

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

**Interview # 66 –Executive Summary**

*Interviewed by: W. Haven North*  
*Initial interview date: February 22, 2007*  
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The interviewee has lived and worked in both Northern (1989-1993) and Southern Sudan (1993-1997 intermittently). From 1997-2005 he focused on Southern Sudan. He worked with the NGO communities, with UNICEF, and in a private capacity. He was involved with humanitarian responses and other institutional issues and, particularly, issues of conflict at the local level in the South and transition areas (Nuba Mountains and South Kurdufan). In the South, he addressed capacity building issues and the emergence of Southern Sudanese NGOs. He participated in local community consultations in the North and South for a study commissioned by the IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) around the IGAD's Statement of Principles. The consultations were extremely insightful as when the people were asked their overall analysis of the peace process and what they thought needed to be done.

Some of the patterns of the responses included: any peace process that is driven from above to the exclusion of other parties is not sustainable; the quality and nature of international involvement, or the lack thereof, was significant as was the lack of understanding of the issues; in the South, the people were 99% ready for succession which was at variance with the policies of the SPLM (Southern People's Liberation Movement). The people's argument was simple and persuasive: in effect, "We have given this a chance for many decades under different guises, and it has repeatedly failed. Let us achieve independence first and we will deal with every else later." This was in 2000 and 2001 at the beginning of the CPA negotiations.

The willingness of the North and South to negotiate arose from the changing international climate, the weariness within, even at the military level, and the involvement of the key individuals -- Garang and Taha. The CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) is in fact a personal document with gaps to be filled, if it should be truly representative.

The interviewee found that at the local level the process was "extremely divorced from the CPA and its negotiations; starved for information, very nervous about what was being agreed to." Efforts to explain it were piecemeal. Moreover, there was in the South a governance vacuum, distracted leaders jockeying for power, and a fractured SPLA (Southern People's Liberation Army). The nature of the agreement did not reach out to the grassroots level. For the Southern government, it was difficult to institute a more democratic approach, as it did not have the capacity to do so. The situation was similar in the North in that the people were kept in the dark, and the Government was used to prevent information from getting out.

The interviewee put most of his energies at the community level, as he could see how fragile the peace was, and if ignored at that level, it could undermine any progress at the political level. His work was aimed at supporting community initiatives to reduce conflict, build peace, and provide

opportunities for platforms for the people and their authorities to meet and exchange -- a form of public cleansing. He sought to do this from the grassroots perspective, looking up to the political process. The challenge was to find linkages with the politicians to impress upon them the need for a broader understanding of what peace means in all of Sudan, and the value of people at the local level having more of a stake in the agreements. The political leadership and the international community risk missing the point, if they do not see that stability at the local level, the relationships at the local level, and the grievances that have to be addressed are as important as the political agreements at the highest level. Without them, there is not the foundation for agreements at the higher level that will be sustained.

On CPA implementation and the protocols, the interviewee sees a dragging of heels that is making the agreement wobbly with no political interest or commitment to change. The Northern government is not one cohesive unit. A collection of different sources of power includes those working to destabilize the agreement, and peace spoilers must be taken seriously.

Land issues are at the heart of the Nuba and Blue Nile question. They are a national issue, not just a local issue for the two areas. If a satisfactory model can be developed in those two areas, this will plant the seeds for longer-term peace in Sudan.

UN organizations in Sudan were divided by the war, in the same fashion that the North and South groups were "out of kilter" with each other very influenced by the context and perspective of where they were living. The six-year waiting period for the referendum is too long for the Southerners, leaving a chance for the rug to be pulled out of the agreement. On Darfur, the agreement was externally driven, the balance was wrong and was doomed to failure; there was no time, as in the case of the CPA, to allow relationships to grow and people to form positions. For the CPA, despite the way it was structured, important things happened at the grassroots level that did play a vital role in helping the agreement along and creating good conditions for it to happen.

Sudan being a complex set of issues and problems, it is necessary to see them from a distance to discern the various conflicts with any coherence, in terms of a national problem. That is where a more comprehensive, a more holistic, a deeper understanding of working for peace over the next 15 years in Sudan is the type of framework needed for dealing with problems in their various component parts such as Darfur. Only with this larger perspective can a lasting understanding develop.

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*Q: Let us start off with some context for the interview; tell me about what your association has been with Sudan and with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.*

A: I have been fortunate to have lived and worked in North and South Sudan so I have had the benefit of appreciating some of the complexities from both sides. I first went there in 1989; I worked in the North from 1989 until 1993, with Non Governmental Organizations, including in the South Kurdufan area, which is one of the contentious areas. In 1993 I went South briefly with the UN, with UNICEF (United Nation's International Children's Emergency Fund), looking at capacity building issues and the emergence of Southern Sudanese NGOs and did a bit of study around that time. So I was in and out of Sudan but not there permanently until 1997. Then, from 1997 to 2005, I was focused entirely on the South, a mixture of NGO work and working in a private capacity and a few stints with the UN agencies and in Sudan as well. So it was a kind of a mixed portfolio but one where I have been able to observe trends over a reasonable period of time since 1989.

*Q: How would you characterize the situation between the North and South conditions when you started out on this?*

A: Over time as I was involved in different parts of the humanitarian response and looking at other more institutional issues, in the latter years I became more focused in on the issues of conflict at the local level and particularly in the South and in the transition areas. I was engaged quite a bit with the Nuba Mountains in the late 1990s as well and early 2000. That helped me to get closer to what the real issues were at the local level and what people were thinking. I spent many hours under various trees across Sudan, but over time in terms of building up a picture, it was quite insightful in terms of where people were.

Then, some of those insights were formalized with a small bit of work that I contributed to the IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) partners in 2000 and 2001. Prior to the impetus around the CPA, there was what could best be described as a hunch or a rumor that the possibility of people coming together for the talks to develop peace was in circulation late 1999, 2000, which precipitated some people, some Norwegians. Some of the Norwegians in particular but others as well of the IGAD partners — the U.S. was not a party then — commissioned a planning for peace exercise; it was probably a little rushed, not very well conceived and had a number of elements to it, which included a consultation with people at the grassroots, both North and South.

*Q: You consulted with the people at the grassroots?*

A: Yes, about peace issues, which was really, really pertinent as unfolded afterwards; there were consultations carried out in the North and in the South.

*Q: This was a private initiative?*

A: It was commissioned by the IGAD partners through UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in Sudan.

*Q: ...before the peace negotiations?*

A: ...before the last stage of the peace process got underway. I draw attention to that because I personally found it extremely insightful when people were asked what their overall analysis of the peace process was until then, and what they thought needed to be done to move things forwarded.

*Q: What did you learn from those consultations?*

A: There was complete disillusionment with the process as it was currently structured, the impact of the war was... it was the elasticity of peace in terms of coping mechanisms; a willingness to deal with the status quo was getting stretched to the limit. While people were very focused, and while they perceived the problem to be coming primarily from the North, their views were sometimes rather simplistic, but very clear as far as they are concerned. But there was also a lot of criticism in terms of the behavior of their own leadership at the most fundamental level in terms of how they were not getting on and were fractured. But also in the sense of their relationships at the local level and their sense of whether they were really putting their heart and energies into trying to seek a victory, a military victory, which was their preferred option.

*Q: This was in the South you are talking about?*

A: This is, yes, primarily in the South. It was just the same exercise in the North, which a colleague of mine participated in and I can give you his name towards the end. There were a lot of Southerners, really, in the North. But again useful that was what we were asked to do by the IGAD partners. The consultations were useful because that is like having a constituency within the Southern area, amongst the Southerners, those who have been living for an extended time under government controlled areas of Sudan. It was also very useful because people were asked in very simple, basic ways; because this were very much public consultations and recently extensive. Therefore, you were able to get patterns in the responses. People have to look at the lessons from other previous agreements, not just the big one in 1972 but also those other attempts by the government, the Fashoda Agreement, the Khartoum Agreement and other agreements at a more local level.

*Q: What were some of these patterns that emerged?*

A: The lesson really was that any agreement that is driven from above to the exclusion of other parties involved is not a sustainable agreement. It is one of the reasons why it broke down. The quality and the nature of international involvement was also mentioned as significant and the lack of it and the lack of understanding of the issues. There is a lot in that, if you focus on what is helpful in terms of reconstructing lessons; I do not know where your lessons learned exercise goes, but to me it was a very useful touchstone. In many respects, it is still relevant because the structure of the consultation in the South was around the IGAD's Declaration of Principles so some of the framework that came out in the CPA, which was being hinted at for a number of years before, was part of the discussion at the local level. So there was talk about, if there was peace, what would be the threats to the peace. One could see very, very clearly what they would be and, in many respects, that is how they turned out.

The other overwhelming feedback, which up to then was a bit vague in the eyes of the international community but very, very clear in the eyes of the Sudanese themselves, is that, at complete variance to the policies of the SPLM (Sudan People's Liberation Movement), 99 per cent of the people were ready for secession. Their argument is very simple, but very persuasive: We have given this a chance for many decades now under different guises. It has repeatedly failed. It is not in our interest and, therefore at this stage, it is time to be honest and just to call a halt and draw a line.

Are most people aware that it has implications of which they were not even prepared to entertain? It is like, let us achieve that secession first and we will deal with everything else later, but do not allow any discussions to distract from that single objective. People felt, at the end of the day, that that will be the only solution. That was extraordinary in the extent of the consistency of people's response to that, passionately.

*Q: This was pre-CPA?*

A: Yes, 2000, 2001.

*Q: At the beginning, right.*

A: Just at the beginning, yes.

*Q: What brought the two sides, the North and the South, to decide to negotiate?*

A: The international climate changed and weariness from within, even at the military level. A lot of the answers to that are probably also linked to the key individuals who really negotiated the process. To a man almost, for Garang in the South and Taha, of course, being the main power broker in the North, even though the North is made up of a number of sources of power. In the South, it is very clear there was actually just one person; there are other factions, of course, but they were sufficiently broken or marginalized to leave the SPLM in the driving seat.

I have always thought that the CPA was really a very personal document between Taha and Garang, that it is not a very holistic document; there are lots of gaps all over the place. There are

different mechanisms and structures, which are very useful; definitely a huge progress compared to what was achieved in 1972, but overall when you are trying to read the logic and understand it, it is hard to put it all together. But, of course, that is because in the eyes of the people putting it together, they had their own logic and their own understanding of how it worked and that was not something that was committed to paper and deliberately so; it was the culture not to do so; it was not in anybody's interest to do so and, in fact, it is a reflection of what people had complained about for years in the South as well as the North of very extreme totalitarian regimes that really have no accountability to people and that these individuals had their own personal agendas that were really worked into the history of Sudan.

So for Garang and Taha, they were thinking not just about peace in Sudan, but also where they precisely would fit into that; it was almost at the level of a personal agreement in terms of you take this and I take that. That had something to do with the timing, as well, because I think Garang had as well his institutional ambitions with the SPLM; he also had very personal ambitions in terms of what he wanted in Sudan; he was also picking his time when it was appropriate to move things forward. So he controlled that process; he gave out information when he felt it was appropriate to give it out,

But when he died, Salva Kiir said: "I am taking over now without any scrap of paper of a handover. I have no idea what was in his mind, what he was intending, what the game plan was around the agreement, how you deal with the Sudanese Government, how you deal with the Darfur issue, etcetera, etcetera." It certainly was not in Garang's interest to commit that to paper because there was his personal agenda and a broader, Southern political agenda deeply entwined. That had advantages at one level because he certainly had the astuteness to deal with the North and to play his cards right and he had been working up to that for a long time and knew the other side intimately: how they behaved, what they thought, what they were after; he can talk with them, talk their language as it were. It is not necessarily the best foundation for a sustainable peace, if the agreement is actually remote from where the people are at and what their understandings are. That is a perspective. It is the stuff that was happening behind closed doors and the stuff that is hidden behind the text of the agreement.

*Q: You said there were some gaps in the Agreement?*

A: Yes, with the wealth sharing, the role the Unity Government was playing vis-à-vis the regime in the North and the SPLM. Some of these things by their nature get worked out because they have to in order to implement them; everything comes to a halt and everyone sits down and works out what do we do next. Some of it was working and others were not working at the moment.

*Q: And are you familiar with the actual negotiation process itself and how it went?*

A: Not much, intimately. The angle with which I was interacting with this process was more focused on what was happening at the grassroots level while the negotiation process was taking place.

*Q: How do you characterize that?*

A: In recent years I became more focused on relationships at the local level where there were conflicts and instability and what impact that was having locally and more provincially within the country. There were different processes in terms of support for local grassroots peace building and conflict reduction measures, probably more formally since 1999 and then it geared up a bit in 2002 just as the broader peace process was taking place.

*Q: How much awareness was there at the local level about what was going on in the CPA negotiation?*

A: : Extremely divorced, sort of starved for information and very frustrated by that and very nervous about what was being agreed to, because, as in the past, they did not know whether their leaders would sell them out or whether there would be an agreement that they would find too difficult to live with. So there was a lot of trepidation. Then, you also had the phenomenon where a lot of the leadership from Southern Sudan was engaged in the peace process in one way or another. You have a fairly steep pyramid of where the elite controlled things; of smaller numbers, and, at the top, a lot of those were either distracted or absent during the time of the peace process. This had the affect of creating a governance vacuum in large parts of the South, and, that, in turn, precipitated more insecurity and conflict at the local level.

You also had a sense that people were trying to settle scores before a new dispensation would come; that also had an impact. But, generally, you had people who were essentially jockeying for position and, therefore, politicizing even the smallest and most local of events based on some aspiration for power should there be peace. Of course, you did not have any rule of law, institutions, really; the army itself during the peace process... the SPLA became quite fractured and ineffectual in many parts.

As in lots of wars, once you start to dilute the common enemy at the top, then the other issues of conflict that were sometimes submerged, come more to the fore. So putting all that together, it was a very stressed time. Because of the nature of the Agreement, which really did not reach out in any way to the grassroots level, the situation was extremely precarious. You could see that at the local level... first of all, if things exploded to the extent that they could, if [local] conflict overflows to a certain critical mass, then getting it under control, when you do not have the mechanisms to do so, becomes problematic and anarchy can take over.

*Q: Were there attempts to explain the Agreement to the local populations?*

A: There were some. Some of those that were supported were with resources from outside, some with local efforts. But it was very piecemeal really and not systematic. It was not in any sense a dialogue in terms of consultations. It was really just announcing in one shape or form or another. But that is very much reflecting how the SPLM had behaved in the previous 20 years so I think culturally it was even difficult for them culturally... it was difficult for them to institute a more democratic way of approaching it, but also the capacity was not there either, given the fact that whoever was around and in any position of power was engaged with the peace process in one shape or form or another.

*Q: Was the situation in the North somewhat different or similar?*

A: The situation in the North was similar to the extent that people were kept in the dark, probably more so than in the South. In the South, you may have some excuse to say you do not have the media outlets and the communication structure to utilize this effectively; in the North you did. But they were used to making sure that no information got out. The sense of potential conflicts breaking out, etcetera, of course, Darfur was burning in the background while the CPA was being negotiated and there were other sources of instability, pockets of instability in the North and, of course, some in the East as well.

The transition areas, of course, were not under the CPA, but were perceived as part of the negotiation process. That is another story, which we can come to. So all of that was what local leaders and community leaders and some pro-peace politicians, as opposed to the peace negotiators and politicians, were doing during the CPA process. That is, they were at least trying to keep some sense of stability in place, not necessarily to cure all the ailments but at least to keep some stability and agreement between people to avoid violent conflict, so that there would be some foundation to allow the peace agreement to take root, i.e., a physical agreement at the grassroots level was very much the motivation behind a number of the peace activists at the community local level at that time. That is where I was putting most of my energies, because I had probably a good insight into what was happening at that level. I could see how fragile the whole thing was and, if this level was ignored, it could actually undermine any progress that ostensibly was being made at the political level.

*Q: What were you trying to do?*

A: I was really trying to support community initiatives and community dialogue to reduce conflict, resolve conflict if possible and build peace. But as the peace process was rolling on, I was trying to at least provide opportunities for platforms for the people and their authorities to meet and exchange on issues as well, because, as you can imagine, there was whole lot of frustration accumulating at the local level between the people and those who were governing them. And again, some of the skeletons had to come out of the cupboard and some bit of cleansing, public cleansing needed to go on at a very, very basic level at least, to move to the next point. This was seen as very, very important. But the trick was to have a platform or an occasion where there is some degree of organization and management around a process like that so that it can achieve good results and positive results. But, of course, it was a very tricky environment, because at the grassroots level, it was so politicized. You had a lot of people jockeying for positions and a lot of politicians as well as people locally manipulating local disputes and spreading of rumors. All that sort of thing is part of one's armory when one does not have anything else to create a disturbance for your benefit or to disturb your opponent as the case may be.

So I was really trying to engage with peace actors and then trying to link up a series of initiatives at the local level so that it would have the sum effect of creating more stability where otherwise there was a lack of stability.

*Q: What kind of initiatives are you talking about?*



A: It would be supporting peace dialogues in various different shapes and forms: some support for media in terms of getting very basic messages out, dissemination in terms of people's views or achievements around the local peace. It was a matter of trying to assist where you could never really do this at the level that is required, but with water interventions and maybe some small support for communities who are making progress in resolving differences can be a part of a common project in terms of constructing a bridge or assisting with a market.

What was interesting was, while I was immersed in that part of it, and then there were others immersed in the political side, of course, the big point of contention was: how do you link those two levels? Certainly, from a grassroots perspective as far as I was concerned people have spoken clearly and authoritatively that, if we are talking about any long-term sustained peace in Sudan, it has to be a holistic one; it has to be an inclusive one because at the end of the day, no matter how good these experiments might be, if they are just done, driven by personalities and deals, they will not stand the test of time. That was the testimony of so many people during that consultation in 2001. So therefore, it is not to deny what is happening at the political level. I could see that people... I am not sure how well they rationalized it, but I can easily see that there were choices.

This is a very complex situation; it is a case of runaway wars, as Darfur was intensifying. We know that the power structures are very personalized so what you do is lock up the people, try and get an agreement to stop hostilities, cease hostilities and take it from there. It is a very logical way of approaching a very difficult problem. History might prove at the end of the day that it was maybe the best way with the limited options that are available. Alternatively, of course, people may have sometimes a reluctance to open things up, especially any politician whose base is not a popular base, whose base is there because of the power of the gun or the power of manipulation, which would be true for parties on both sides. Introducing a democratic process in this key period is not one that they would be trying to encourage. If the capacity is not there to deal with it, never mind the vision to know how to do it as well as lack of willingness; if the capacity is not there, of course, if it is not managed and stewarded well, it will be a glorious mess because you will have so many fractured interests out there who will have very different opinions about how things go forward.

However, it depends on what your tactics are. One tactic was to get the people in, make an imperfect agreement, stop the hostilities and, then work things out over the next six years or so. Or you try to... there was one dynamic in the South that gave me courage to be more bold in suggesting an alternative. It was that the only change that really started to take place amongst the leaders in the South was when people at the grassroots level started to speak up more coherently as a common body. They had very few opportunities to do that.

But the most striking one was actually where these peace meetings were taking place, and, especially since 1999, when there was a historic agreement between the Nuer and the Dinka, which was a process where traditional leaders, having been suppressed for so long actually suddenly had a platform to speak out and they did. Now, subtly, (and it was never really allowed to take full root) what was happening was that a whole new constituency was being built around a growing peace movement. It did not quite become a peace movement, but it had the potential

to be so. And it put into effect some degree of accountability into a system that did not really have one. I tried to extrapolate that really to a broader peace process. Somewhere in the system there has to be some degree of accountability for the decisions made and for the implementation of those decisions or otherwise you are also setting a ground where the same agreement can be abused as much as it is positively used for the benefit of peace in Sudan.

In all of this, where I was coming from, I was looking at it from the perspective of the grassroots and looking at it upwards rather than from the political process down, which I was not immediately engaged with. What I was trying to do was trying to see where those linkages might be and to impress upon people that we, at least, need to incorporate a broader understanding of what peace means in all of Sudan and start grappling with those issues now because they have to be done at some stage. The more constituencies and coalitions and people you have involved in that ultimately at the end of the day will hasten the point when you will have a more sustained peace.

*Q: Where did you see these linkages?*

A: That is the area that people have struggled with most. I was listening to somebody last week say, they were grappling with Darfur, trying to know how they will get in touch with the people when the peace agreement was failing and could they have some sort of a dialogue. People floundered trying to know how to link those two. The truth is you cannot just switch it on in the morning. It is something that has to be built up over time, and it depends on the democratic culture and the institutions that are functioning within any particular context. Now, in Sudan's context, among the people, there was a conspiracy of silence for many, many years and people were really marginalized from any decision making at any level.

So if you cannot get a political buy-in or an integrated peace process where you start working at relationship issues and reconciliation issues, attitudinal issues concurrently with the hardcore political work that has to be done to broker a peace, then, at least, try and get an awareness out there. Try to create awareness about why a certain conflict in Upper Nile has a distinct relationship to what is happening at the negotiating table as people speak. It might seem that these are just local conflicts and they will all dry up as soon as there is peace, which was the prevailing attitude by a lot of people at the higher level from the international community. Whereas you were trying to say well actually no, this group is the community that supports this armed group, this armed group is part of a grouping in Khartoum, which is trying to negotiate with SPLM. You try to draw people out to see how these things are linked. In truth, there was some effort, but it was not sustained.

In terms of lessons learned, it really is one that needs to be understood better: why? Because everybody at a rational level will agree with you that yes, this is important, without civility there is no peace, which was the mantra that was repeated over and over again. But in terms of trying to help people to see how that works and how it functions and then helping people in terms of finding mechanisms to at least trying to do that and work through experience about the best ways of doing, that is an area that needs an awful lot of work. I feel the process in Sudan is a good problem to analyze and study a lot more.

At one stage, thanks to somebody in the U.S. embassy, we managed to bring some representatives from those either directly or indirectly supporting this process, like Italy, Britain, the U.S., Norway, and others who wanted to get in on the act, not necessarily always their senior people but representatives from embassies in Nairobi in this case. They wanted to be brought around the table at least to say look, this is what is happening in Sudan while all this stuff is going on in Naivasha. Here is what is happening with respect to South-South dialogue, here is what is happening with respect to what the Nuer people, which is the most fractious of all ethnic groups and have suffered most in the war, are trying to do about their issues, why it needs to be supported and why supporting it puts the right type of pressure with the right message on leadership to come up with the right agreement. All in all, there must have been about four, maximum five rounds of discussion over about nine months.

It sounds pathetic when looking back on it, but, at least, it was an effort to cross that void a bit in terms of understanding what those connections are. I was, then, trying to entice people to understand that it is not a sequential thing that these are dynamic things that are influencing the present, the issues on the ground. From the grassroots perspective, I do not think it was a question of making an agreement, and then we will deal with everything else afterwards if it means that everything else afterwards is much worse to deal with, where, at the same time, there are things that can be done concurrently. But the trick was and the trick still is, really, about how to conceptualize and bring to life some sort of an accessible framework that can bring the parts together so that you are supporting a more dynamic process that does reach to the grassroots a lot more effectively in the belief that, over time, you are actually contributing to the long-term project of a more sustained peace in Sudan.

*Q: There were two views about the negotiation process for the CPA. On one hand, some people were pushing to be more inclusive and bring in more parties. Other people were saying no, that would not work because the negotiations would fall apart; it would be just too cumbersome to make that work. Were there any views from your side as to how the CPA was put together in terms of being more inclusive or not?*

A: To make it more inclusive means more than just adding political parties some of which have legitimacy and some who do not. There are a lot more out there in terms of representation from civil society, a kind of a catchword. I do not know what you would call it in the Sudan case. That constituency, in particular, is not going to be sitting around the table negotiating between each other or between their leaders, but they are going to influence the environment within which decisions are being made and the direction is there. You go steps closer to putting more enduring qualities into your agreement, if you are in touch with people are outside.

Take, for example, nobody in the South wants unity, yet the game the SPLM had to play was to pretend that it was in favor of unity. It felt that if it did not, it would not get the support of the international community; it was a negotiating tool. So there are arguments for the SPLM to say, given where we are at now, only a small group of people can deal with this. But what I am saying is that I am still doubtful that, in the long run, a more exclusive process would have the same enduring results compared to one that was more holistic in its nature, broader in its nature, more integral in its nature. But having said that, I know that there are very few paradigms out

there to assist people to know how to do that, but most of all there was probably a lack of political willingness because people were scared, scared of opening a Pandora's Box.

So it is a tricky one, but when you are looking at the same theatre from the perspective of the grassroots, you get more convinced, increasingly, about the value of people at the local level having more of a stake and that people will really miss the point if they do not see that stability at the local level and the relationships at the local level and the grievances that have to be addressed at the local level are as important as the political agreements at the highest level. Without them there is not the foundation for agreements at the higher level to be sustained.

*Q: We should talk a bit more about the CPA agreement itself. It had a number of protocols, I do not know whether you are familiar with all of those and what they have accomplished or not accomplished, the security protocol, the wealth sharing, the power sharing. There was a border commission and the evaluation commission, all those. Do you have any experience or views about those?*

A: If you were to compare the mechanics of the CPA to 1972, you would have to say that there were a lot of more creative ways, creative mechanisms put in place to give this particular peace agreement a chance. And some of those are functioning reasonably and others are under strain, as I understand it. Mostly, I have been out of it for a while. Of course, once you go beyond the level of a John Garang and Taha, after the agreement is signed, you get into the broader issues of the Northern regime. It is not one cohesive bunch; it is a collection of different sources of power, which includes both those within the regime who have the intention of destabilizing the CPA agreement and would love to see it collapse, Then, of course, there are other forces without, who also would like to see it collapse for their own particular interests as well. It is evident to me that like the Abyei Protocol and some of the wealth sharing issues, there is a dragging of heels that is slowly making the agreement wobbly. If you listen to SPLM people who are in the government, they will nearly all say that they are dealing with a bunch of people who have signed the agreement and talk-the-talk, but there is no real political interest to change, no real commitment to change.

*Q: Among the Northerners?*

A: Amongst the Northerners, yes, for the people that they are dealing with. That, of course, affects how the implementation is working. Even though there were a lot of the discussions that were behind close doors between the two parties that reached the agreement, in truth the efforts by third parties to push things and to keep the pressure on, if that had not been not there, they would not have reached a conclusion, either, because I am not sure both parties were capable of actually resolving the issues themselves, such was the depth of their divisions.

Six years seems very short as an interim period, but of course it is very long in the eyes of the Southern people who felt that slippage could come in. But also you could see it is very long to expect the international community to give it the sustained oversight and attention that it requires to ensure that the bits would be implemented, because there are enough people out there who will be delaying implementation indefinitely. Without somebody looking over their shoulders the

status quo would continue until eventually you would get to the point that the future of the agreement is not clear.

*Q: Let us come back to that in a minute. You said something earlier about the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile?*

A: Yes. The protocol for the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile.

*Q: Yes, you had some specifics.*

A: I was very disappointed in that protocol for a number of reasons. Geographically, it looks like very small areas with small populations. The Government did well in convincing all the players that they should not be part of the overall CPA agreement; the agreement is between the North and the South and these areas are in the North; “This is our business, thank you very much,” which, of course, was very tactfully done and did not really reflect what the issues were at all. But from my experience of those areas and watching them and being around them over the years, of course, I have always seen them as being extremely strategic in terms of long-term peace in Sudan.

First of all, there is an interesting mix, its groups have been very much assimilated by the Arabized culture in the North, but they are trying to break out of that; whereas in the South, the Arabization did not take place. A lot of Muslims there are of African descent, completely marginalized people over the years, sometimes even more so than people in the South. And so what vision they had for the future was something that I took very, very seriously in terms of how they see a window to where Sudan might go in terms of trying to resolve what sometimes seemed to be its irreconcilable differences. Nuba is a very, very influential in a place like Darfur. The people of Darfur, over the last number of years, would like to look to Nuba before they look to the South in terms of leadership for the way forward. To me it was so obviously your starting point in terms of getting this right. We then start thinking about a different vision of how we can find accommodation for the future. How they dealt with, at a very, very local level under SPLM control, religion, the state and the rule of law and all these type of issues. There are small number Christians, a lot of Muslims, but under the SPLM a lot of traditional religion was allowed to flourish.

So it was extremely frustrating to see how people bought the government line and Nuba got sidelined as something less important. People were also underestimating, although it is a small population, the history of the struggle there. In terms of armed resistance, it was extremely ferocious and you had a small group of people who withstood extraordinary adversity. In other words, their capability of creating violent conflict there, if they are not happy, is very, very high. In other words, do not underestimate their ability.

But also, there are links to the South and its link to the East. So I was very frustrated and disappointed to see how Nuba was treated. And then, finally, the protocol itself was extremely disappointing. The people there were probably stunned into silence —probably the best way of putting it —when the protocol had been completed and they eventually understood what the agreement was. And they were also let down by their own leadership.

*Q: What was it in the agreement that let them down?*

A: The protocol fell very far short of what the people had hoped for, but, also to me from an international perspective now —obviously the parties will see it differently— it was a lost opportunity in many respects, because it curiously can speak to Darfur as much as it can speak to the South as much as it can speak to the North.

*Q: How do you describe how it fell short?*

A: It really smacks of an agreement where— knowing the lack of capacity on the SPLM side— there is an opportunity for the Northern party and the elite, if they are left to get away with it, just to assimilate the two places back into the North in what appears to be a special arrangement. There was a little window there, that from an SPLM side, it could have worked harder for their advantage, but, in truth, the capacity was not really there to do it, and the support to help them was not there to do it to the extent that it should have been.

*Q: Capacity in the SPLM?*

A: Yes, yes. And I think also it suffered a bit in the negotiation process, because at a higher level with all these deals going on between individuals, the fallout for what happened when Nuba was definitely a playing card for bigger stakes. Everybody felt that the way it the protocol was set up... it was just before the conclusion of the agreement, it was last on the list and, therefore, instead of seeing it in its strategic side, it was overlooked and much to the disappointment of the people. But also it is an area that will erupt again eventually if progress is not made for people on the ground with respect to the autonomy that they have, most importantly, over the land issue. This was the reason why they fought was over the land being taken away from people.

And so that is a very dodgy situation. And, of course, Abyei is another hot touchstone, because it is again embroiled with the politics of the North; there is oil under Abyei. Again it is straddled with parts of Darfur and some of the politics of Kurdufan. The situation is being manipulated by a lot of elites from the Northern side for their advantage, but it should be a very troubling point for observers of the process if progress is not being made there.

*Q: Is it relevant for the Darfur situation?*

A: For Darfur, I can appreciate that for lots of people; Sudan is a big country, it is very, very complex in terms of its internal dynamics; it is very hard to get your head around it. Also, successive regimes in the North have been extraordinary in their ability to blind people to the realities around them. Then in the South, it has been also very hard to get a grasp beyond the few leaders you meet of what is really happening at the local level and put it all together in a common picture. So complexity and scale are defeating a lot of people. When it came to the CPA, they said let us concentrate on this and then maybe we will have an agreement that will help Darfur. But, of course, that was a very superficial reading of the situation. Reluctance to embrace the problems of Sudan as opposed to embrace the problems within the SPLM and the National Congress Party, [makes it] questionable whether that was the right thing to do. But I

also appreciate it is extremely complex and very difficult to kind of get your head around the whole thing and the sheer scale of it is debilitating. If you step back far enough, of course, people have been dealing with conflicts in Sudan, but bits of it, not looking at it coherently and systematically in terms of a national problem. That is where a more comprehensive, a more holistic, a more deeper understanding of working for peace over the next 15 years in Sudan is the type of framework we need to be working out of which the different components like Darfur and like the South or whatever come into the fray.

*Q: How do you define and bring about such a framework?*

A: That is what I am saying; it does not happen overnight. There has to be a willingness to try and that is where even during the CPA people wanted, all the time, to close those doors. You are trying to say: “no, no, no, you will deny these other realities at your peril over time, please try and include them in part of a broader understanding of what you are doing.” So I am acknowledging it is very, very difficult, but I am saying and that is very much what the people are saying, is that at the end of the day if you have a long-term vision of what you are at as opposed to just dealing with peace agreement by peace agreement, you have to start bringing on board a different perspective and this is something for over the next 20 years...

*Q: How do you do that? How do you bring that about? How do you get the ball rolling in that direction?*

A: My experience is that without political will at the top you will probably get nowhere.

*Q: You mean the Northern Government particularly or...?*

A: No, even the international community.

*Q: We are talking about the international community.*

A: As well, yes. The elite at the top will have vested interests in not cooperating, because that is opening up to constituencies that are not their base so that there is a groundswell of opinion at the grassroots to try and participate in that the long term vision. I am talking in very simple terms now because that is all that is available to us unless you start opening up these doors and crossing those bridges.

*Q: So it is up to the international community to...*

A: To show leadership and to demonstrate that it is possible, that it a long term vision can produce good results. So you have little things in terms of supporting peace at the local level or cross border dialogue, but it is still piecemeal; it is not really sufficiently constructed or supported to the extent to really demonstrate its the long-term vision's longer term value.

*Q: How do you see the international community, the UN or the participating countries begin to take more leadership in developing or promoting a long-term vision?*

A: I do not know how to answer that really. Because the UN suffered as much as everybody else in terms of being divided by the war. Even the same organization, North and South, were out of kilter with each other, such as where one side was very, very influenced by the context and the perspective that they were living. So if you are in Khartoum, you tend to take the Khartoum line, and if you are in the SPLM, you think everyone in the North is the enemy and you take that line. That went right into organizations like WFP (World Food Programme) and UNICEF in a very deep way. So to get this kind of overview, the international structures that are there to do that had a lot to do themselves to catch up and position themselves to be able to do that.

So sometimes you need leadership really at a high level to start to bring about the structures and the institutions to do that. Now under the CPA you could say you have a better chance, but I reserve my judgment to see how that going, because a lot of those institutions like the military ones and they are transitory ones, they tend to be people passing through. I am not sure they are sharing in long-term vision stuff.

*Q: There are three things that are coming up. One is, of course, the census and then following that an election and then a referendum. Do you have an sense about those coming about?*

A: It will be interesting. They are nudging forward. Obviously, as it gets closer to an actual referendum, that will be when all the true colors from all the sides will start to appear. Curiously enough, if Garang were still in power, he would not have allowed the referendum to take place. He would have fudged it for years. But that is a personal surmise about where he was coming from, because he felt his agenda more important than that, whereas his successor would be very happy and willing to implement the referendum. It is possible that you see pre-Garang people would have thought that it may not happen, given the kind of loose arrangements at the top level.

Now, of course, with a different leadership, they see that people are more serious about it happening and, of course, that then opens up other dissenting voices and peace spoilers and all the rest of it. So the referendum is out there in terms of whether it will go ahead or not, but what to expect is that running up to it will be a very tense time. A lot of depends on the extent to which the SPLM in the South can keep it together. If they can get their act together at a minimal level, then they have some capacity to resist the forces that are trying to destabilize things. Once they start slipping and dividing amongst themselves and the floodgates open, we are stuffed.

*Q: Let us back up and talk specifically about the implementation of the CPA. You have already touched on it in a way but about the different components of the CPA, their implementation?*

A: I have been out for a little while now so I am getting a bit rusty. But my understanding and perspective so far is that the peace spoilers must be taken seriously; it is real and it is happening. There are definitely forces out there trying to slow things down to the point of creating paralysis or frustration, and there are opportunists who are trying to sabotage the CPA. The extent of their ability to do that is hard to judge and I suspect it changes. There are a number of variables involved: the degree to which the SPLM keeps its act together; how the regime in the North is at any given time; how the balance of power is panning out. And then, of course, there are flash things like elections, like transfer of money that goes missing and the census; there are vulnerable times where peace spoilers can be more effective.



But overall, yes, I would say it was a funny peace agreement. While people were delighted that, they could get on with their lives better than they ever could before for two decades, there was a lot of caution at the local level with the agreement, a sort of a subdued celebration. I always felt, from moving around and getting to people that the threats, both internal and external are very real. They think that this six-year gauntlet is far longer than they would ever have agreed to. It is not that they feel they will be ready in two years to self-govern, they just feel that leaving a chance over six years for people to pull the rug out of the agreement is just asking the gods for too much and that was their overall view.

Right now, there are signs of things moving forward; the little parliament in Juba, where people are not elected, they are appointed but with some degree of consultation. It is the one institution that has surprised people and it has actually performed better than expected. Then there are other commissions and ministries that actually are deeply disappointing. There is a peculiar arrangement with Salva who has taken over a job that he is not really cut out for; an impossible job where he has to be in two or three places at the same time every day; his number two who he does not want but he has to have, sort of runs riot when he is not there. It is probably a miracle the whole thing is still holding together in some degree or form. And then of course, you have the disarmament nightmare, because it is not something that can be dealt with, nor should it be dealt with, quickly because it could explode into undermining the agreement from within very, very easily if it is mismanaged.

*Q: Are you familiar with the Audit and Evaluation Commission?*

A: Yes and I cannot speak fluently in terms of how it is working except the deep frustration at the slow pace it was being put into place. Do not underestimate the effect that frustration has as people lose it. And sometimes you just have to slow things down and you are destabilizing things without being seen to be completely throwing a spanner in the works. But subtly and, of course, there are people within the regime who are much more astute in terms of how to play the system to their benefit whereas people in the South have not had that opportunity to learn how the system works and how to play it to your advantage.

*Q: Can you characterize the Northern Government?*

A: The first mistake would be to see it as a cohesive group of people. It is actually made up of a number of sources of power that come into the ascendancy at different times. It is very astute. It is extraordinary. You think about how the SPLM has survived, but how these guys the Northerners have survived this long given the fact that public resentment of them has been growing over the years, how they have not buckled with the tragedy in Darfur. There are very few governments in the world who would still be there now with all that happening and the impact that is happening within ones country and all the international pressure. They are extraordinary. I have been observing their culture since they took power in '89 and it is a study in itself. How they deal with Westerners. They are pretty good at dealing with us. I think we are the easiest part of their problems, but how they have been dealing with the Southerners over the years. So one would be very foolish to relax and say we are coasting now and we are just heading up to the referendum. This is an inconclusive process and the next stage finishes by the

end of that referendum and then after that we go into another phase depending on what the outcome of that referendum is. I just keep going back to it that unless we are thinking and acting in terms of a broader, longer-term frame for stability and peace in Sudan, history will keep repeating itself.

*Q: Do you think the referendum will actually occur?*

A: If Garang were there, I would have said no. Because Salva Kiir is there, there will be a force, very stubborn force to insist that it happens. Then you come to the next stage-the referendum. How it happens: is it going to be fair, will it be representative? Everyone will politicize that stage in different ways and try and manipulate it as well. So Garang may have fudged things for awhile; Salva is not interested and people know that, and therefore if there is a sign of it not happening, expect a very big response in the South.

*Q: Do you think an outbreak of warfare between the North and the South is likely?*

A: It could easily happen, but I would not expect that you would suddenly go back to the status quo as it were. It would be a then when you would probably move into a phase of pockets of resistance, a sliding decline that may or may not coalesce over time, depending how the politics and the political machineries work. So then because people may not see the big dramatic changes overall, back to war now? To build up a war machine would take quite a bit of time, because it is fairly dismantled even though they have a core army, it is that slide into instability and counterinsurgency; people are just running again and everything breaks down and you are back to where they were. So the risks are very high.

*Q: Are there any topic areas that we have not touched on? I do not want to cut you off on anything.*

A: I know I am speaking in the knowledge that you are probably talking to lots of other people who know of other parts of the agreement more fluently than I. I am deliberately trying to put an emphasis on the constituency that I was most exposed to and the perspective from the grassroots side and the fact that the CPA is a very elitist agreement, conducted in a foreign country far away. I am not trying to say it was a complete waste, but I am saying it is not too late to start still bringing on-board a broader understanding and a broader vision for creating a longer term, more sustainable peace in Sudan.

You cannot just like instantly democratize an environment that has been living in war for so long. It is not just a question of lining up all the political parties who happen to have a registration docket, and they suddenly become the picture of diversity and plurality in Sudan. But something much deeper than that and something that has more accountability at the grassroots level and certainly in the North; there it is a different story than in the South because civil independent voices have been really squashed by this regime since 1989 in a very violent and oppressive way. But, of course, people underestimate people and there are still a lot of constituencies there that are very ready and willing to form.

*Q: This would suggest an important role for NGOs?*

A: I think so, but you know, NGOs, just like NGOs on its own- the architecture of this and the stewardship of this needs some degree of competency. It is not the question of having NGOs just to have little meetings here and there. That can work once there is some framework and understanding about what people are trying to do and there is some stewardship around that. In other words it needs some competency...

*Q: Competency among the NGOs themselves?*

A: Yes, exactly. It is not to say that they cannot, and very often it is individuals that make things happen in the NGO world. But yes, people flounder, to be honest, and I can appreciate that given the complexity in Sudan. I have been there a bit longer and therefore have a sense of change happening over a longer period of time. As a result, I also look much deeper into the future in terms of what I am in the present. Hopefully, this will have a positive effect in 20 years' time, type of view, rather than when I arrived first, I was more worried about what would happen within two years. And the sense of having a finger on the pulse of the grassroots, the building up of relationships and, at least, not to giving up trying to understand how the pieces make up the whole. And penetrate that and start seeing how the little bits can contribute to something bigger happening over time.

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*Q: You think the NGOs could help to stimulate a movement?*

A: They can, but it is at the higher levels, also you need some cooperation. Because during the peace process, people on a one-to-one, say, "Yes Paul, I agree with you, this is really important, blah, blah, blah" but at a collective level, they had their own dynamic in terms of the peace process and I realized that it is like "no, the doors were closed." I do not fully understand that and that is why I am saying I think it is something worth understanding better in the future about what is happening there and could we have done things differently and how and why. I accept that there are no ready templates to know how to do this. But I felt there were definitely strong leads. Even going back to the IGAD partners Planning for Peace project in 2001, while it was not popular, but what was being recommending was. This was before the IGAD thing became invigorated; it was something that was more interactive, more community-based to try and start working toward the conditions that would make a peace possible, conditions that would break the impasse between the two fighting "bulls" and getting grassroots people together.

It was an imperfect model, but it was definitely trying to strike at longer-term vision, and it was definitely a proposal that was informed by what people were thinking at the grassroots. So I felt it had some degree of credibility, at least to start working on and building on and to try and build some consensus around. But in truth I remember very clearly an IGAD partners meeting in Rome in 2002. People were talking about "no, no, no, how many bridges do we need to build when there is peace?" It was like, there was no dialogue when that is what people are saying. "Hang on a minute, what is the context; what are we trying to achieve? Why is the peace process failing at the moment? How could it better? What are people saying?" That is why I am saying there was not a common language and a common frame to bring people around those more important enduring issues through which you start getting a different kind of coalition of support and

association at the local level and connections with international support to bring about the type of change that Sudan needs over time.

So I am really focusing on that kind of pitch, from my experience.

*Q: Is there anything we have not touched on or a point you want to emphasize?*

A: : Nuba, Blue Nile and Abyei for slightly different reasons are still important. I still have not lost my sense of the importance of those areas and how we are squandering much bigger issues by letting them slip through the net as it were. And that is still the case; we still can retrieve that. Because, for example, the land issue is at the heart of the Nuba and Blue Nile issue; it is a national issue not just a Nuba and Blue Nile issue so in those confined environments if something positive can be done where if people have difficulty dealing with the scale of Sudan, but we can develop some satisfactory model in those two areas then we are beginning to plant the seeds for longer term peace in Sudan.

I feel people miss the point for a whole variety of reasons. That is a tragedy; of course, we cannot go back and change the agreement, but, at least, for the little tiny bits that they have we should be supporting them and doing that. I would be very keen on that one. Yes and of course, while all this is going on, it is really... I do not know how it has been going during the last 12 months now, but the establishment of the Rule of Law institutions, the governance institutions, of course, is the other part of the glue to make the agreement function. They can only go at the pace that capacity can absorb them, but if they are going at anything less, then it will implode.

*Q: Looking over all of what you have said, are there some key lessons learned that you would suggest that what should or should not have been done? You have already implied a lot; maybe single out three or four or five lessons that you think might be relevant to other situations.*

A: : Yes, there are a lot of things implicit there; I am just trying to think about Darfur, what do you transfer to Darfur from the CPA?

It is similar in the sense of trying to get leaders locked up into the same place at the same time and force an agreement on them. But it was so externally driven; the balance was so wrong that it was doomed to failure and you did not have to be in the room to see that; it was just so obvious that this had the potential of making matters worse. Now, I can understand the political pressure to have a resolution and the humanitarian crisis at the back door of a lot of countries that have a stake in Sudan at the moment. But no, if you lose the head, then you start doing silly things like that then you are, at the end of the day, making matters worse.

The CPA is very imperfect, of course. I am critical of it being so exclusive and out of touch from the grassroots side. At the same time, there was time to allow relationships to grow and people to form positions eventually, whereas in Darfur that did not happen at all. In spite of the CPA, the way it was structured, a lot of very important things happened at the grassroots that did play a vital role in helping the agreement along and creating good conditions for it to happen. They need to be learned about more and the extent to how they worked and could they worked better.

But just to transfer that to a Darfur situation in the morning, you cannot do that, you have to build these things up, they have to emanate from people, not from outsiders...

NGOs or whatever and it requires, again, a longer term perspective; it requires a sense of understanding and relationships at the local level, an assignment about who is the ally and who is the spoiler and all the rest of it so that you can start putting something into place. Outsiders and the international community can play important role in a context like Sudan provided people have an understanding of that context and know how best to use whatever influence they have and whatever resources they might share.

*Q: So you think that pretty well covers it.*

A: : Yes.

*Q: What we will do is get it transcribed and I clean it up a little bit and then we pass a copy on to the Institute as well as send you a copy. If you have any other names that you want to suggest that we can communicate with you can send me an e-mail.*

A: : Okay, I can send you an e-mail on that.

*Q: Thank you so much. It has been very worthwhile.*

A: : Okay, best of luck.