue sharing, security arrangements, and the demarcation of boundaries) will not be resolved before the referendum; (2) the National Congress Party (NCP) is unlikely to give up political power and focuses on tactics rather than longer term strategies; (3) Sudan's deep fissures derive in part from competition among many groups for key scarce resources (e.g., oil and water); and (4) political and economic power is concentrated in the Nile River Valley, dominated by a relatively small Arab population, to the disadvantage of the populations in the "periphery" of Sudan.

Participants then identified volatile (that is, highly uncertain) forces and factors important to the political violence dynamic, either because those forces and factors cause or exacerbate violence, or because they impede or mitigate the effects of political violence. In contrast to the key assumptions, which focused on the North, resolution of North-South issues, and the underlying characteristics of Sudan, key uncertainties identified in the workshops centered on conditions in the South, the governance capacity of the Southern leadership (and its equitable allocation of key resources), and the actions or inactions of Sudan's neighbors and the international community. Another key uncertainty was the North-South relationship, including whether the parties can develop a shared view of possible post-2011

futures and the degree of trust necessary to manage contingencies (including events in the "three areas" and Darfur) that could otherwise escalate into political violence.

In summary, the group's initial examination of the key assumptions and uncertain forces and factors focused on those drivers participants believed would have a material effect on the existence and extent of political violence in Sudan through 2011. In doing so, the participants recognized it was important to identify opportunities for the international community, including the United States, to avoid or minimize the impact of political violence.

In scenario generation, it is ideal to identify drivers that are both characterized by uncertainty and are largely independent. Four emerged as especially important, and participants went on to examine their interplay:

• the governance capacity of the South;

• the North's cooperation in the referendum process before and after the referendum (including military, political, and administrative responses to events and other parties);

• the availability and allocation of basic resources at the grass roots (a peace dividend supplemented by international aid); and

• the extent to which key issues (e.g., oil, the three areas, border demarcation) are resolved before or immediately after the referendum.

Three groups examined the interplay of two pairs of the key drivers. Each pair, when arrayed as an XY matrix, produces four quadrants, each of which is a scenario environment. Each group evaluated its eight scenario quadrants (four for each of two matrices) to identify which two quadrants presented particularly compelling or interesting environments, where the interplay of forces presented unanticipated opportunities or challenges.

These drivers, designed to highlight key areas of uncertainty, serve to focus the analysis and should not be seen as excluding other forces and factors. For example, while the scenario exercises focused largely on 2011 and the expected referendum, this focus should not lead others to overlook the impact of the conflict in Darfur. Rather, this study sought a broader view of the issues that will shape Sudan's future. Participants identified the key assumptions, such as the basic dynamic of the core versus the periphery, as largely immutable in the next few years. These key assumptions would be part of each scenario, but not drivers of them.

Workshop participants generated six candidate scenarios, three of which were developed in greater depth. The criteria for choosing which scenarios to develop included whether the scenario was plausible (made logical sense based on the evidence available) and whether developing the scenario was going to be instructive—that is, what compelling potential risk or opportunity has not been adequately explored? All three chosen scenarios assume a referendum and a vote for secession. While consideration was given to other possibilities, including unity or some sort of confederal arrangement, the participants thought the secession scenarios warranted particularly close scrutiny. Exploring these three scenarios further does not imply that they are the only possible scenarios; the participants explored many other possibilities (and surely there are others still), but they focused on these three to illuminate the key driving forces.

Scenario One: Costly Secession

Without a change in its current capacity to govern, the South devolves into a downward spiral of violence, even in the absence of aggression from the North or a loss of existing donor support.

This scenario focuses almost exclusively on the South. The GOSS lacks the capacity to deliver needed services, including the equitable allocation of basic resources (e.g., roads, water, and food). The GOSS instead spends the bulk of its oil revenues on its military and other security expenses in an effort to maintain order and provide a deterrent against the North, and significant corruption is reportedly on the rise. While there may be a legitimate need to provide a credible military capability, doing so is at the expense of other basic necessities. Popular acceptance of the status quo is not sustainable long beyond the referendum. Whether or not independence is proclaimed, the referendum itself is an insufficient "peace dividend." Expectations of improved living conditions cannot be deferred indefinitely.

In essence, this scenario says that absent major changes, the South is not a viable state. It would take very little for the tenuous relative calm to devolve into violence. The following factors could trigger or facilitate large-scale political violence within the South (which could spread to the North):

- failure to distribute food, water, and power and to build basic infrastructure (e.g., roads);
- intertribal conflict;
- violence in South Kordofan or Blue Nile, which could spread to the South;
- GOSS inability to disarm militias;
- continued insufficient distribution of power to capable regional and local governance institutions; and
- the North's failure to lend assistance to avoid violence in the South.

This downward spiral might be avoided if the GOSS can dramatically improve its capacity to deliver services at the local level, but this is unlikely to happen without the following:

- **Resolution of key post-2011 issues.** There has been too little progress in resolving key North-South issues, including control of oil fields and distribution of oil revenues. Both sides need to make progress. If the South avoids these issues now, it will face them in crisis mode after the referendum. The international community, especially the United States, may need to ensure that the referendum will occur on schedule in order for the South to be willing to address key issues beforehand. Additional confidence building measures might include upgrading the U.S. diplomatic representation for the GOSS. To entice Northern cooperation, the United States may need to offer to review existing sanctions. To ensure resolution of the oil issues, the United States may need to provide assurance to China that its oil interests will not be adversely affected. Other nations, including Sudan's neighbors, may also play a useful role in mediating North-South disputes.

- **An overhaul of international assistance strategies** to focus on GOSS and state government–led service delivery at the regional and local level instead of reliance on international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This change would include an overhaul of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) to provide more services at the local level, together with economic development (not just assistance) programs, and a United States–led effort for national solidarity (within the South).

- **The creation of a viable police force and rule of law.** Such reform would include civilian law enforcement and prison reform. It would include successful disarmament of militias and international support for training assistance to the police (including counterinsurgency training). Supporting steps would be to buttress human rights and anticorruption commissions and perhaps include the negotiation of a balance in ethnic representation within the police force.

- **Improved and more transparent governance.** Basic good-governance mechanisms, such as publication of the budget and parliamentary oversight over the organs of the GOSS, would help address corruption. Such reforms take time, but meaningful efforts

by 2011 might provide the needed confidence that progress is being made. Quick-impact projects in small communities could help tangibly demonstrate such progress.

- **Unity within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).** Fractionalization of SPLM could lead to violence at worst or at the least to ineffective governance.

Scenario Two: Civil War, from Tinderbox to Conflagration

The failure to build trust and address key issues between the North and South prior to the referendum results in violence after the referendum.

Without a change in the dynamic between the parties, they are unlikely to be willing or able to confront the key issues between them. Yet the failure to do so could lead to mistrust and miscalculation, triggers for large-scale North-South violence. In a volatile, uncertain environment, North and South lack a shared vision of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement or of the future. For example, while the CPA stipulated integration of units of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) into joint integrated units (JIUs), that interim security force has not proved effective. Instead of the JIUs providing a mechanism for "national" security (including the disarmament of militias), each side is adding to its military capabilities. North and South are perhaps already in an arms race—not a prescription for stability and peace, given the many flashpoint issues. The following are seeds of potential political violence:

- **The census.** There is disagreement between the North and South about the validity of the 2008 census. Clear demographic information is important for staving off challenges to elections and referendum results.
- **Oil.** There are several important unresolved issues concerning oil. These issues are related but distinct: control of oil production (which the North now controls and claims as its own), pipelines, and long-term oil revenue distribution between North and South.
- **Internal security.** Militia activity continues in the North and South.
- **Uncertainty over the 2010 election process and results.** Will the results be honored or disputed?
- **Uncertainty over the referendum law.** Will the referendum be held? Will the results be honored or disputed? A flawed referendum, marked by questions of voter eligibility, for instance, could lead to lack of acceptance of the results.
- **Incomplete border demarcation, including continued disagreement over Abyei boundaries.**
- **Should Southerners vote to secede, steps toward independence and the timing of these steps after the referendum.**
- **Land tenure, especially in the three areas.**
- **Uncertainty over the fate of displaced people, especially Southerners in the North.**

Collectively, these disputes and uncertainties provide a volatile environment in which North-South violence could occur (see box for an illustration of how this scenario could unfold).

Oil revenue allocation can be part of a grand resource bargain (including water), but that conversation must start now.

All It Takes Is a Match

The following is a hypothetical example of how scenario two could play out:

- The census results are contested by the South, but a compromise is not achieved. Both sides hold census grievances in their back pockets for later use.
- Referendum legislation passes, but the SPLM is disappointed by the small number of Southerners living in the North that will be able to vote.
- The 2010 elections occur but are flawed. NCP wins in the North, President Bashir is reelected, and there is a large SPLM victory in the South.
- Little or no progress is made on the key issues, including oil and borders. Mistrust and fear begins to infect all North-South discussions.
- Disarmament does not happen, and each side continues its arms buildup—the South to show it is a credible force, the North to maintain its advantage.
- The referendum results in a large vote for secession. The Government of Sudan, expecting this, stations large numbers of troops on the "border." After the referendum, troops move to protect oil fields, including some in the South. The SPLA sees this as a direct challenge to an independent Southern Sudan.
- A single incident explodes into North-South conflict—for example, a strong Southern reaction to the North surrounding the oil fields.

This dangerous situation might be defused, but only with concerted effort:

- **Boundaries and oil issues must be first in line.** Resolution of these issues cannot wait until the potentially highly charged postreferendum period. Oil revenue allocation can be part of a grand resource bargain (including water), but that conversation must start now. The United States and others must consider an array of carrots and sticks to bring the parties to the table: from offering the North moves toward normalized relations and removal of the Government of Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, to using U.S. leverage and putting pressure on the SPLM and NCP.
- **Security.** The mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) should be extended beyond the CPA and redefined to increase troops, form buffer zones (local demilitarized zones), and permit intervention rather than simply observation and reporting, as is currently the case. The arms buildup should be restrained, which will require the United States and others to engage Russia, China, and Ukraine. The South should be encouraged to develop purely defensive capabilities.

Scenario Three: Muddling Through

With concerted effort, robust international engagement, and some progress on key issues, the parties avoid large-scale violence.

A tenuous balance can be achieved if the parties can make progress on several fronts. Such an approach does not constitute a long-term solution but could avoid large-scale political violence through 2011. Incremental progress requires the parties to make a concerted effort, encouraged by the United States and the international community. Ingredients to building confidence and stability include the following:

- **A compromise on the census.** The census is key to confidence in the elections and the referendum. Without a compromise that parties can accept, even if only grudgingly, the issue will fester and continue to be divisive.

Compromise on the census is an initial step toward ensuring acceptance of election and referendum results. Stability will depend on avoiding contestation of these results.

- **Acceptance of election and referendum results.** Compromise on the census is an initial step toward ensuring acceptance of election and referendum results. Stability will depend on avoiding contestation of these results. Maintenance of the status quo—that is, President Omar al-Bashir and First Vice President Salva Kiir are reelected and the Northern opposition parties do not make significant gains—will not be disruptive so long as the results (whatever they may be) are perceived as legitimate. The same is true for the referendum.

- **A vision of the future.** Some degree of a shared understanding between North and South of the post-referendum alternatives (whether unity or independence or an in-between arrangement) will help minimize mistrust and the potential for miscalculation in the immediate aftermath of the elections and referendum.

- **Negotiated settlement or other resolution of the three areas.** The disputes over Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile will not go away, and failure to address them will only add to the burdens on the North-South relationship. Progress here will signal that progress on other issues is possible.

- **Darfur.** The conflict must be at least at a stalemate and not a source of escalating violence.

This sequence of compromises and trust building will not happen without help from the international community. Strategies for the United States and the international community should include the following:

- **Confidence building and constructive dialogue.** Both parties need to explore the range of options that can accommodate their respective concerns. With a concerted effort by the international community, the parties can engage in a realistic dialogue to envision post-referendum futures. Multilateral participants (likely to include China and Sudan's regional neighbors) need to develop carrots and sticks to rein in extreme reactions by the parties and provide a forum for them to engage in fruitful dialogue informed by historical examples.

- **Census and voting eligibility.** International NGOs and the United Nations can help resolve voter eligibility questions by suggesting constituency demarcation, without reliance on the census. It will be important to reinforce and support domestic and international election observers.

- **The three areas.** In Abyei, NGOs and the UN should help mark the boundary now that the arbitration process is complete, educate the population on the arbitration and referendum processes, provide local mediation assistance, and support the JIUs. In Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, NGOs and the UN should assist in rumor control, spread awareness of future options and the Popular Consultation process, and help facilitate consensus, especially between ethnic groups. The Assessment Evaluation Commission can also play a role in pressing parties to abide by the CPA in the three areas.

- **Security.** In addition to formal mechanisms, including militia disarmament, NGOs and the UN should engage youth in productive employment to discourage violence, particularly around the elections.

- **Boundaries.** The international community will have to mediate with the parties—and with the assistance of the oil companies—to make progress toward demarcation.

- **Acceptance of referendum results.** Immediate international recognition of the result may encourage acceptance of the result throughout Sudan. If the vote is for secession, such support may bolster the South's confidence that it can proceed toward independence in an orderly fashion. The European Union and the African Union, in addition to the United States, must exert pressure on the parties to accept the result. The United States and the European Union should promise support to the South should its people chose to secede;

in that event, China's oil equities will have to be protected to encourage its support of a Southern Sudan government.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is telling that the most hopeful of the three scenarios is one that foresees Sudan as simply muddling through without large-scale political violence.

It is telling that the most hopeful of the three scenarios is one that foresees Sudan as simply muddling through without large-scale political violence. It is clear from the participants and the scenarios they developed that Sudan is a highly complex environment in which the United States, the international community, and the parties in Sudan have much work to do to avoid violence.

The elections and referendum are planned for April 2010 and January 2011, respectively. The parties and the international community, including the United States, run serious risks of political violence if they proceed toward 2011 without addressing the key issues that divide the parties, developing enough trust to envision the realities of post-referendum Sudan, and building sufficient capacity for a government in Southern Sudan to effectively meet the basic needs of its people and reduce corruption.

Any effort to move forward in such a complex environment needs to be buttressed by meaningful indicators of progress (see appendix) so that the parties and the international community can have a shared understanding of goals and milestones.

Appendix: Indicators

One of the primary benefits of generating scenarios is to develop indicators or signposts that help contextualize events or developments. These observables become indications of whether a given path is being followed, a trend is continuing, or a milestone has been achieved. It is often difficult to evaluate the importance of developments without a pre-established context and a list of indicators to be monitored. For each of the scenarios, the participants developed a preliminary set of indicators that a scenario was unfolding (the absence of such indicators would suggest that the scenario is not unfolding).

Costly Secession

Without a change in its current capacity to govern effectively, the South simply devolves into violence. It is a downward spiral that occurs without aggression from the North or a loss of existing donor support.

Indicators associated with this path:

- overall level of violence in the South (especially intertribal);
- success of disarmament efforts;
- continued unity/disunity of SPLM leadership;
- the proportion of service delivery by NGOs versus GOSS (e.g., NGOs are no longer providing a large majority of health services);
- reform of MDTF and assistance strategies generally;
- quick-impact projects in small communities;
- flow of revenue to local communities as opposed to military expenditures;
- budget priorities of GOSS (guns versus butter);
- publication of state budget to see priorities and to demonstrate accountability and transparency;
- strength of anticorruption commissions;
- strength of human rights commissions;
- degree of uncertainty of how independence would be implemented;
- degree of calm following 2010 elections;
- effectiveness of GOSS police; and
- extent to which Darfur conflict is spilling over.

Civil War, from Tinderbox to Conflagration

The failure to address the basic issues between the North and South results in violence after the referendum.

Indicators that this path is being followed:

- failure to make unity attractive;
- lack of meaningful talks on the post-referendum futures;
- arms buildup on both sides;
- continued lack of oil transparency;
- failure of joint integrated units (JIUs);
- collection of grievances by South;
- North reengaging with dissident groups in the South;

- unclear or inadequate resolution of boundaries;
- increased propaganda and rhetoric on both sides;
- drop in oil prices;
- troop movements on either side; and
- increased diplomatic contact with the region by the North and South in support of their respective positions and opposing the other's position.

Muddling Through

With some progress on some issues the parties manage to muddle along, and avoid large-scale violence.

Indicators that this path is being followed:
- progress on census to resolve the differing positions between the parties;
- progress in implementing a new Abyei boundary;
- limited contestation of election results;
- an agreement on the border or an expressed willingness to reach agreement;
- some resolution of the status of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile (e.g., a resolution of disputes over the parties' desires prior to the referendum and acknowledgment of what each side expects);
- resolution of Darfur conflict or a steady-state stalemate without increased violence;
- some level of agreement between North and South on the nature of either separation or unity;
- lack of contestation of the referendum; and
- widespread recognition of South by the neighbors and international community.

Of Related Interest

- *Building Blocks for Citizenship and a Peaceful Transition in Sudan* by Linda Bishai, Kelly Campbell, and Jacki Wilson (USIPeace Briefing, March 2009)
- *Conducting Elections in Darfur: Looking Ahead to Sudan's 2009 Elections* by Stephanie Schwartz (USIPeace Briefing, March 2009)
- *Sudanese Universities as Sites of Social Transformation* by Linda Bishai (Special Report, February 2008)
- *Some Assembly Required: Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement* by Timothy Carney (Special Report, November 2007)