

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

**Interview # 27 - Executive Summary**

*Interviewed by: Sam Westgate*  
*Initial Interview Date: October 27, 2006*  
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The interviewee is an informed former American Embassy official, who had the opportunity to witness CPA processes as a member of the senior Embassy staff. Overall, she found the CPA to be effective since it has brought a relative peace at least in terms of the North-South divide. The most effective of the various CPA commissions in her view has been the one dealing with demobilization and disarmament and with the reintegration of soldiers, and in particular, child soldiers into civilian life.

The downside has been the continuing instability in the South. No effective government is in place, and the region is wracked by conflict: “every conceivable kind of conflict. Raiding and counter-raiding for cattle.” The transmigration of refugees also compound the indigenous conflict between tribes, particularly that between the Dinka and the Misseriya. The Lord’s Resistance Army or LRA is also a factor in Southern instability, since the LRA depends upon pillage to maintain its soldiers.

The commission on the rights of minorities needs to be strengthened. This is a big issue in the North, in particular, where Christian and other minorities do not want to be judged by Sharia law courts.

Border issues, such as in the disputed area of Abyei, continue to exacerbate the North-South divide. In addition, the interviewee sees as a foregone conclusion that in the 2011 referendum promised by the CPA agreement, the South will vote to secede from the central government. The interviewee foresees major conflict unless the North and South come up with a mutually agreeable plan for the division of the oil wealth well before the vote. Otherwise, the central government may just decide to cancel the referendum vote, agreement or no agreement.

Asked if the CPA is any kind of an international model, the former Embassy official noted: “it is a model, because it succeeded in bringing peace. If it even brings peace with a provision for secession, which then turns out to happen, this really is not a tragedy. War is a tragedy. Having one more government in the world is not a tragedy.”

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*Q: How has the CPA dealt with implementation? Do you have comments on the mechanisms contained in the agreement, or on why the agreement was structured in the way it was?*

A: Some say there was no international oversight of this process. There is, actually, a committee on which major donors are represented, and it does oversee, look at, and issue comments on the way implementation is going. The UN also puts out a report periodically and so does the AU. So there are a number of monitoring bodies, though they don't have authority to make the government do one thing or another.

*Q: Have these reports by monitors had any influence at all on the government?*

A: Somewhat. Certainly they reinforce those who wish to push ahead and more or less counter those who may not wish the CPA to be put fully into effect.

*Q: Of the various commissions, have you had experience of any one of them, in terms of their effectiveness or success?*

A: There was a commission on demobilization and reintegration of militias and I think that has been quite effective, and the UN monitoring group of peacekeeping operations in the South have been involved in helping with that, to demobilize militias, disarm populations and to try to reintegrate them either into the army or into some other structure. There are still a lot of guns in the South and there's a lot of anarchy in the South, and you do not have an effective government in the South. So it is a real problem. I think in many cases, the demobilization effort just reached a wall because a group refused to be disarmed, claiming, probably rightly, that they have enemies and they need to keep their arms to defend either their cattle or their farms.

*Q: Are the enemies necessarily Northern enemies or are they local?*

A: They are local. They are not Northern enemies, usually.

*Q: So the conflicts are still tribal in nature or a case of common thievery within the South?*

A: Every conceivable kind of conflict. Conflict, especially over cattle, is absolutely endemic. Raiding and counter-raiding for cattle. The movement of ex-refugees with their cattle through different population zones in the South has led to a lot of tensions. Everyone tries to be very understanding with the returning refugees, but they do tend to stay too long and their cattle do destroy farms. They overgraze, they displace other people's cattle, and there are constant problems at that level. Banditry as such does not seem to be that pronounced in the South. There is probably more of that in Darfur. But you get the warlord-related banditry, particularly connected to the LRA, the Lord's Resistance Army, based in Uganda, and the LRA live from pillage. So they are a constant source of disorder, exacerbated by the fact that you are never sure who they are, because they are not uniformed and no one is ever sure who really did the attacks.

*Q: As far as you know the activities of the LRA, since their headquarters are really in Uganda, they are not under the oversight of any of these commissions?*

A: Oh, no, the LRA escapes all of it, they would not be under any commission, because they are not supposed to be in the country at all.

*Q: Are they monitored as well?*

A: No, only by the UN peacekeepers. You would think they would be monitoring them, because any disorder is monitored by them, but they are not, no. However, the Southern government took on the task of trying to lead and engineer a peace treaty between the Ugandan government and the LRA. They are really trying to buy peace for themselves in the South. They even gave them money. Somebody recently visited the country, I just heard, and the Ugandan government was not happy. This, of course, does overlap with the North-South conflict because it is always said that the North historically has supported the LRA, and the South of course allied more with the Ugandan government.

*Q: How would you characterize the peace process that is going on?*

A: The peace process is really the North-South process and there is relative peace. The Northern army did reduce its numbers, and relocate, fairly much as required by the agreement, little by little, though perhaps reluctantly. There is no North-South fighting as such. But there are problems all along the borderland, which is not necessarily in the Government of South Sudan territory, it may be a little bit north of it or a little bit south, in Kordofan and Blue Nile state. One of the biggest political issues in Sudan actually is the area called Abyei, the Abyei area in South Kordofan, which is disputed between North and South. This is actually one of the major issues, problems and sore points of the entire CPA -- the fact that the Abyei situation has not been resolved, as it should have been. The agreement said that an expert commission would come, study the problem, people from outside with no partisan connection and that their opinion would be taken as final. The North, however, refused their opinion. Their opinion favored the Ngok Dinka and as Francis Deng's books highlight, the Ngok Dinka historically managed to get along quite well with their pastoral area neighbors, the Misseriya. However, different kinds of administrative changes happened after independence, creating more

competitive relations between them and by now they are very much opposed. The Misseriya claim the land that the Dinka have and *vice versa*. According to the Dinka, the Misseriya only passed through, as pastoralists, as migrants, and did not stay. So they are, in a sense, the landlords of the land, which the Misseriya dispute. The Northern government, therefore, has taken sides with the Misseriya; it has refused the commission report and this remains a big stalemate in the whole political scene in Sudan. All of the other areas which are implicitly disputed are the areas to the east, where there are a lot of oil fields. That is in the Upper Nile state, the northeast of South Sudan. Those areas are disputed and there are reports periodically of population displacement. So the whole question of the border of South Sudan is probably the most important issue that looms over the future, because it could lead to another outbreak of war.

*Q: So in terms of the border delineation, as far as you know no real sincere efforts have been made to mark what should be Southern Sudan? Are there any efforts to correct the situation?*

A: There is a border. It is only in Abyei itself that the border itself is disputed. It is control of the borderlands that is the issue, not the boundary *per se* in most of the area. But in Abyei it is the boundary.

*Q: You have mentioned some of the failures or problems. Have there been any principal achievements in the peace process? You earlier were saying that there is a relative North-South peace.*

A: There is a North-South peace. That alone is a major, major achievement. Should there be war it would be a disaster. So certainly the peace itself, is worth having commissions that do not function that well, or commissions that get formed six months late, or little bits of banditry here and there or other disagreements. All this is much better than war. It should always be remembered that the CPA did succeed in stopping a war that had been going on for a generation. There has also been, if you live in Khartoum, better North-South relations. North-South relations are better on the personal level and the political level, owing to the fact that Southerners are part of the Northern government, that there is a government of national unity, that these people do socialize to some extent, that there is an effort to have civil relations, civil in the sense of polite, of mutually respectful relations, in social dealings in Khartoum. I think this makes a big difference. It is a little bit like going back to the prewar days. Southerners are special, they are different, they may be looked down upon but they were treated all right and they were felt to be deserving of attention and to get their piece of the action.

There is one particular commission that has to do with rights of minorities. This is one of the other big hot issues in the CPA, the right of minorities, the rights of Christian minorities as well, in the capital city, and that commission finally was set up. Attention has been focused on this and that is important, and it may be that they will be able to work out some compromises about, for instance, the application of Sharia law to minorities in Khartoum, and respect for church property or even perhaps restitution of church property. So these things are being taken up at least. That is an achievement.

The CPA did create a liberal social space for everyone in the country. Everyone in the North, everyone in Khartoum, had previously had a much more authoritarian kind of system, a much more explicitly religious ideology backing war. All of that has faded into the background, and you have an emergence of civil society, civil liberties, which are very significant. The Khartoum *Monitor* was the one English language paper that goes back a few years, and it suffered a lot of harassment, but it survived. Now there are three other pro-Southern papers, doing very well and again vociferous in their criticism. What they say about Arabs and the history of Arab depredations against the South, it is just sensational, but they are not called to order for that.

*Q: Of course it is published in English, as opposed to Arabic.*

A: That does help because it means that they can be ignored, relatively to the Arabic language papers. It is true that the Arabic language papers more commonly get into trouble these days, mainly because they do have more influence.

*Q: What about the attitude of various parties to the CPA and their obligations in terms of who are fulfilling their obligations and who are not? Are there personalities in play that somehow have an important role? Do you see a leadership vacuum or successes with any of these involved parties?*

A: The Northern leader most closely associated with the CPA was Ali Osman Taha. Since the signing of the CPA, Vice President Taha has been more or less increasingly marginalized. He has lost power relatively. There was even the rise of a very interesting new phenomenon, which is Northern separatism, the formation of an explicitly, avowed, organized northern political grouping which has a newspaper called *Al Intibaha*. *Al Intibaha* really speaks for the right wing of the Northern Islamist elite and looks at the CPA as a sellout, and feels that the North not only should allow the South to secede -- and good riddance -- but that the North itself should stay separate and not give way to the demands for social and cultural and political reforms in the North. They feel that the South can do as it likes, but that the North should remain more or less as it was previously. This is an interesting development, and in that group is an uncle of the president, Al-Bashir. So there are definitely strong factions fighting one way or the other.

There are also the Southerners who are in the Northern government, but who seem relatively weak. The SPLM and a number of Northern leaders sometime explicitly take positions at odds to the government. There is a lot of controversy in the newspapers about that. For instance, they favor UN troops for Darfur. There are others. And they are allowed to do that, although there is a bit of vitriolic exchange. But it is all verbal, and life goes on. So there is a lot of conflict at the level of those personalities in Khartoum who are implementing these things.

*Q: What are the distractions to the process? It almost sounds as if this splinter group in the North is almost a distraction. They do not seem to have that much influence. Are there any other distractions that you see? These could be financial or they could be social.*

A: Because of oil revenues, the finances do not impede the North-South process. In some countries it might be the budget. But in Sudan that is not really the problem. It is mainly political attitudes that impede more rapid implementation. And also the idea that the South is going to secede anyway -- it does not really matter what we do. This also leads to a bitter aftertaste for Northerners to the agreement, and makes them less enthusiastic about promoting it. No unified country could result when the South makes it clear, constantly, repetitively -- Southern intellectual leaders make it clear -- that they favor independence in 2011. So some Northerners feel that, with some justification, the South wants it both ways. They want to get investment, concessions, collaboration of all sorts now, only to turn around and opt for independence down the road. So for Northerners, there would be a lot more assistance for the South, more enthusiasm for CPA implementation, if it were not so clear that this is the attitude and the outcome.

*Q: Would more aggressive international involvement encourage or hamper the peace process?*

A: There is monitoring to do. I do not see an area in which more foreign involvement at this point would make a great difference. Again, Khartoum has its own revenues. It doesn't depend on others for that. It is locked in conflict with the international community over Darfur in some respects, and so I think more intervention on the CPA front might not be terribly productive.

*Q: What international political and financial resources could be provided to improve prospects for success?*

A: There could be more need for more funding and I think there are many things in the CPA and implementation that do take resources. Because the North does not have such a vested interest in implementation and its prospects in the long run, it tends to plead poverty sometimes in terms of implementation of these articles. So simply more international funding could help a number of things. It could help the reintegration of demobilized armed forces. It already does, of course, but there could always be more. It could also help with the reintegration of the child soldiers, which were very, very numerous in the South, on all sides.

*Q: Not just the LRA?*

A: Oh, no, the Southern armies used them extensively. There is a big language conversion going on in the South in the schools, from Arabic to English, back to English. That program is desperately in need of support. In other words, there are many projects that could help the South. But as for the CPA implementation itself at the level of the government of national unity, resources are not an issue there.

*Q: Anything to add about the 2011 referendum on Southern self-determination? You have already mentioned that a vote for independence is foreshadowed. What are the consequences, though, of growing Southern disenchantment with the CPA and can this process be reversed?*

A: I really have mixed feelings about the question of unity versus separation. The South is physically so far away. The cultural gap is so enormous. The legacy of resentment is so deep, that secession not necessarily a bad thing. It will be a poor banana republic but in fact it will be a happier place.

*Q: Is that because the oil revenues would not be divided under this scenario?*

A: That is a major issue. You now have a very good deal for everyone: fifty-fifty division of oil revenues. Yes, if the South could continue to get those oil revenues, that is nice but it is still a banana republic, administratively, in terms of governance, in terms of intellectual cadres, in terms of educational level. It is like some place in 1952. It is really delayed development, and very pronounced.

We do generally favor unified countries, and one could have a unified, diverse, pluralistic and secular national government with perhaps some semi-federal arrangements with the regions, this would be wonderful. But the elites in Khartoum, the entrenched Arab elite, really does not favor this sort of thing, and I do not know that they would ever take on the political reforms that would create that kind of very hospitable environment. And of course this is what Southerners constantly pointed out: "If they real want us, they will change, and yet they do not change."

*Q: What lessons for future operations can be learned from the Sudan experience, in terms of implementation of the CPA? Is there a lesson learned? Is the CPA any kind of a model?*

A: It is model, because it succeeded in bringing peace. If it even brings peace with a provision for secession, which then turns out to happen, this really is not a tragedy. War is a tragedy. Having one more government in the world is not a tragedy. The issue is whether it could be peaceful, and if the peace could be maintained. One of the big problems was the question of the fifty-fifty division of oil revenues. If people want peace in Sudan, they should start right now to look at the way in which oil revenues could be divided by mutual consent in 2011, because the South may claim all the revenues. Most of the oil wealth falls within its boundaries. The North could claim all the revenues because the South wants to leave, and it is more powerful, and it will take over those oil fields. It could be the outbreak of another war, because of the oil location and revenue issues. This is one of the key things that one can just look down the road and see as the key issue. People could begin to see if there could be a negotiated settlement of that issue in advance of any vote. It would go into operation if such a vote occurred. Of course, you would have to have an implicit agreement, because you wouldn't want to

encourage secession by having it already worked out in advance in public. But this is certainly going to be the issue.

*Q: What are the chances the referendum will actually take place? What are the chances it will either be postponed or simply cancelled?*

A: If the CPA keeps on being implemented, however imperfectly, if the national elections take place in 2009, and are carried out reasonably well, without some sort of total breakdown of public order or martial law, or some other dramatic change in the situation, then I think the referendum will happen. However, those elections are again a kind of a danger point in this whole process, because who knows how they will go. Will the Northern government permit a referendum, will the Northern government permit elections well in advance by which it the referendum could be displaced? That is much more dangerous for the Northern government. Then it could let the South go, apart from the oil.