

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

**Interview # 29 - Executive Summary**

*Interviewed by: Sam Westgate, Dan Whitman*

*Initial Interview Date: October 26, 2006*

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The interviewee was a former government Sudanese official, who while not part of an official delegation, was an influential behind-the-scenes participant. He had crucial meetings with all the key participants in the CPA process, and was partly responsible for coating the bitter pill of proposed Northern troop withdrawals from the South as “disengagement.” His efforts to find a peaceful end to the North-South conflict included helping to organize a Wilson Center conference on Sudan in 1986, writing numerous books, and developing conceptual frameworks in collaboration with CSIS and the Carter Center. In addition, he worked with President Obasanjo of Nigeria to bring international influence on and attention to Sudan’s problems.

The interviewee sees Sudan’s dilemma as a “crisis of identity,” and sees the remaining challenge as one of finding common ground for two seemingly irreconcilable realities: unity and separation. The South wants to separate. The North wants unity. The country is divided into two: one Arab-Islamic, the other secular African. The process must somehow find a way to accommodate both unity and separation. This depends on coming up with a formula to provide for one country, two systems, which the interviewee sees as the basis of a viable CPA.

He is skeptical of the effectiveness of the CPA in the long run: “The CPA unwittingly deepened the division of the country, because you cannot have the North, whose party is the governing party in the Government of National Unity, continue to hold to its Arab, Muslim agenda and to share in the framework in which the South would be a party through a framework of national unity. And it is making, clearly, the framework not attractive to the South. Two ideas were critical in the CPA: self-determination for the South, and making unity attractive.” The key remains to come up with a formula for one country, two systems, which in fact is one of the key concepts in the CPA.

The interviewee says the CPA is less than comprehensive, and even calls the term a misnomer, for having left out a number of political forces in the country. He sees the CPA as an agreement between two warring parties, the National Congress Party and the SPLM/SPLA. While the agreement was instrumental in ending the war, it did not create a framework that was sufficiently inclusive.

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*Q: How does the CPA deal with implementation, and what are the mechanisms contained in the agreement?*

A: The CPA is a very detailed document. What does the size of the agreement, the document, tell us about the agreement and what does the length of time it took tell us? The response of one person was that it means that there was no trust between the parties, that there was a problem of mistrust, so people had to get into great detail. Another person said it means it is a good agreement because it deals with just about every aspect. It is very detailed, and that is the only context in which the word 'comprehensive' makes sense, because we are not actually that comprehensive when we talk about the people involved. You have a very detailed document, which has many bodies stipulated; commissions, committees, and various mechanisms for monitoring. The result is that it is so cumbersome, so detailed, that the process of implementation has not been easy.

The good will of the parties (particularly the Government party) has been very much in question. The process of creating the commissions was delayed and the functioning of the commissions is not that effective. To this day a number of key commissions, such as the border commission, which is critical to demarcating the border between North and South and will become critical in the allocation of the oil revenues, is not effective.

*Q: What was your role was in the negotiations? At what stage did you became part of the negotiations?*

A: Two issues struck me. One is the extent to which people were formally involved in the negotiations played a role that was not part of the formal structure. The other is the time factor. The effort to bring peace had been a very long, protracted one. The intensity of the negotiations that resulted in the CPA covered a much longer period than the length of time the whole peace process took. So I could say that ever since I left the Government in 1983, I had been, in one way or another, involved in the process. One of those was a workshop I organized at the Woodrow Wilson Center, where I was a fellow, and to which I invited all the political parties involved. I had the former president of Nigeria, Obasanjo, come, and Andrew Young came as a senior statesman, to help the process. The only two parties that did not participate in that conference were the National Islamic Front and the Communist Party, but even they sent their documents.

The National Islamic Front sent what they called the National Charter, which presented their vision for the country.

*Q: When was the conference?*

A: In 1986, at the Wilson Center. The product of that, speaking of how indirect the involvement in the peace process can be, was when I resigned in 1983. As I was flying out of Khartoum I asked myself the question, “Am I turning my back on the country?” The answer was, of course, no. Then, what do you do? I left because I saw the country going in a direction that I could no longer really support. I asked myself, “What do you do next?” I wrote two novels, in which I wrote down precisely what I was hoping they would do in Sudan. The idea was that instead of this intellectual, academic, scholarly work, how about putting the message across in a manner that would touch people and engage them? The novels are called *Seed of Redemption* and *Cry of the Owl*. The cry of the owl is a signal. When the owl cries or makes the sound it makes, in the mythology of our people, it is sending an alarm. It is warning you about disaster that is about to hit. So, the issues in these two novels were to analyze Sudan’s crisis of identity, the way people who have been dominant (and for that matter a minority), who are a hybrid of the few Arabs who came as traders or missionaries of some sort, intermarried with Africans to produce this hybrid race that in many ways is a range of browns, from light to dark, within the brown context. They see themselves as Arabs, so the novel is to highlight the discrepancy between the self-deception and the reality. The other aspect is the projection of this distorted self-perception as a framework for the nation, which we then call an Arab, Muslim country, which it is not. So these two books have been provocative and have been very, very much discussed in the Sudan. You could say it is a very removed way of contributing to the search for ways of looking at the problems of the Sudan, and therefore ways of addressing them.

*Q: You said that the length of time it took to get the agreement was positive and negative. The negative is that it indicated there was mistrust, and the positive was that, because of the length of time, the agreement really was rather comprehensive.*

A: The length of time and the size of the document of the agreement are both indicative of the lack of trust and the fact that they thrashed out their differences, which makes it a good agreement.

*Q: You described the role that you played since 1983. Can you bring us up through the ‘90s to 2005?*

A: After the workshop we published a book at the Woodrow Wilson Center called *The Search for Peace and Unity in the Sudan*. Then General Obasanjo, the former Head of State of Nigeria, called me and said, “What is happening with the results of the workshop?” I said, “We are producing a book from that.” His response was, “I don’t want this to be just a book on the shelf gathering dust. We should use it as a basis for engaging the parties,” which I thought was a great idea. So he and I then started with that book, shuttling between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/SPLA, for a

number of years. In fact we were doing that and it started with the Government of Sadiq al-Mahdi, who was then the prime minister after the overthrow of Nimeri. We began to shuttle between the parties. In fact, there was a time we were involved with another former Head of State of Switzerland to organize a meeting between Garang, the head of the SPLM/SPLA, and Sadiq al-Mahdi. Everything was set in Switzerland, including making travel arrangements, planes and security arrangements, in some remote, nice area.

It was meant to be secret, so Sadiq al-Mahdi announced that he was taking a break to rest a little for a week or so in Europe, without identifying where. John Garang, happened to be my cousin. Two days before the meeting was to take place, we had another meeting in Harare. It was a convention called the Interaction Council of Former Heads of State and Government, of which Obasanjo was a member. So we had an initiative of the Interaction Council, which brought together different parties and especially the two factions, for dialogue. This would have been '86, '87. And so I then called Harare, only to be told by John Garang that he was deep in the South and that he had accepted the principle of a meeting but not the venue nor the precise date.

It really outraged us. So much so that we wrote a letter that was very toughly worded. It almost turned me against a man whom I admired as a friend. Obasanjo said, "You have to appreciate the man's situation in the bush." Because he said, "Even if I wanted, I cannot get there because I'm deep in the bush and in a war context." Obasanjo said, "Let's appreciate his difficulty." So we then toned down the letter. In fact, I have published a book about our activities with Obasanjo. When the Islamists took over from Sadiq al-Mahdi, and General Bashir came with this radically different Islamist agenda, I went to meet with John Garang in Addis Ababa to assess the situation in light of the military takeover by the Islamists.

While I was there, I met with Garang and a couple of other friends from Europe. The question came up about whether I should go back to the States or go to Khartoum, and all of them were against my going to Khartoum. In fact, they thought my security would be in danger. I said that I had a principle of talking to all parties and for me to come this far and not go to the Sudan would send a signal to these people that I had taken sides against them. So I went, against the advice of everybody. In fact, I had two friends who were my classmates at law school in Khartoum and who were practicing lawyers. They asked one another whether I had consulted either of them, and one of them had been consulted. So one said, "Well, let him come. He has never tasted prison." This was a kind of joking comment on the lack of wisdom in my going into that situation.

I then met with one of the members of the Revolution Command Council for the Southern Sudanese - a colonel - who then decided to take up my program. He had me meet with all the members of the Command Council, including the president and all of his colleagues. I then got very actively involved in discussion with them all, and there was to be a conference to discuss these issues. They asked me to address the conference. I told them, "Look, I have come to learn, to educate myself about what was happening. I'm not ready yet to make public statements." But they insisted. They said, "People know that you have come. It's in the media. If you don't address the conference people

will come to their own conclusions that there's something you're hiding." So I decided I would speak my mind about my analysis of the crisis the country was going through. It was a very provocative statement, which really talked about the crisis of identity in the country. I was saying that what is happening in the South is a different kind of rebellion. It's not a separatist mentality. These people are fighting to change the character of the country. This was to talk about liberating the country, that is, to address these discrepancies that I talked about before with regard to the identity issue - the self-perception - and the way it is projected to be the identity of the nation. For them to say this is a national conference, to which you then invite the SPLM/SPLA, is unrealistic. Make this an internal debate among yourselves, also others within the country. Then use that as a basis for discussing with them, because the reality is that we are a divided nation. There's a nation inside and a nation outside.

My talk provoked a lot of discussion. Some people were outraged that somebody was said to have said--even John Garang himself--how can we give him a platform to come and address the nation that way? As a matter of fact, following that talk my diplomatic passport was withdrawn, cleverly, saying that they now give it to only those who are engaged in diplomatic work and not for the honor of having served, as used to be the case. It was intimated to me that security was offended by the way I talked, and they played a role in doing that. Later on, others intervened and it was restored.

About two months after I was in the Sudan, I got a message that the president would like me to come back to the Sudan and to meet first with the chief of security and with the Southern member of the Revolution Command Council in London. I went to London and was then to proceed to Khartoum from there. But after meeting with these two people, the message was that they wanted me to reactivate the peace initiative that Obasanjo and I had undertaken. My question to them was, "You don't just plunge into a peace initiative without some grounds that will give you the hope that something is do-able. What will I say is a basis for why we are coming? What is the Government really offering that would persuade the other side that there is something meaningful going on?" We then decided I would think about it and they, too, should think about it if there is some message that they want me to use as a basis for reactivating our initiative.

Now, it was meant to be a secret meeting, but it leaked into the Arabic press. So when I was flying back, I met a U.S. official on the plane. I told him why I was in London, and he said he had heard about that and he said, "Why don't you come to the State Department and then brainstorm about what to do, building on the fact that these people want you to take the initiative?" So I came and we had a very good meeting at the State Department, in which the official surprised me by saying, "I think we should take advantage of the fact that they want you to continue this initiative with Obasanjo, but we would like to make a suggestion based on an article that you wrote."

I had written an article in which I predicted that there would be a *de facto* separation in the field. Each side would continue to claim to be fighting for the whole of Sudan, but each side would then consolidate their hold on the territories that they then controlled, and there would be a protracted period after which either they would then have a *de jure*

recognition of this state through some regional autonomy or confederation, or the partition would become a reality and the country would break up. The U.S. official said that article provoked a lot of interest in the State Department, and their view was that if my prediction is correct, why wait for more people to die? Why not persuade the Government to pull out of the South on the understanding that the SPLA would not exploit this for separatist purposes, and then persuade the North to honor their pledge for a federal arrangement, possibly bringing an end to the war immediately? But I tell you that my immediate reaction was: "This is ridiculous. How can I go?" He said, "If you go and you say you're coming with this initiative as yours with Obasanjo, as they requested you, you can tell them that the United States will support this initiative."

*Q: What were you proposing giving the South? Some more authority, some degree of autonomy?*

A: My analysis was simply that there would be this *de facto* separation, and eventually it would be given some legal recognition by negotiation. The U.S. official was suggesting, "Let's pull the forces of the North out of the South, but let's commit the SPLM not to use this for separatist purposes and persuade the North to accept a federal arrangement, with the division of powers. Suggest it as your idea but make it known to them that the U.S. would back you."

I thought, "My word, this could actually end the war immediately, because if the SPLM is genuine about not being a separatist movement and if the Government is genuine about wanting a federal solution, then persuading the Government to pull out on these conditions of not being exploited for separatist purposes and honoring the promise of federalism, we would have ended the war quickly."

I then went to London, to proceed to Sudan, on the basis of this understanding with the State Department. I then called Obasanjo and told him that there was a development that would require going back to the Sudan, and I would be coming and hopefully we would proceed to Khartoum. The only change that we made, instead of asking for the withdrawal of forces, was that we would say "disengagement" of forces, but explain disengagement to be literally withdrawal of the Government forces in the South. We then proceeded. Obasanjo and I talked to everybody, including the president. He asked the question, "What does 'disengagement' amount to?" We explained that to him. He did not reject it out of hand, and in fact, to my surprise, many of the members of the Government - the Revolution Command Council and others who were sort of senior statesmen, not members - said, "If this is going to end the war, why not? We should go for it." We took that, which was not a commitment of acceptance but also not a rejection, to the side of John Garang. Ironically, John Garang was with two of his commanders, Riek Machar and Lam Akol. These two names are important because these are the people who rebelled later against John Garang and caused a big rift in the movement.

When we presented the picture, Garang turned to Riek Machar, and Machar said, "This idea is tantamount to separating the South from the North and we should not do anything that would look as though we are separatists since we are committed to unity." He asked

Deng Alor, who was the manager of his office, and Deng Alor said he had no comment. Now the irony of it is that these two people who rejected the idea in the name of unity were the ones who would later rebel about a year later, in 1991, in the name of separatism; that this idea of unity is a misrepresentation of what Southerners want. They rebelled against John Garang as a unionist and they wanted the separation of the South.

*Q: At what point would you say that these activities could be considered the precursor to the CPA?*

A: When we started this initiative with Obasanjo, I got a call from President Carter. He said he had heard about this initiative and would like me to consider him the third member of our team. I thought, "How can I ask the president of the United States to join us as the third member of the team?" So I thanked him and offered to be of help to him in any way I could. He and I proceeded to work closely, separately from what I was doing with Obasanjo.

*Q: Were you also working with the staff of the Carter Center?*

A: Yes, we had meetings there to which I had people invited by the Center. The USIP meeting and the Carter Center meeting produced a body called the IGAD resource group. The group was owned by something called Inter-Africa Group. We used these to advise the IGAD process and the Declaration of Principles. For years this group began to meet and interact with members of the IGAD initiative when the process started in 1994 in earnest. We continued this group, being in close contact with the IGAD process, until it was halted by one thing: the Declaration of Principles was presented, and the Government rejected them. So, there was a pause until later on when the situation in the field turned against the Government, after the Government had been doing quite well for a number of years. And now Nigeria took the Abuja initiative in which Obasanjo was an advisor to Babangida behind the scenes. The link between our initiative and the IGAD process was in a sense interrupted when the Government rejected, until the tide turned against them and they came back. Now the parts that lingered on had a lot of flaws. The IGAD initiative became weakened; the Governments of the region were at war with each other; Khartoum was in conflict with Uganda and initially with both Ethiopia and Eritrea. So the whole thing stopped until it was reactivated by the involvement of the IGAD partners and the U.S., working with the UK, Norway and Italy.

Something else happened. CSIS started an initiative to help develop a policy for the United States and clarify a policy for the next administration. This was while the presidential elections that brought Bush into his first term were about to come. He had a project, submitted to USIP, to convene a task force that would help develop U.S. policy on Sudan. I became co-chair of that force, which went on for some six months, involving some 40 people from around Washington. When we started, most of the participants were of the opinion that Sudan was not important to U.S. policy and that the U.S. had no specific interest. Our only interest with Sudan was its involvement in international terrorism, its destabilization of the region, and the humanitarian tragedy inside the

country resulting from war. According to this thinking, the U.S. should let Europe take the lead and help from a distance.

My position was radically different. I said, “On the contrary, Sudan is a very important country for a number of reasons. It’s the meeting point between North and sub-Saharan Africa, between Christians and Islam, between all these forces, and the country also has tremendous resources that have not been utilized. You should reverse the order of things. It is the war in the South that makes the Sudanese reach out to terrorists, because they think that the United States and Zionism, Israel, Christendom, are supporting the non-Muslims of the South. They were reaching into terrorist circles for support: enemies of my enemies are friends. Secondly, it is because of this war that Sudan is destabilizing countries of the region, which they also assume to be supportive of the South. And it’s because of the war that you have a humanitarian crisis. So if we focus on ending the war, Sudan will stop being involved with terrorism, stop destabilizing the region, and the humanitarian crisis will be addressed.”

In the end our report came from a middle ground. The formula I suggested to them is, “We have to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable realities: unity and separation. The South wants to separate. The North wants unity. There are two different regions of the country. One is Arab-Islamic, the other secular African. We have to find a way where unity and separation are accommodated.” And we came up with a formula: “one country, two systems,” which in fact is one of the key concepts in the CPA. When Bush was elected, contrary to what people had predicted, that if Bush were the president he would not be interested in foreign affairs, let alone Sudan—well, the reverse became true. Bush took up the cause of Sudan, particularly with the Christian Right and with Congress, fully supporting bringing peace to Sudan. Then the negotiations intensified with the appointment of Danforth, Andrew Natsios, and Roger Winter, using the humanitarian agenda in the Nuba Mountains, was then extended to the North-South negotiations.

*Q: And the CPA process itself?*

A: We told the State Department, “Now it’s in your hands.” Obasanjo and I wrote a letter using that. What John Garang said to both commanders was, “We cannot reject this. If it ends the war, what are we fighting for? It will bring peace.” So let the United States itself, if they want this initiative, take it up instead of using one of us. A U.S. official came to my office, and said, “I cannot ask the Government to withdraw. I will be kicked out immediately.” Apparently some generals and some people in the State Department then advised the U.S. Government against that. So they came back with a formula of some pulling out of Juba, some monitoring and separating the parties in the field. This became a minimalist idea that nobody wanted, and on the contrary, Khartoum began to see the original idea as an attempt to divide the country.

*Q: The Sudanese parties, at the time of the negotiations, IGAD, leading to CPA later, who were the basic parties? Which one of them did you feel played a constructive role and which did you feel acted as spoilers?*

A: On the Government side was a team led by Ghazi Sallusammahudim Atabani. Ghazi is a hardliner and with him were people like Nafie Ali Nafie. On the side of the SPLM, the delegation was initially led by the man who's now the president, first vice president, Salva Kiir Mayardig. With him on the team there are people like Nhial Deng Nhial and also Deng Alor and a lot of other SPLM people. Their starting point was tough, and the SPLM was talking the language of a confederate arrangement. Khartoum was rejecting confederation and suggesting federalism. SPLM was talking secular, and Khartoum was totally rejecting any reference to secularist ideas. This was during the initial stages. When these positions were presented, the two were on totally different grounds. Ghazi Sallusammahudim even threatened, saying they had a mission to Islamize not just the South but the rest of black Africa, and that the cause of Islam had been interrupted by colonialism. He wanted to start from where the colonialists stopped. That was when things fell apart and the mediator said to them, "If you think you can do this by war and that you can win the war, go ahead. Try. We'll be ready to help if and when you want to come back to the table." Eventually the war tide turned against them. At that point they were very strong, even during the negotiations, up to Abuja.

*Q: You met in Nairobi with some of the key players. Would you say you were directly involved?*

A: No. My role throughout has been very informal, private, independent; not a member of any team. Of course, on the part of the mediators, you had the IGAD foreign ministers as the key team. The heads of state would come in from time to time. Each of them was dvised privately. Initially there was the foreign minister of Kenya, who led the negotiations, but then IGAD stalled, and the IGAD partners, particularly Norway, UK, at that time including Canada, too, then the U.S., took firm control of the situation and financed the IGAD secretariat. Then Sumbeiywo was appointed to be the key mediator. That's when things began to really intensify and when the U.S. began to play a key role. Again, Danforth was the umbrella, but you had a number of people within the U.S. as well as from the other countries being advisors behind the scenes, including someone from South Africa, and someone from Switzerland.

*Q: What is your perception of the role of various Governments: U.S., EU, Norway, Canada, NGOs. Who was doing what?*

A: The Inter-Africa Group continued to play a role, probably because Abdul Mohammed, who is Ethiopian, was very well connected to the Ethiopian leaders, and Bethuel Kiplagat was very well connected to the Kenyans. Bethuel used to be their undersecretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and ambassador. And then of course you have the United Nations, from a distance. There were people like the undersecretary for political affairs and who organized several gatherings in New York.

Aleri is very important because there was another initiative called 'Concerned Southern Sudanese.' We first met in Ireland, and then with the support of Switzerland, had a whole series of meetings in Switzerland. This group was trying to unify the position of

the South on the critical issues behind the war. What is the war about? Their idea then was that we should focus on self-determination, and not on New Sudan. I was a shuttling person between the SPLM -- John Garang in particular -- and this group. The Ireland meeting came out with a document, then the series of meetings supported by Switzerland reached a point where we wanted to unify our position with that of the movement. I kept talking to Garang about sending people. In the end, Garang became suspicious, he did not trust the motives of some of the people in this group, particularly Bona Malwal. Bona was linked to some of the political parties, particularly the Umma Party, and this was the way of infiltrating and undermining the movement. There came a point when he just said to me point blank that he would oppose this, and that he did not want any part of it. I then decided that since this is causing another division within the South, I will not be a party to it. So I resigned. My resignation soon led to stopping the funding and then a real break with these friends of mine. Garang's position was vindicated when only a week later Bona began to write a series of very venomous articles against John Garang himself and against the movement.

Bona was involved with something called Christian Solidarity International, in the slave redemption program, which turned out to be a source of corruption even for our people. I was firmly opposed to the whole thing, because I felt to be paying slavers to go and redeem people. Number one, you're paying a criminal, which should be punished and, secondly, you are introducing corruption so that children were self-cycled as slaves to be redeemed. It became a source of income.

*Q: You're saying that such slaves were redeemed and then sold again back into slavery?*

A: Not exactly sold again into slavery, but presented as sold again, so that there would be a staged program of redemption. Many children were redeemed and it did one good thing: it exposed clearly the slavery that existed and which was proven in an international meeting later on by a committee that was established by the U.S. But in any case, Bona was stopped by the SPLM. They told Christian Solidarity International that they should no longer come with Southern Sudanese as individuals, including Bona, into this program. If they want redemption, it should be organized through the SPLM. Bona took that as a personal insult. It also deprived him of his contact with his constituents and of resources that he could use for building his base.

*Q: Did it obstruct the forward process on the IGAD becoming the CPA?*

A: This was an attempt by individuals to help the cause of the CPA by unifying the position of the South, because they took the position that the SPLM was presenting in the negotiations as unrealistic; that idea of a New Sudan. They wanted to fall back on self-determination as the agenda of the South. This, together with the rebellion of Riek Machar and Deng Makal (who by the way came back to the movement after finding that agreement with the Government wasn't worth it), in the end actually made the SPLM take the dual agenda of talking 'New Sudan' but also posturing some self-determination. That, if the idea of secular, democratic, pluralistic New Sudan is not acceptable, then there could be a confederation arrangement for the transition period, with the South

exercising the right of self-determination after the interim period. You could say that while this was a distraction, it was part of a process that eventually crystallized in the South, adopting or accepting something much less than the vision that John Garang had already been promoting.

*Q: Can you comment further on the role of the U.S. in this process, as well as the other actors - the AU, the EU, etc.?*

A: First of all, I do think that the timing, especially after September 11<sup>th</sup>, was very critical to making the U.S. become very committed to finding a solution in the Sudan case, because the war was a source of evils. Khartoum had to recognize that if they did not cooperate with the United States there was high likelihood that they could be hit as being engaged in terrorism. So the Government had to bend over backwards to be seen to cooperate with the United States. The SPLM, on the other hand, knew that although it enjoyed unique support from the United States, if they were belligerent and uncooperative they could also be labeled. Initially, although we were all taking the peace process seriously, the positions of the parties were so far apart that I really think John Garang did not envisage coming to an agreement with these people. I think he wanted to link with the other regional conflicts to converge on these people and throw them out.

*Q: These people being the Government in Khartoum?*

A: The National Islamic Front Government, which is Islamist and Arabist and cannot provide a basis for unity. So you could say that while they played the game, to appear to be really seeking peace, they didn't see the prospect of peace really coming. When the talks got to be very keen, I came to Khartoum. Garang was telling me that because of these people's weakness, they probably are the right people to do business with, because we can negotiate a better deal with a weak Government than we would be able to get later on. So I came to Khartoum and met with the president just before Ali Osman went to engage Garang in the intense talks that resulted in the CPA.

*Q: You say Ali?*

A: Ali Osman Taha, who was then first vice president. In meeting the president and Ali Osman, their view was that Garang was not serious about peace, and that he didn't want peace. I said to them I had just met with Garang and that he thinks that you are the right people to do business with. And remarkably, the president said, "People think we're weak, but how can we be weak when we were isolated at one point - even the Arab world and the Muslim world had separated themselves from us - but now not only are people coming back but our own position and everything is clearly strengthened. How can we be called weak?"

I met with Ali Osman and I was wearing a suit very much like the suit he was wearing, even the tie and he said, "By the way, I'm going to see your friend and the fact that we are wearing the same kind of suit, I hope is a good omen." So that was when he went to see Garang. In fact Garang was also reluctant to meet with Ali Osman at first. Within his

SPLM/SPLA there was sharp division between those who wanted Garang to meet with Ali and those who advised against it. In the end they agreed to meet and that was when the talks became serious.

*Q: When was this?*

A: It took about two years, John Garang and Ali Osman. But before that, Salva Kiir had been withdrawn from leading the delegation and Nhial Deng had taken the leadership. But it was not until John and Ali Osman, then the first vice president, had these face to face negotiations that things then began to move in a positive direction. The U.S. then decided, while strongly backing the process, to allow the parties to directly negotiate.

*Q: Do you think the U.S. was an honest broker in the deal?*

A: A former Assistant Secretary said recently in a meeting, “We were never neutral in that there was injustice. We wanted peace. We wanted to be genuine, honest brokers. But the injustice had to be corrected. So,” she said, “We were with the South. We were with the SPLM.” She made it quite open.

*Q: You said things really got started when John Garang met Ali Osman. From that point until the signing of the CPA in February 2005, is there more to be said about how the process was conducted?*

A: The viewpoint in certain circles in Washington was that John was maintaining such a tough line that it made the negotiations become very protracted, and made it difficult for Khartoum to accept a settlement that they could not sell back home. I could argue the opposite, that the position of the Government was so rigid on certain issues, especially when it came to their Arabist Islamic (Sharia) agenda, that it’s not easy to find a framework of unity in which this view of the country would continue to dominate. I thought they were the ones responsible, but John later on explained what almost proved his critics right. He would argue and push the envelope to a certain point and then push them to the point of accepting that and then take the next level, step by step, until they came to a point of no return that they could no longer disengage. Otherwise, the responsibility for the failure would be with them.

*Q: And what were the mediators doing during this period? Simply allowing the process to take place?*

A: Sometimes they gave talks about police, security. Sometimes they discussed things in general principle terms, issues that are arising. And behind the scenes, they would talk to the parties. In some cases, many of them were sympathetic to the cause of the South and the other marginalized groups. People like one Western ambassador in Khartoum, were more seen to be toeing the Government line. He and I attended a number of meetings in which we confronted one another. He was always dismissing self-determination as a legal concept and as something viable, that Sudan cannot be divided; it is not viable to divide. And I would argue that although I’m for the unity of the country,

it's very important to take self-determination seriously, in order to compel the North, if they want unity, to create conditions that would sustain unity. My position is to support self-determination, not because we are supporting separation but because we want the North to create conditions that would win the support of the South.

*Q: Do you feel that the CPA succeeded in doing that?*

A: The CPA unwittingly deepened the division of the country, because you cannot have the North, whose party is the governing party in the Government of National Unity, continue to hold to its Arab, Muslim agenda and share in the framework in which the South would be a party through a framework of national unity. And it is making, clearly, the framework not attractive to the South. Two ideas were critical in the CPA: self-determination for the South and making unity attractive. Well, if you cannot make unity attractive, then self-determination almost by definition for Southerners means opportunity to break away.

*Q: You said that the length of the talks produced enough detail that there was some good substance in the agreement.*

A: This is in the judgment of some people. I said there were two viewpoints. This is not my opinion.

*Q: Okay, in your opinion?*

A: My opinion clearly is it is too complicated a document, too big, too cumbersome, and people are having a hard time living up to the details of its provisions.

*Q: You've rendered us your own personal judgment of the CPA, in a nutshell. Given whether it's good or bad or indifferent, how is its implementation?*

A: What is happening now is because of the sudden, untimely death of John Garang. Garang had a national vision, to which during all these twenty years of warring he remained committed, at a time when most Southerners did not believe in that vision. But because he was bringing in some positive results, they took it as a clever ploy for their separatist agenda. But John became so persistent over the years and he began to win pockets in the North that people began to see the wisdom, the plausibility, of the New Sudan vision. When he came to be sworn in as vice president, first vice president, there was such a turnout, estimated in the millions, sending a clear signal that this man was reshaping the country.

With his death that power, that vision began to fall back. People who are involved in implementation, people like Salva Kiir, were known to be skeptics throughout, about this vision of a united Sudan. Their agenda is more Southern and more focused on self-determination and secession. Rhetorically they still speak of the New Sudan, but it is lacking in that conviction and that power that John brought into it. So what is happening is they are retreating into the South and almost leaving the national Government to the

National Congress Party to dominate and to continue, with minimal concessions, its own agenda, both domestic and foreign. And what this is doing is turning the CPA into a tool for containing the South.

Something similar happened in Darfur. Had the Darfur agreement actually gone through, the way it initially was envisaged, it would have also been a tool of containing the West.

So the NCP, which was initially under siege and really threatened, and really felt that they were fighting for survival, now they take a breath of fresh air.

*Q: So you think the CPA gave shelter to the Khartoum Government to do as it wished?*

A: Right. What I don't know is what the key players like the United States and the UK expected. That was said even by another former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. John Garang was saying in Washington, publicly, that for him the CPA, unlike the Addis Ababa agreement, which people took as an end in itself, the CPA is a means for transforming the country, to create the New Sudan that he has always talked about. And his way of transforming the country was to get into strategic alliances with key Northern political forces, particularly from the marginalized areas. I said to him, "If I were your counterpart and heard you say 'this agreement is only a step towards transforming Sudan' why would I agree with you?"

He said, "Because you've got no choice." And the former assistant secretary said the same. Another U.S. official said, "This is actually the position of the United States, which we have declared publicly, that this agreement is a means of transforming the country." Well it doesn't look that way now. It doesn't look like a means for transforming the country.

*Q: Do you think it was a mistake that there was no external authority responsible for implementation, that all the implementation depended on internal Government mechanisms and organizations?*

A: Well, if Bashir is right in something he said recently, the distinction between the CPA and the DPA in Darfur is that there's international involvement envisaged in the implementation of the CPA but not in the Darfur agreement. You have UNMIS in the South, which is almost meant to oversee that the agreement is implemented credibly.

*Q: In the South, presumably.*

A: We're talking now about the CPA, which is the South and neighboring areas, Nuba Mountains and you have what they call the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. It's meant, also, to oversee the credible implementation. Then you have all these mechanisms, security arrangements, which involved outsiders. What is happening now, though, is that the Government and by the Government you really mean the NCP, has a controlling hand in all of this. If they can kick out Jan Pronk and get away with it, if the

Government has totally rejected international involvement in Darfur and are threatening to fight and nobody has the stomach to send in troops that will just start fighting the Government, you want to fall back on the AU or what they call "AU plus plus." In Khartoum recently that was the language they were using, that we will allow other forces to come in supportive of the AU but not as international forces.

Well if they got away with all of this, then the message is that the tough line is working and therefore they will become empowered to continue to impose their will. So some other methods must be found to check that arrogance of power, to send a signal to them that in the end if they violate the CPA in a fundamental way, the price will be very high. You do that by strengthening the Government of Southern Sudan, by strengthening the SPLA, also by strengthening the SPLM as a political party and encourage them to be active in the North, so that they're not just seen as a Southern party but a national party. And there is a case to be made for continuing to pursue John Garang's vision of the New Sudan, if need be by the alliances of certain forces in the North, especially from the marginalized regions.

Ali Osman, who was the Government leader during the Darfur talks. In talking to the parties, both Minni Minnawi, who represents one wing of the Sudan Liberation Movement, and Abdelwahid El Nur, who represents the other side, clearly were thinking beyond the agreement, thinking beyond the war, to see what alliances the forces in Darfur could enter into with the South and form some grand national alliance for the New Sudan. But this course has suffered a setback because of Garang not being there.

*Q: You just said that the way to reduce the arrogance of power in Khartoum is to make the price high for maintaining that arrogance. Can you relate that to the CPA process itself, the implementation? Could the process have been done in a different way?*

A: There were serious dilemmas confronted. Several people wanted to end the war and stop the killing. And so they had to make some serious sacrifices, compromises. For instance, you call the CPA "Comprehensive Peace Agreement." It's a misnomer, because it left out a number of political forces in the country. It was an agreement between two warring parties, the National Congress Party and the SPLM/SPLA. Although that was important to ending the war, because these were the ones fighting, it did not create a framework that was sufficiently inclusive. There were some aspirations that in the implementation process it would be made inclusive, but it is quite clear that it has strengthened the two parties and in particular the dominant party, the National Congress Party, which has such a high share of power that they can pretty much impose their will on the other parties. That's one thing.

The other thing is in the end, there was so much reliance on two individuals, John Garang and Ali Osman, and there was a degree of faith that Garang would continue to be a major force in influencing policy and actions in Khartoum. So the agreement gives a lot to the presidency and the presidency then was meant to be shared between Bashir and John Garang. Now, John Garang had already proven that had he been a member of that presidency he could not have been outwitted, nor could he had been out-muscled by

Bashir, which is now what has happened. And to some extent Salva is retreating from all that and focusing on the South, which needs these people to run the show. So the dependency on what Garang would have done has in that respect proven to be a setback.

*Q: Will this affect the referendum?*

A: The Government is already proving that it's not reliably implementing the agreement, that they may renege on the implementation of the self-determination idea. In fact, they're already using the pretext of Darfur to say should international forces come in without consent of the Government and should there be a fight between the Government forces and international forces and the South hold to the position it now has in welcoming international forces, then NCP will disengage from the agreement, disengage from the CPA.

*Q: What do you think would actually happen? If the 2011 referendum occurs, what could be the outcome?*

A: In all probability, most people predict that the South will vote for secession. In Khartoum, at the national level, that is making unity attractive to them. If they vote for secession, the North is going to lose a lot. All this oil wealth, which is now strengthening their power, is mostly within the borders of the South. So either they will play with the borders or they will try to create another reality that could actually endanger the implementation of the self-determination agreement.

*Q: Are you suggesting, that they might not hold the referendum?*

A: There is a conviction on the part of many Southerners, including Salva Kiir himself, that these people will find a way of undermining the implementation of the agreement, maybe even go back to a state of emergency or war and then say under these circumstances we cannot implement the agreement. We have to recognize that they are continuing to try to divide the South, very much, by co-opting some of the ministers in the central Government that are from the SPLM, by undermining the central ministers who are from the South or SPLM, by using some of the armed groups in the South that have not yet been integrated into the SPLA or into the Government forces and by using some independent Southerners who are not members of the SPLM, to give them positions of influence at the national level, to play a role in the South.

When one looks back and sees what lessons we can learn, the role of regional actors is both a positive and a negative. The positive is, when the process started, Khartoum, having just supported the rebel movements in Ethiopia and Eritrea to overthrow Mengistu, took them as friendly countries which, if they were to mediate, we'd probably see favor Khartoum against the rebels. And in fact initially, immediately after the overthrow of Mengistu, we saw some skirmishes between the SPLM/SPLA forces and the forces of Ethiopia. But these people came in with the idea that they were freedom fighters themselves. They wanted justice done. So they told Khartoum, if you want us to help we will help but we have lived in your country and we know what the roots of the

problems are. We have to address the crisis at its roots. The South had really never enjoyed the right of self-determination that brought independence to the Sudan. Southerners are marginalized. And then they listed a number of key issues. "We have to address these issues."

This came as a surprise for Khartoum. Aferwerki said he couldn't understand why John was talking the language of unity and he said, "We have lived in your country. We have observed very closely what's happening there. The first class citizens are the Arabs of central Sudan. Second class citizens are westerners from Darfur and these areas in Kordofan who, although not Arabs, are Muslims. Third class citizens are we refugees in your country and Southerners come as fourth class citizens. That cannot be a basis for unity." As a matter of fact I said, later on, "You could have considered the Nigerians and other African Muslims who come on their way to pilgrimage. You could have said they're the fourth class citizens and Southerners come as fifth class citizens."

That's how the principle of self-determination was accepted in the declaration of principles, because it said, "The South is entitled to the right of self-determination. We would prefer the Sudan to remain united but you have to create conditions for unity. If you fail to do that and therefore cannot win the South, the South will break away." That was a positive contribution by a regional group that understood the situation and was also likely to be a factor in the war, such as Nigeria and Kenya and Uganda.

The negative is once they began to have their own problems among themselves, the trust and even the unity of purpose that had initially made the process credible began to disappear. So the whole peace process became flawed and protracted. And if other outsiders did not engage and particularly the United States did not come in so decisively, the process would not have succeeded. So you could say that part of the distraction were regional differences that began to emerge, initially between Sudan and the other countries and later among those countries themselves, particularly Eritrea-Ethiopia, which weakened their resolve. And they began to take sides with the Government in order to fight one another. So Khartoum began to play delay tactics.

The international climate played a key role. By the same token, once Sudan began to endear itself to the United States, particularly in the cooperation in the war against terror, on which Washington is divided, so that the head of security would come here to meet with his counterparts, which would outrage the Hill. And to some extent the State Department is somewhere there in the middle, not entirely standing with the Hill but not entirely wanting normalized relations. So the role of the United States has been diluted by the fact that on the one hand they need Khartoum in the war against terror as this very good partner, precisely because they have been involved with terrorists and so they have the inside story of what it is all about. Then things got favorable for the regime while at the same time unfavorable, especially on Darfur.

But they know that the United States is not about to send troops to Darfur. They know that no Western country is about to send troops there. Much of the talk is talk, not

viable. Therefore their self-confidence has been built up and with that self-confidence comes a degree of lack of cooperation in credible implementation.

*Q: Is there anything else you want to add?*

A: I think the compromise that was made on maintaining Islamic law in the North, essentially, in the Sudan, Islam goes hand in hand with Arabism. That compromise which, in a way, was just to be practical, to end the war, I think has not helped in laying the foundation for Sudan evolving as a nation that has discovered itself fully in a comprehensive way to build a genuinely united nation. My worry is that if all goes according to the CPA and the CPA is credibly implemented, the South will break away. But until the vision that John Garang has presented to the nation is just going to die away -- the idea of creating a New Sudan which is freed from this domination by a minority that misidentifies itself as Arab. The North has a law that is imposing an Islamic agenda on the country where even the Muslims are not agreed on the version of Islam, which is being applied by the NCP. This is going to create continuing instability in the North.

*Q: If it should come to partition or secession, how viable would the two states be?*

A: If the North disengages from destabilizing the South and they allow the South to manage their own differences, the South could manage. It is not that different from any other African country which has many tribes. They require quite a bit of wisdom and a great deal of statesmanship, and the majority has to cater for the needs of the minority and not exchange one domination for another. I doubt that Khartoum would want the South to succeed. They will continue to destabilize the South.

It will be very difficult to hold the North under the present circumstances. I don't think that any of the regions of the North would want to secede and create their own state. I think there's sufficient cohesion in Arabism and Islam controlling and the regions have been more defined over a longer period. The British ruled the Sudan as two states in one, the South very different from the North. So you could say that the North has had a certain degree of resolution into a common identity. But not under the present regime and whether you take the traditional political parties, Umma Party or DUP or Communists or you take the forces of change that want to modernize the country or to secularize, I don't think that they would settle for this domination by a minority movement. The question is what can they do? And what they can do is simply a transformation -- what it would actually mean is transforming the country on accommodation of their differences and to try to have a pluralistic country.

*Q: In a larger context, the CPA and its implementation, what are the lessons learned?*

A: One critically divisive issue was whether Darfur should be approached as a vision or should be kept as separate states. Well that debate has come up in the South before, with Nemieri using some divisive elements in the South, wanting to break up the South into regions, three regions and the South fought to be one region and they eventually won that fight. For Darfur resisting, Darfurians wanting to have a region of their own, doesn't

make sense. What will they do, being a region? Become a country and break away? Not only Darfur, but the East. And even Kordofan, if they wanted to. And farther North, Nubia. Let them be regions. If they all either have their federal arrangements, based on regions, or even a confederation, this nation can only be kept together by leaving room for people to discover themselves and to build on their own sense of identity within the larger picture.