

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

**Interview # 32 – Executive Summary**

*Interviewed by: Daniel Whitman*  
*Initial Interview date: November 9, 2006*  
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The interviewee was engaged in Sudan from 1989 as a senior U.S. State Department official. He met Sudanese President Sadiq al-Mahdi, who appeared to some as a Muslim extremist in the earlier context, but was later seen in retrospect by the interviewee and others as a moderate by comparison to those who followed him. He supported Shariah law not so much as a matter of principle as a way of stabilizing his political base.

The interviewee's recollections of John Garang, on the other hand, form a composite of intransigence and lost opportunities. "We kept leaning on him...but he was totally rigid."

In the disarray of the 1989 coup, a greater menace emerged in the person of National Islamic Front party leader Hassan Turabi. "He was going to be the Caliph, based in Sudan, and he totally believed in the Muslim revolution." Paradoxically, Garang turned more open to negotiation with the North after the more radical couple took control there, while at the same time Northern Regime leader Omar Bashir opened up to the possibility of the South eventually seceding.

Exploring evolving opinion in UK and Egypt, the interviewee found alarm and concern over the new regime in the North. At the same time, civil and military unrest in the South bore the likely fingerprints of the Khartoum regime.

Garang meanwhile did a 180-degree reversal, and favored a negotiated, unified Sudan but lacked interlocutors. The interviewee laments the tardiness of Garang's change. International support, including U.S. Congress, favored the beleaguered South, based on conservatives' support of religious freedom for Christians.

A humorous moment passed after the U.S. intervention in Somalia, which stunned and concerned the Khartoum regime: the interviewee regrets, in retrospect, that he did not bluff and leave the Khartoum regime more nervous about being the next in line for U.S. action. He maintained frequent contact with the Khartoum leaders and with John Garang. He differs with a Clinton official's establishing "isolation" as the treatment for Sudan, when time could have been better spent in advancing negotiation. He implies that more international pressure applied to Garang and the Khartoum regime at an earlier stage could have yielded a quicker North-South peace. Once the negotiations did take

place, U.S. mediators distinguished themselves in their technical abilities and personal commitment to the process.

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*Q: We want to know your knowledge about the CPA, and what your own personal involvement was in the North-South talks in Sudan, starting at any point that you would like.*

A: I was assistant secretary of state under Bush 41 sworn in in April of '89. My first day on the job I got a call from a senior State Department Official, who said, "I want you to go to Sudan." I said, "Why?" I wasn't planning to do that. I had other things, Angola, Mozambique. He said, "It's something important." I said, "Why?" He said, "I'm getting calls from congressmen all the time, these people on the so-called Hunger Caucus and it's very important that you go there, show that we're concerned about it and that we're doing something about it."

I asked for a briefing and they told me that there is a war going on -- this was 1989 -- there is a war going on between the government and the South. The government is a democratically elected government but yet they're waging war against the southerners and one of their major weapons is denial of food aid, since the people of southern Sudan are unable to cultivate because of the war and land mines, there's not enough food. So the UN has a food program but the government is denying access or delaying shipments. So you have to go out there and talk to the government.

I went in and saw the democratically elected leaders of Sudan. Sadiq al-Mahdi was the prime minister at the time. He was very gracious and I saw all the other people and they were very disdainful of all the southern guerillas. They said, "We're a democracy! Why don't they just run for office?" And it's true, they were certified as a democratic system there. "What is this guerilla warfare all about?" I said, "Oone of the big problems is that you have something called sharia law and the southerners don't like that." So Sadiq al-Mahdi said, "Yes, but we decided not to implement it. We cannot take it off the books, because it's a political problem for us in the Muslim community, but we don't implement it. So it's a moot point. They shouldn't be making guerilla war, they should be running in democratic elections."

My main priority was to get them to loosen up on the UN, which they agreed to do. But when I looked at it, I said, "This is not enough. You can't keep fighting the food problem every year."

*Q: By loosen up, you mean, on the UN?*

A: Allow the UN to do its work. The UN was bringing food in from two directions, by train and barge from the north and over the border from Kenya, and the government was interfering. Aircraft were not allowed to overfly, not getting landing permission, as a military tactic, to try and starve out the rebel army. So I told them this is unacceptable, so they agreed to do that but then, talking to my own staff, I said, "This is not the way to go. We had to do this but we have to find a solution to the basic problem. So let's develop a strategy."

We felt sympathetic to the argument that they had not implemented sharia law or at least what they called the criminal penalties, amputation, that sort of thing. They'd maintained sharia law for family issues, divorce and marriage and all that but the criminal, they're not implementing it, they're just implementing British law. So we said, "This is not unreasonable. The southerners should see this as a gesture of willingness to compromise."

So we went back to Washington and they did fulfill their promise to let the food go through and we had another season without terrible famine. So that was successful. We figured, "What do we do to bring about a peaceful solution?" So we visited both the North and the South again. I went to Juba on my second trip and talked to a lot of people who were not involved with politics.

*Q: Still in 1989?*

A: April to August of '89. We talked to John Garang, the leader of the SPLA, and said, "Why don't you get into negotiations on this, on participating in the political process?" He said, "No, we cannot do this while sharia law is in effect." So we said, "Yes, but Sadiq al-Mahdi, who at least has the virtue of being democratically elected, said 'We're not going to implement the bad things,'" the criminal law, what they call the *Hudud*. And Garang said, "No, totally unacceptable. We must have that before we even talk to anybody." We kept leaning on him, putting pressure on him, but he was totally rigid on that issue. So we didn't see an opening there. And talking to the government there, they kept saying, "We will be kicked out of office if we repeal the sharia law." We saw it as kind of an impasse, so we were kind of worried that we had no openings.

Then came the coup. The coup was in I believe June 1989. A minority party, the elected government was a coalition of three parties, the DUP, the Democratic Union Party, the National Islamic Front and the prime minister's party, had the most votes. So it was an alliance of three parties. The coup took place. The NIF, the one with the least number of votes, only 15 per cent of the votes, the National Islamic Party, made an arrangement with certain members of the army, that they had to have an Islamic coup and that Sudan had to become an Islamic state, democratically elected governments were no good for Sudan. It had to be all Islamic.

And the leader of the NIF was a fellow named Hassan Turabi, educated in Europe, had a PhD from the Sorbonne, also from Oxford. He had maximum credentials but he fancied himself as the future head of the Muslim world. He was going to be the caliph, based in Sudan. And he totally believed in the Muslim revolution. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt, the Algerian revolutionaries, he was on the same wavelength as all these guys. The head of the new junta was an army general named Bashir, who is the guy in power now, still but we all knew that behind the throne was this fellow Turabi, who was effectively pulling the strings.

After the coup took place the first thing I did was go out there but our ambassador in Cairo, Frank Wisner, insisted that I go through Cairo because the Egyptians are the country with the greatest interest in Sudan, their neighbor and the Nile River going through there. They said, "It will be very good for our relations with Egypt if you at least asked for their advice before going to Sudan to see this new junta." So I went there and found it rather interesting that Sudan policy in Egypt was not controlled by the foreign ministry, but by the intelligence service. So I had breakfast on the lawn of the chief of intelligence and he said, "You should be very happy with this coup." He said, "The previous government of Sadiq al-Mahdi was totally useless. It couldn't get anything done and just because it was democratically elected doesn't mean they could do their work. They were just useless. These people coming in now, they know what they're doing. They're efficient. They'll implement reforms and above all else be good allies of us and you and everything else. So we recommend them to you. Because they call themselves Islamists, don't worry about it." So that was stop number one.

And by the way, they had always told us they hated the previous guys. This was just one of ten times they had told us how much they disliked the other ones. And when I saw Sadiq al-Mahdi the first time when he was still in office he told me how much he disliked the Egyptians for interfering in Sudanese affairs.

*Q: Was this general in the Egyptian government, beyond the intelligence people? You say that it was the intelligence people who ran the policy, so to speak.*

A: Yeah, but they generally represented the view of President Mubarak. My next stop was Khartoum. I apparently was the first foreign high official to see President Bashir. And he was very friendly, very nice. He did not speak any English, though I suspect he did understand it but everything was in Arabic and he had a translator with him. But there were people hovering around, constantly whispering in his ear. I had the feeling these were Turabi's people, telling him what to say. And they said that we shouldn't worry about this Islamic thing, this is what Sudan needs and it'll be a more efficient country for development and that sort of thing and they are willing to make peace with the South. So I said, "What do you mean by that?" And Bashir said to me, "I'm willing to go one on one with Garang and we could settle everything."

*Q: He said this to you?*

A: Yes, knowing of course that I had relations with Garang. So I said, “What do you mean by that?” He said, “Well, let’s negotiate. We don’t want to continue this war. We want to just work things out. I’m sure we can.”

*Q: You think he was relying on you to make that connection?*

A: I’m pretty sure he was. So we took that on board and we had a meeting with the country team. Ambassador James Cheek was there. He had only recently come on board and he was well known as a troubleshooter. He was in Afghanistan and various countries where there was instability. I asked, “Because this is an Islamic government, does it mean we can’t work with them?” And the consensus was not necessarily, we might be able to work with them, as long as they don’t harbor terrorists. So after that, we decided to work with them but as I was flying out of Khartoum on a commercial flight I was sitting next to the British ambassador, who was going back to London on consultations and I said to him, “Are you worried about this coup?” And he said, “Yes, we’re very worried about it. It looks like it’s bad. It looks like it’s very radical Islamists in charge. And not only are we worried about that, we’re worried about you, because you don’t seem to be worried. You seem to be willing to give them the benefit of the doubt and we think that’s a big mistake on your part.” So I took that on board.

Well the next step was to talk to John Garang. Basically the message to Garang was, “Look, he’s willing to talk.”

*Q: You were leaving Khartoum for Europe at that time? You came back again to see Garang?*

A: I saw Garang in Nairobi a little while later, probably in July. And we talked about this. I said, “He’s willing to negotiate directly with you.” And by the way, before that, we’d gotten pretty good intelligence reports that some of the people within the National Islamic Front, some of the intellectuals were saying, “Who needs the South? It’s too much of a burden.” Now remember, this is before oil was discovered. So as far as they were concerned it was just a useless place anyway. It was Christianized. So why not get rid of it? Let it go. They didn’t say that to us but we were getting echoes in the intelligence reporting. So we said, “If that’s going on, maybe a talk with Bashir and Garang might lead to something. They might say to Garang, ‘Take your independence. We won’t stop you.’”

*Q: Did you have a preference as to whether Garang might just go, take the South and go away or possibly make an accommodation to remain?*

A: I wasn’t that expert on Sudan so I boned up pretty quickly. We brought in academics who lectured us in the State Department. After listening to them I reached a personal conclusion that the only possible solution is a divorce but I was not going to push it. I was going to push negotiations because our overriding principle was not to support secession in Africa. We were supporting the Organization of African Union, keep the

colonial boundaries, that was theirs. I wasn't going to push any particular line. I just wanted to make peace.

I saw Garang and said, "Bashir told me that he wants to talk to you directly. Could you give me a message back to him?" He said, "I will not negotiate directly with Bashir." I said, "Why not?" He said, "Bashir and I should not be deciding the future of Sudan. Two people, all by ourselves, we're deciding the future of Sudan? This is not fair. What I want is a national conference of trade unions, journalists, lawyers, political parties," because one thing the Islamic government did when they came into office was to abolish political parties, abolish newspapers. It became a total totalitarian state. He said, "I want civic society, I want political parties, I want labor unions. We should all come together and chart the future of Sudan." So I said, "At least start talking to him. You could propose this." He said, "No, I will not talk to him, unless he, in effect, brings back everything that Sadiq al-Mahdi had." Because under Sadiq al-Mahdi everything was legal. He even had a Communist Party in Sudan.

So I found this a little hypocritical on Garang's part, because he wouldn't negotiate with a democratically elected leader who had all of this civil society there and freedom of the press. And now he's got a leader who abolished everything, so he won't talk to him 'til he brings it all back. So I had a feeling he was not ready for negotiations.

I passed this back to Bashir and we went back to the drawing board because we felt that we needed to come up with a new strategy. At that time, in July, a little later a U.S.-based Sudanese researcher came to see us. He had gone back to Sudan to talk to people and he was invited to see Bashir even though he was a friend of Garang, even though he's a fervent southern nationalist and was constantly criticizing Khartoum. He was invited to talk to everyone, to Turabi and all these people. And he came back and said, "You know, I think they'd be open to some fresh ideas, maybe some confidence building measures or something like that."

*Q: Came back to Washington?*

A: He was based in Washington at the time. He said, "Bashir personally asked me for some new ideas on this whole thing." So we're sitting around talking and I said, "Let's propose something sensational. Let's propose that all Khartoum troops be pulled out of the South. In return for that, Garang would promise not to do any secession." One of the reasons I proposed it is because during my visit to the South I saw hundreds of thousands of refugees sitting in camps in Juba and other towns and they weren't out there doing agriculture and keeping their flocks and they were being given food aid. But we knew that at night the SPLA was out there like the Viet Cong and they were surrounding the cities so the Sudanese military couldn't do much, they were being ambushed all the time. So I said, "Let's get them out of the South. Garang would promise not to secede. This would be a preliminary to negotiations and the refugee camps, people could go home, go back to their normal lives." So the Sudanese researcher loved that, said, "That's terrific!" So he goes back to Khartoum and proposes that and he also went to see John Garang. John Garang said, "Yes. I accept it without question." And while it was kind of tilted in

his favor, no northern troops down there, but of course he would be constrained on political developments. He couldn't secede. He said, "I'll take it!"

But then he went to see Bashir and Bashir said, "I'll think about it." And then he got back a couple weeks later and said, "I can't do it because I would be kicked out of office. There would be a coup against me if I did that because of course people don't want to believe that Garang's promised not to secede. He'll immediately secede, as soon as we leave. So there is a consensus in the North, at least among the elites, that we don't accept secession. So I can't accept that." So we kept brainstorming and this was leading into late 1989 already, early 1990. We said, "Okay, let's do something less. Let's propose less things." And we said, "Why don't we have the SPLA withdraw to a distance of 25 kilometers from every town, thereby allowing refugees to get out of their camps and move back to their villages and give the Sudanese Army a little breathing room but the Sudanese Army would go down by fifty per cent." And we were just looking for anything that could help reduce the tension and lead to negotiations.

*Q: The SPLA claimed to be espousing the interests of the people of the South, but you're saying that they were actually impeding internally displaced people who were southerners?*

A: They were afraid to go out because there was fighting at night and the army was laying mines.

*Q: Was this the intention of the SPLA, to keep the refugees in their camps without moving at night?*

A: No, the intention was to harass the army, to get them to give up.

*Q: It just created enough chaos.*

A: The refugees really were so fearful they had to stay there. There were land mines and all sorts of other things out there. We proposed that and that didn't go anywhere. Then we started getting intelligence reports of the Islamic government starting to become a safe haven for Middle East terrorists. Every known terrorist group in the Middle East had set up shop in Khartoum. We knew this came from Turabi, who wanted to influence all of these Islamic movements. And we started getting word because you had Abu Nidal and all the people looking, we were worried about our ambassador because we had had this thing, the PLO, back in the Sixties, had killed our ambassador there. So that got us upset. But nevertheless we continued to brainstorm, continued to talk to everyone, not getting anywhere. So our only success was keeping the food going. We had enough clout to keep the food going, right through the end, all through 1990.

A year after the coup I went to see the Egyptians again. Actually I didn't go to see them about Sudan but we had an annual review of African policy with the Egyptian foreign ministry under Boutros-Ghali, he was their vice minister for Africa. So this was two or three days of intensive comparative analysis. But of course I took advantage of my



presence in Cairo to see the head of intelligence. And about one year after the coup, which was June 1990, he said to me, "We're sorry we told you that was a good coup. We now think it was a bad coup. We were blinded by our total dislike for the predecessor government. We thought we could influence these people but they are now giving arms to the Moslem Brotherhood of Egypt. So they are trying to destabilize us." And we had also gotten reliable reports that they had sent arms through the diplomatic pouch into Tunis to try and destabilize the government there and try and stir up an Islamic movement there and that they were helping the Algerian Islamists as well.

So they were clearly becoming a pretty nasty bunch but nevertheless we figured as long as they're allowing the food shipments to go through we should not give up on trying to negotiate some things and we thought that there was as much blame on Garang's side here as there was on the government's side, because the government seemed to be more interested in negotiations where Garang was stuck on preconditions to negotiations. As a diplomat, I thought that those who place preconditions are guilty of stopping negotiations.

So we really didn't get anywhere on this. We were not that active. We kept going to see both sides. I was busy on other things, namely the Ethiopian-Eritrean situation and Angola. So I would say towards the last quarter of 1990 it was virtually dormant on Sudan. We just went back to worrying about, trying to follow the movements of these terrorist groups in Khartoum and the first quarter of 1991 was also the same. But we reached a conclusion of the Ethiopian-Eritrean War in May of '91 and in July of '91 there was a big meeting in Addis Ababa to launch the new Ethiopia with Eritrea seceding, which caused a big ruckus but it happened and the new ruling rebel group of Ethiopia called a meeting of all political groups to chart the future of Ethiopia. So we were invited as honored guests, since we played a big role in ending the war and other countries in the region were there.

While I was there I was asked to have a private meeting with a Sudanese official, El-Khalifa, he may have been chief of intelligence or national security advisor. I believe now, in the year 2006, he's still there. He asked for the meeting. I wasn't going to do any Sudan business. He said, "Well, Mr. Cohen, we thank you for all the work you've done on this. It's very hard and we know you're very sincere about this. I'm sorry we could never reach anything with John Garang, but from now on we'd appreciate if you didn't do any more." In other words, "Butt out!" So I took it on board. I didn't promise him I wouldn't be doing anything. I just said, "Well, thank you for telling me." But what he was saying was we're no longer going to cooperate with you on any sort of mediation, that sort of thing.

This was July of 1991, when they had this big meeting in Addis. Reports started coming of civil war within the South. Various militias were fighting each other and the SPLA was being attacked by other groups. And this turned out to be, the main protagonist was a fellow named Riek Mashar. And it turned out to be, turned out to be more or less an ethnic thing. Riek Mashar was the kind of leader of the Nuer ethnic group and Garang's power was based mainly in the Dinka. So it quickly came clear to us the government's

game plan, since they couldn't reach an agreement through our mediation to bring the war to an end, was to get the southerners fighting each other. It was clear that they bribed people and they used all sorts of methods, ethnic antagonism, "Look at this Garang, the Dinkas are dominating you, what are you getting out of it?"

*Q: You say it's the Khartoum people doing this?*

A: Yeah, it looked quite clear to us that in Khartoum, first they tell us to stop mediating, so they obviously had a new game plan, which is to destroy the civil war from within. If they get fighting each other, then they'll kill each other off and that'll be the way to end the war, instead of mediation. But that was a mistake, since the SPLA was able to fight two wars at one time. They were able to fight Riek Mashar, they were able to fight the government and Riek Mashar tried to demonstrate that he was not a government puppet, so he was ambushing army people as well, even though he was working for them. So everything became quite messy down there and it was totally impossible to do anything. And I believe that the southern civil war must have gone on until at least 1995.

So really, for the rest of my time as assistant secretary I really didn't do much on Sudan except worry about terrorist groups there, keeping track of them. I dialogued with Garang whenever he came to Washington and he told me, essentially, that he was against secession. He laid out his philosophy. We had many sessions, over drinks at a friend's house and he said, "The Arab speaking people of Sudan are a minority. Muslims are a majority, but Arab speakers are a minority. African people, whether Muslim or Christian, are a majority. So my game plan is that if we have elections, democratic system, Africans will predominate over Arabs. That is why I want a united Sudan, so that the Arab minority will no longer be a minority regime, which it is today" and which still is in the year 2006. "So therefore I want to remain part of Sudan. I am opposed to secession and that's what I'm working for. I want them to accept democracy." Now, of course, in my mind, when he told me this is, "You had democracy! You had democracy under the previous government but yet you didn't participate."

*Q: You think he blew it previously?*

A: Yeah, but one thing I also found out in retrospect was that he was secretly negotiating with the second party in that democratic government, the three party government. He was negotiating with the DUP. Now the DUP and of course all of these Arab elites in the political world are all related. Hassan Turabi was the brother-in-law of Sadiq al-Mahdi and the head of the DUP was a fellow named Mirghani and Mirghani was related to both of them. But, anyway, Mirghani was more moderate. He was ready to give up on sharia, just for the sake of peace. So we had heard that he was secretly negotiating with Garang to bring about a true democratic system, non-discrimination against the South and that Turabi got wind of this and he saw this as the death of Arab rule. So he was on the same wavelength as Garang, you see, but looking at it from the other way. It was the death of Arab rule and so he convinced these officers and it wasn't the whole officer corps, it was just a hard core of devout Muslims within the officer corps that pulled this coup under Bashir.

So right through the end of my time -- I left office in April of '93 -- we really did only two things on Sudan: watch the terrorists and keep the food flowing. We managed to do both. So I leave office and the Clinton Administration comes in and I retire and I start working with the World Bank as an advisor on African governance. And I got a call from Congressman Johnston of Florida, who is retired now, a Democrat from Florida. He was chairman of the Africa subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee. This was 1994, around May. And he said, "Can you help me? I'm trying to mediate between Garang and Riek Mashar." So the mediation had stopped being North-South but South-South. I said, "Sure, I'll do anything I can." So he brought me to a meeting with the two of them and asked them both to present their case and Riek Mashar talked about he wants democracy in the South, he felt that Garang was running an authoritarian South, he was dominating everyone.

We had known that Garang was not a democratic ruler. I remember the Reagan Administration, just to flash back a little bit, 1987-88, the right wing people in Reagan's government were saying, "Why don't we give arms to Garang?" And the answer always came back, "We can't, because his human rights violations are so bad that we'll be accomplices in that. So we really shouldn't be doing this."

*Q: Wwhat was the right wing motivation for that? Was it religious? Was it anti-Islamic? What do you think guided them?*

A: It was essentially religious.

*Q: Having to do with freedom for Christians?*

A: Freedom for Christians, right, which became even more powerful much later. The Khartoum government wasn't particularly pro-communist or anything, pro-East or pro-West, so that was not the motivation.

Okay, so flash forward, Congressman Johnston, Harry Johnston, took it upon himself in the absence I guess of the Clinton Administration I guess wasn't that interested, took it upon himself to mediate between the two. And they were willing to shake hands and that sort of thing but it kind of didn't work out between them.

*Q: Did you actually go to Sudan to do that?*

A: No, we did it in Washington. They came to Washington. I did not go to Sudan.

While I was still assistant secretary, the last event of my term in office was the Somali intervention, which I had a lot to do with. And my last act was to fly around the area, after President Bush decided to intervene and send troops, to get all the neighboring governments to cooperate, using their airports, communications facilities. It was not only U.S. forces. There were about twenty countries involved, under the UN umbrella. So one of my stops was Khartoum. And I go there and this fellow El-Khalifa meets me at

the airport. And it was the first time I had seen him since that time in '91 when he dismissed us as mediators. And he said, "Boy, that's a big operation you're doing in Somalia. You've got 50,000 troops. It's a wonderful logistical feat. Are we next?"

I didn't think on my feet fast enough. What I should have said was, "I don't know. Maybe." But I said, "No, this is just a one time affair." I told the truth, which was a mistake. They were impressed by this operation, by the ability of the United States to project force, within a matter of three weeks, from the time that Bush gave his order 50,000 troops went in. They were extremely impressed. While I was there I stopped at the embassy and I saw a lot of people. I saw the foreign minister. I didn't see Bashir. I saw various people. And our ambassador there took me around. He mentioned my visit later, where he said that "Secretary Cohen couldn't convince anyone that they had to change their course and they had to stop being so authoritarian and so Islamic" because they were doing everything, prejudice against women and all sorts of horrible things there. But I believe the operation in Somalia had an important impact on them, which was they stopped supporting revolutionary groups in the rest of the Middle East and Turabi was kind of laying low. And they decided just to consolidate the Islamic power within Sudan.

*Q: You think that the Bush Somalia operation actually had the effect of reducing the amount of Islamicist mischief in the region?*

A: Export of revolution. I think that no longer was on their agenda, because they were afraid that even though I told them "Don't worry!" they said, "Oh, yeah, if we get caught doing something, especially in Egypt," which was a good friend of the United States. So they decided to lay low, because there were no more reports of revolutionary activities outside of Sudan after that, sort of after the end of '92.

I retired and I joined the World Bank and during 1994 we learned that Turabi himself, Turabi had become speaker of parliament and then he was fired from that and arrested and it was quite clear that the Clinton Administration was clamping down. And the Clinton Administration, I don't know what year the Clinton Administration sent those. So Turabi was suppressed and it was clear that Bashir had two sides pulling him. There was the real hard line Islamists and there were the more moderate people saying, "Let's just consolidate in Sudan."

So for the rest of the Clinton Administration, even after the bombing, by the way there was one anecdote about the bombing of this factory, whatever it was, the pharmaceutical, I got a call from a fellow named El-Mansour and this was in my World Bank office and he said, "What are you guys doing?" Now El-Mansour is an Arab who supported the SPLA. He was a Sudanese Arab who supported the SPLA. Of course needless to say he didn't live in Sudan. He was a wealthy businessman who was in Geneva and various places. So he calls me from Europe and he says, "What are you guys there?" I said, "Wait a second. I'm not in government anymore. Don't blame me!" He says, "Why did they bomb this factory? The owner of the factory is a good friend of ours and he's been giving money to the SPLA."

Anyway, I was very much on the periphery of all this. I saw Garang once in a while. When he came to Washington I had drinks with him. So nothing much was happening through the rest of the Clinton Administration. Now, the story about the regime offering Osama bin Laden, I cannot comment on that. I have no knowledge of that, although I know they did offer the French to return this terrorist named Carlos and they did do it and the French picked him up. So if they say “We offered to give back bin Laden” I suppose it was the same but anyway I can’t comment on that. I don’t know.

My analysis of the Clinton Administration posture, I remember I picked it out of one of Madeleine Albright’s statements when she was Secretary of State, she said, “We are determined to isolate the Khartoum government as much as possible and we are going to work very hard to bring about peace.” So I said, “How can you isolate them and bring about peace by not talking to them? The peacemaker has to talk to everybody, you see.” So the Clinton Administration had totally tied its own hands. We’re not going to talk to these guys but yet we want somehow to work out a peaceful settlement. So they weren’t able to do anything, you see. That’s why nothing happened under Clinton. As the French say, “They didn’t know which leg to dance on.”

So they left office and Bush came in and it was quite clear that this had become a major issue for the evangelicals. And they sent word to Bush through Karl Rove that “You cannot ignore this issue. We will not let you ignore this issue.”

*Q: So do you think that there was a jacking up of the issue in the evangelicals? We’re now in ’96, ’97?*

A: No, the evangelical pressure on the Clinton Administration was not that much, so Bush came in and they said, “Here’s our chance. Here’s our man in office and we’re his base. He’s got to listen to us.” And they made a full court press to address this. And that’s why they named Senator Danforth to be the special rep but the person who did most of the work on this was Walter Kansteiner, who himself comes out of an evangelical background and a businessman who did a lot of work. But when I first knew him in the Eighties he was working for a faith-based NGO and very anti-communist and he was working to help UNITA, the rebel group in Angola. But when he came to office as assistant secretary he had already become a businessman working in Africa. But he, being an evangelical type himself, he was all caught up in this doing something about Sudan. So he and Danforth just worked very hard. There was a mixture of threats, carrots and sticks, which brought, I think, brought them to the table.

*Q: After leaving the administration, you still had a hand in this through knowing John Garang. Tell us about your perception of the CPA process and the parties that were part of it. And I’m talking both about the parties directly involved but also the international mediators.*

A: The U.S. did have a combination of threats and carrots but they also had to put a lot of pressure on Garang, because of Garang’s history of never wanting to negotiate. In fact

I wrote in my book on conflict resolution, I have a chapter on Sudan where I say, “I’m writing this book seven years later and it’s not changed. Garang is always looking for the next coup. ‘I can’t deal with this government, I’ll wait for the next one.’” So I’m sure they put a lot of pressure on Garang as well.

*Q: What about the others? What about the EU, the Norwegians, the UK? Do you think this was a U.S. in concert with others, or was it pretty much the U.S.?*

A: I see it as ninety per cent U.S., with the Bush Administration exerting all of its pressure on them. Plus, I would say there’s one other player, the Egyptians, because they had a lot of influence on Bashir, a lot of ability to threaten him. They have this enclave up in the northeastern part of Sudan which they’re fighting over. So every once in a while to scare Bashir they send troops in there. I think they put a lot of pressure on. And the evangelicals put a lot of pressure on Garang, because whenever he came here he’d go visit them. He’d go down to east Texas and various places like that.

*Q: Put pressure on him to be less intransigent?*

A: Yeah, definitely, because the Bush people did not come in there with their eyes closed. They knew the history of Garang being a spoiler, basically. And I remember some of them saying to me, “We know about his luxury house in Nairobi and his three wives. So we’ve gotta really clamp down on him, too.” So they did and they essentially forced everyone in there but it was a very hard slog and in addition to putting pressure the U.S. provided a lot of expertise. Provided lawyers, provided military people, because when you work out a ceasefire that’s not a simple matter.

*Q: So you’re saying ninety per cent U.S. You’re talking about the talks in Nairobi, right? Though you weren’t in the room but what was your sense of the process of those talks? Lessons learned, good points, bad points in the way we were dealing with that challenge.*

A: Yeah, well, it was dividing resources and sharing power. And I think Khartoum didn’t want to give up, wanted to give up the minimum and Garang wanted the maximum, so that his vision of being able to bring about a unified Sudan under an African majority, this is what he was pushing, whereas the government wanted a Sudan under the control of the Arab minority. So you have to argue about decentralization, how much power to the different provinces

*Q: Okay, there was the Garang position, the Khartoum position and then there were these outsiders providing, we call it technical assistance, the mediation.*

A: I think the outsiders were looking essentially to stop the war.

*Q: Do you think they did it as efficaciously as, as quickly, as they might have? Looking back, did they do well?*

A: I think they did well. They got a ceasefire early on, which is important and so that leaves more room for slow negotiations.

*Q: Now all the rest, the various protocols, the power sharing, the wealth sharing, the possible referendum and an election coming, possibly, in the northern part of the country, the possible secession in the future. If we skip forward to the implementation, where we are now, what's your perception of how it's going?*

A: I've listened to a lot of opinions. You have six years. And thinking back to the time that Sudan got, the Khartoum government got, Riek Mashar and Garang fighting each other, there is the strong suspicion they'll do it again. Even now you do have various armies, southern armies which are not integrated, which are attacking each other from time to time. Are they armies, are they mercenaries, are they just criminal gangs? So it's possible to see Sudan saying, "We've got six years now. We'll work it out so that they'll be killing each other and they'll never have this referendum," you see.

*Q: That would imply no progress at all.*

A: Yeah. That's one point of view. I'm not sure that's the case. Other people say, "No, they'll implement the agreement and if the South secedes, so be it." They are sure now that they'll get two thirds of the oil, at least, out of this. So whether they have to worry about the South seceding, which will have one third of the oil. But they want to make sure that there's still some unsettled boundary issues. So they're going to be haggling over that. I lean towards the government fulfilling the agreement.

*Q: Fulfilling the agreement in terms of power and wealth sharing?*

A: Yeah.

*Q: So do you think secession will happen?*

A: Yes, because during my trips to the South I couldn't find a single person who was against secession.

*Q: Is this good or bad for Sudan?*

A: I think it's excellent. The South of Sudan belongs with Uganda and Kenya. They trade more with them. The culture, the ethnicity is all part of Kenya and Uganda. There is no way that the southerners can live in a normal way

*Q: Do you think it's likely that there will be a secession and you think that that will improve life for people in the South?*

A: Yes, definitely.

*Q: Will it actually, possibly, improve life for people in the North? Is that possible?*

A: The North needs a democratic change. Until they get that, it'll just be the small elite stealing everything.

On lessons learned, I think I can just give one, which is that the pressure on Khartoum, the threats to Khartoum, should have taken place earlier, in the Clinton Administration. Just isolating them wasn't enough. We should have been going to them and saying, "Look, you're gonna be in trouble. We'll work with the Egyptians to undermine you," that sort of thing. "We're not for regime change but if you want us to stay this way, settle with the South!"

*Q: If we had done this, a hypothesis here, would the CPA process have been easier, would it have started earlier?*

A: It would have started earlier, I think and probably reached the same result but with far fewer people dying of hunger.