

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

Interview # 81 – Executive Summary

Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen
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The interviewee is an architect of Sudanese origin. In addition to his architectural work, he works with a variety of organizations to promote awareness regarding the conflict in Darfur and assist in the realization of peace throughout Sudan.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has provided for a stable peace between the Sudanese government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/SPLM). U.S. involvement was critical in the development of the CPA. The United States exerted political pressure on the Sudanese government to engage in negotiations with the SPLA/SPLM. Still, the Khartoum government remains reluctant to implement certain provisions of the CPA.

After 22 years of war, the SPLA/SPLM is rapidly transforming from a warring faction to a legitimate political party. The Sudanese government has used a technique of “divide and conquer” as a means to weaken the political influence of southern Sudan. It has employed corrupt mechanisms in encouraging SPLA/SPLM leaders, such as Riek-Machar and Lam Akol, to split off from the main faction. But other entities have largely succeeded in reuniting these groups. The United States, as well as certain Scandinavian and Christian groups, have played a key role in this process. Salva Kiir, Vice President of Sudan and President of the autonomous government of Southern Sudan, has also successfully promoted the unity of SPLM.

While certain critics claim the CPA is too complex for successful implementation, the comprehensive and detailed nature of the agreement has assured widespread confidence in continued peace. The CPA has largely become a guarantor of the peace. The CPA constituted certain commissions to oversee its implementation. These commissions have achieved great success given the infrastructural challenges and an uncooperative Sudanese government.

To some extent the CPA fomented an expansion of the Darfurian rebellion in 2003. Darfur lacked any representation at the CPA negotiations and if drafting process had included Darfur, the current conflict may have been avoided. CPA negotiations should have included the leaders of the three main Darfurian tribes – the Zaghawa, the Fur and the Massalit.

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Q: Share with us what you've seen as the positive consequences of having negotiated and implemented thus far the North-South agreement in Sudan.

A: The North-South agreement is one of the successes of United States diplomacy. This is because they had big leverage on the negotiation process itself at that time, although officially the IGAD was leading the process. They are the ones who leading it, but we know that Senator Danforth was forthcoming in the negotiations. So that's where I think the United State succeeded. They had the will, and all the parties had very good will on the peace process itself, so that is one of the successes and the driving forces to the success of the Naivasha agreement.

Q: Certainly for the negotiations part.

A: Not only that, but the Sudanese government as well, we know that sometimes they were reluctant to proceed with the negotiations, because there were the hold-outs in Khartoum who were not happy with the peace process and starting negotiation at that time. Yet, the United States exerted great pressure on the Sudanese government to accept and sit down with SPLA/SPLM. And fortunately the SPLA/SPLM leadership exerted good will to proceed with the peace negotiations, so that is one of the great successes.

Q: If I understood you correctly, the Khartoum government was willing, under pressure, to sit down and negotiate this agreement. Now that the agreement has been signed, how would characterize the attitude of the Khartoum government toward its implementation?

A: The Khartoum government is still very reluctant to implement the different items of the agreement itself. Yet, they are proceeding with the agreement. As I said, the other partner, the SPLM, they are coming along with the agreement and they have a great will in realizing peace in Southern Sudan, they are pushing ahead. The United States is still pushing ahead. Seeing that Senator Danforth at that time, when he was Ambassador at the United Nations, they had convened the Security Council in Nairobi, Kenya, just to help the peace process and help the Sudanese parties come to peace, and that is one of the great events for the peace process in general.

Q: I can appreciate that peace is really important for human activity. Let's look at that a little more in detail, with respect to say the SPLM. Do you feel that they have

implemented the agreement? What kind of a report card grade would you give their efforts, in terms of how well they've done?

A: For the SPLM, I can give them 95 percent. Because they actually transformed themselves from a guerilla or warring faction to a political body to an executive body, which is not an easy process. They have been in that war for almost 22 years, or 21 years. They have never assumed any political role in a civil society. So it's very difficult to just in two years for a soldier to transform all their personnel into politicians to executives in the offices, to build a country with no infrastructure.

Q: So you give them high marks for their efforts.

A: Definitely yes. Definitely yes.

Q: Some people have said that there are some problems along the lines of corruption. What would you say in that regard?

A: That is understandable. If one knows the Sudanese government very well, the Sudanese government are professional corruptors.

Q: So now we're talking about the government in Khartoum?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, professional corruptors.

A: They are professional corruptors. Not only have they maintained the divide and conquer strategies since when they came to power, and that is where they divided all the Sudanese political parties -- not only that, but the warring factions in the South itself. They have divided them so many times. Fortunately we know that the friends of peace elsewhere, they have united some of those factions together, back together to the original. Seeing that the SPLM/SPLA itself we know that Riek-Machar, now the governor of Southern Sudan in Juba, he had his own faction split from the main SPLM/SPLA, as well as Dr. Lam Akol, now the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Sudan, he also split from SPLA/SPLM, the same tactic of the Sudanese government. We know that they have convened so many times in Germany in some areas to split them.

Fortunately the United States, and the United States Congressmen at that time, played a big role in bringing all these factions together to the main faction of SPLA/SPLM. So seeing that it's still the Sudanese government there and they are in the South, so they have their plans, and we know that they are very pro-active in corrupting people. So they have their plans ahead of the CPA, and that is one of their strategies. We know there is some corruption here and there, I understand that, but the peace process is going on. The peace partners are willing to go ahead, this needs to appear gradually, but not all at once.

Q: That's a good point that it will be a gradual transition and that some of the individuals that you mentioned, Riek-Machar and Lam Akol, there was an attempt then by the Sudanese government to corrupt them, to take advantage of the fact that they were split from the body of the SPLA. But that effort has not succeeded because others were able to bring them back together. There were other friends of peace you mentioned. Is that how it worked?

A: Friends of peace, yes, from Scandinavia, for example. We know that there are some Christian groups, also with the good faith to realize peace in Southern Sudan. They have exerted a great effort to bring them together. Thank the Lord, yes they did. But still as I said, the Sudanese government is trying at any time, at any opportunity they can get, to continue their past strategies of divide and conquer.

Q: Okay. Salva Kiir, who had to take over from John Garang, to what degree would you say he's been able to carry out the vision of John Garang and again, how would you evaluate his strengths as the leader of the SPLM?

A: Actually Salva Kiir is quite different from late John Garang. Yet he is a great leader. One of his strengths is his connection with the grass roots and with the field commanders, rather than the politicians and the thinkers. We know that the charismatic figure of the late John Garang has overwhelmed other leaders, yet Salva Kiir has formed his own personality. So that is where he succeeded in keeping the SPLM intact on all these crises. And we know that they are still fighting to realize peace with a very aggressive partner at this point, the Sudanese government.

Q: It seems the SPLM is able to remain united, and that the leadership is coming, as you point out, from Salva Kiir himself. That's very key. Some people have said too that the CPA, as it turned out, is overly complex. The criticism has arisen that John Garang felt it needed to be very detailed, but that the result was just too much complexity for a successful implementation. What would you say in response to that?

A: Yes, CPA is very complex, yet it is very comprehensive as it says itself. And that is one of the strengths of the agreement itself. And that is where it didn't fall out within this year, because the people who are implementing it, the Southern Sudanese people, SPLM, the Sudanese people in general, they look at it as a guarantor for the peace. That is one of the very strong points of the peace agreement itself, as a document.

Q: Now of course it's all spelled out in the peace accord what should happen, but there are a great many commissions established in order to oversee these details and some of them have been more effective than others. I'm thinking in particular of the Evaluation and Assessment Commission, which has been constituted. But how would you describe how well it has been able to do its job?

A: As I said, it is very difficult in the situation of transforming a warring faction into a political body to try to put the basic infrastructure of a region, or let us say some country, it is not easy. Not only that, but with a reluctant partner who always tries to put blocks

on the peace path. So realizing all that, I believe that they have done a great job. Not only that, but if we look at the basics, this Commission, the environment in which they are working, the importance rests on Southern Sudan itself. The commitment of the peace partners, if you look at the others, those who pledge to help build the country. So given all that, I agree that they have done a great job.

Q: I'd like to steer us now to the relationship with Darfur, because I know that's an area you have focused your efforts in particular on. Some have said there that the negotiation of the CPA was a completing factor to some degree in the rebellion that took place in Darfur in 2003, I guess. To what extent has the CPA made a difference in, I don't want to say fomenting unrest in Darfur, but has there been an impact on Darfur from the successful negotiation of the CPA?

A: I can say to some degree yes. The Darfur situation is quite different from the CPA, and at that time the peace process itself, the path its going on that fomented at some extent the Darfur rebellions to take the momentum to the second level and to declare as rebels against the central government. But they are there on the ground. Unfortunately the Sudanese government response was so brutal, and that's where we ended to the genocide which is unfolding right now.

Q: If the Darfurians had been able to be present in the negotiations of the North-South agreement, because they had legitimate grievances, could that have forestalled the rebellion that took place later?

A: I believe I can say yes. One of the shortcomings of the CPA is that it is between two political parties, I can say – the SPLM and the NCP (the National Congress Party). So that's one of the shortcomings of the CPA. But as I said, it is very comprehensive in that it included the whole Sudanese political spectrum within the agreement itself. But those who were negotiating it at that time were only two parties. So if the Darfurians were there at that time, maybe yes we would not have what we have right now in Darfur.

Q: You have a long background in peace and conflict resolution studies. So if they had asked you whether we should have the Darfurians as one of the negotiating parties in the CPA negotiations, what would you have said? How would you have advised them?

A: I will say yes, they should include some Darfurian key leaders and especially those tribal leaders. We know that, at this time, there are three main tribes, of the Darfur so many tribes, that are mainly affected by this conflict, especially the Zaghawa, Fur and Massalit. So if we include just leadership of these three groups to the CPA, we would not have what we have right now.

Q: So that would have been a suggestion you would have made had they asked you at that time, and I guess it could have made a difference in Darfur in avoiding the war. Now the violence that we see in Darfur, how would you characterize the attitude of the government in Khartoum towards the rebels and towards the violence itself? Does it serve their purposes?

A: The situation in Darfur is very complex. The Sudanese government, the first time they realized the strength of the Darfurian rebel groups, they were shocked, so their response was very brutal.

Q: This was in 2003?

A: Yes, 2003. Early 2003. They tried to bomb some locations of the rebel groups, yet they failed. So they recruited the Janjaweed. You know they are some Darfurian Arab factions. More of them actually, they are the remnants of the Chadian-Libyan conflict and they are basically recruited by the Libyans to fight the Chadians. Later the leadership of Libya, they sort of colonized Africa by using what they called the Islamic Arab brigade, which is the nucleus for the Janjaweed.

Q: The Islamic Arab Brigade. So these individuals are not really originating from the Darfur region itself?

A: Originally, actually they are from Chad, from Mali, from Mauritania, from Niger. They were recruited to help the Libyans fight the Chadians in the Aouzou area. Since Chad, they had a new government in 1990, so they had most of the bases of the Islamic Arab Brigade moved to Darfur.

Q: So since the 1990s there have been fighters in the region of Darfur who could be mobilized for this purpose.

A: Yes. And they have the continuous support from Libya. And that is where when the Sudanese government, they were faced by the rebellions in Darfur, they first of all, I believe, they get the permission to use the Islamic Arab Brigade with the local Darfurian Arabs and that is from the nucleus of Janjaweed, the so-called Janjaweed. Not only that, but the Sudanese government, they are reluctant to use the Sudanese Army, which is composed mainly of the Darfurians.

Q: It's understandable why they would be reluctant to use the Sudanese Army. But in that case, the Sudanese Army would have a number of leaders who would not be happy seeing what's going on in Darfur.

A: Yes.

Q: So what's happening with that?

A: Unfortunately, most of the Sudanese Army leaders are not Darfurians. The Darfurians are mainly the low-ranks and ground troops.

Q: But the officers are?

A: Most of them from Northern Sudan. And that is where even the Southerners, when the Darfur rebellion started in 2003, and the international community tried to refocus on Sudan, they focused at that time on Darfur. So the Southerners looked very skeptically toward the Darfurians. Some of them actually they started out saying “You have killed us before or used to kill us before, and now you are trying to spoil our peace.”

Q: Now I'm going to ask you to say that again because it's a little hard to understand which Southerners are saying this.

A: Actually most are intellectuals. Unfortunately, the Sudanese ambassador to the United States, Dr. John Ukec Lueth Ukec, recently he said at a discussion in Philadelphia that the Darfurians tried to spoil the CPA by surfacing against the Sudanese government at that time. That's how they looked at it.

Q: Okay, so this is the governor of South Sudan.

A: Yes. Lam Akol, he said the same thing.

Q: Right. And that goes back to supporting your point that had the Darfurians been present in the negotiations, then it would be difficult to argue that, because they were there and they blessed the final agreement.

A: Yes.

Q: Of course, perhaps you would say that that's not true, what would you say in terms of the Darfurians are not trying to spoil the CPA...

A: No, they are not trying to spoil the CPA. But they are trying to defend themselves, because, as I said, there are other grievances. The insecurity on the ground at that time is the highest levels. There is no presence of any Sudanese authority in Darfur on the ground. And we know that maybe the lack of support of the Janjaweed, as we know, there are military militias in Darfur without a central command. So they are looting, they are killing people for survival, and that is the situation where the Darfurians have rebelled.

Q: Right, and the Sudanese government didn't mind having them there when they were not threatening the government in any way, but...

A: Not only that, but we know that they were supported by the Libyans and they don't want any kind of bad relations with Libya, as they are assuming they are Arabs and the Libyans are Arabs.

Q: Well just one year ago, of course, there was the Darfur peace accord, which in some ways modeled after the CPA in some of its components, structurally, anyway. But the security that was supposed to result after the signing of the Darfur peace accord remains a big problem. What would be the principal explanation for why the implementation of that aspect hasn't occurred?

A: The Darfur peace agreement is, I can say in a word, immature. It is a hasty agreement. That's one thing. The other thing is there is no will.

Q: No will?

A: From all parties there is no will to realize sustainable peace. Yet they try to convince themselves or try to convince others that yes, we want peace. And even for the United States, I don't believe they were there with the same will that they had in the southern Sudan peace process.

Q: And why do you think that is?

A: I don't know that mechanisms of how the United States form these decisions. But what I know is at that time under Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick, he went in five days or six days and he came up with the agreement.

Q: That's why you said it was hasty.

A: It was hasty, yes. I met him the day that he left to Abuja, and later on that week he got the peace agreement. And one of my suggestions to him at that time was if you want to have sustainable peace in Darfur, first of all you have to have a comprehensive peace agreement, cease-fire agreement, a comprehensive cease-fire agreement, and then invite all of the Darfurians to sit together.

We know that there were three different factions in Abuja at that time negotiating with the Sudanese government. They were unskilled negotiators with no great will to realize peace, so many other partners are pushing them back. So there are a lot of negative mechanisms in the Abuja peace agreement. So the environment itself is not healthy to have an agreement of that type. Yet we have this kind of peace agreement. Not only that, but they have built the agreement on, sometimes I can say, it is not a real great fraction. If we took the Darfurian factions, the three Darfurian factions at that time, they might constitute less than 25 percent of the Darfurian leadership.

Q: So they made the mistake of not really having the right leaders to negotiate with?

A: Yes.

Q: What did Mr. Zoellick say when you told him that?

A: He said Thank you very much, and he had his plans and he just went off.

Q: So you're not surprised that the cease-fire has not been observed and that the other groups feel that they're still marginalized.

A: Yes. Not only that, but if we look at the terms of CPA and the terms of DPA, the Darfur Peace Agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement, it doesn't have mechanisms of implementation, that's one thing. It doesn't have forces to guard it. We know that the CPA was guarded by a United Nations force, the 10,000 United Nations peace-keeping force. Yet the Darfur Peace Agreement, there's nothing there, that's one thing. The other thing is if we come to one of the terms in the DPA, is the Darfurian Transitional Authority which is the minimum now is the assistant to the President of Sudan he has no real authority. He has nothing actually. Nothing constituted anywhere. He just has a title without any real authority. No power at all

Q: And how has he reacted to that? Has he noticed?

A: As I said, there unskilled. He just got the title. Maybe that is one of his ambitions.

Q: The Darfur Peace Agreement contains the provision for something called the Darfur-Darfur dialogue and consultation mechanism, which is supposed to bring together all parties together, apparently, to generate ideas, to resolve conflicts, to provide for the political representation of everyone with particular emphasis on women and youth and be very inclusive. This whole process is designed to give a better sense of participation to the factions that you mentioned are left out. But, I am unsure whether that has been launched.

A: Darfur-Darfur dialogue, this is one of the approaches that we the Darfurians proposed, It says specifically here the Darfur rehabilitation project is the first body that suggested the Darfur-Darfur dialogue.

Q: Oh, your own Darfur rehabilitation project?

A: Yes, that is in 2004. When we suggested that, and we submitted a proposal to the United States and other bodies, we suggested what we call three concentric conferences for the Darfurians. The first one is for academia, the thinkers, the intellectuals to put a road map of different scenarios for the solution of the Darfurian conflict, as well as addressing the Darfurian conflict itself. What is the Darfur conflict itself? Because now we have so many groups, Darfurian groups, that claim they are defending the Darfurians and calling for Darfurian rights. But we thought to have a common vision, to have a specific message for the Darfurians. The Darfurian academia, intellectuals and politicians, they have to come together to put a road map or different scenarios for the Darfur conflict. So that is the conference we suggested.

The second one is for the Darfurian traditional leaders and the civil society. Saying that those who are in daily contact with the normal Darfurians to buy into what the first group has put, or perhaps to change it. Then the third group is the Darfurian warring factions, and we know that, as Darfurians, most of those warring factions don't have skills, they are not politicians, yet they are aggravated by the insecurity, by unemployment, by so many local factors that led them to carry the arms and defend their people. So we know that the second group is specifically the local leaders, the civil society leaders, they have

the leverage on the warring factions. So they can influence them. They can educate them. They will carry or embrace whatever the second group will have, so that's where we think, or we have thought of the Darfur-Darfur dialogue. And that is how we thought of putting the Darfurians all together to have a common vision, to have a shared strategy, to go with a unified voice to negotiate with the Sudanese government.

Q: This sounds very similar to the process of the CPA.

A: Yes.

Q: You were inspired by the CPA?

A: Yes. Yes. Unfortunately, those who put together the DPA, they have put this process, the Darfur-Darfur dialogue into DPA and under the auspices of the Sudanese government.

Q: Under the auspices of the Sudanese government?

A: Yes, unfortunately.

Q: So it really hasn't got off the ground, the dialogue.

A: No. Later on one of the annexes, they have given it to the AU, the African Union. And I believe they have assigned Abdul Mohammed, who is Ethiopian. He was a long-time conflict resolution activist. And so he is now the head of the Darfur-Darfur dialogue and consultation from the African Union. Yet, there's nothing on the ground.

Q: You mentioned the third group of warring factions, and when you described them you didn't say they were foreign fighters. Yet from what you've said earlier I was thinking...

A: No, well when I said Darfurian warring factions I meant the local Darfurians, not the Janjaweed.

Q: Excluding them and those Janjaweed presumably...

A: Janjaweed is a part of the Sudanese government.

Q: Right. And they were supposed to take care of them, which is another measure that hasn't actually occurred.

A: Yes.

Q Does that link still exist? There are different points of view of how close the Sudanese government is to being able to control the Janjaweed.

A: With the Sudanese government, there are many relations in the international community. We learned that they have incorporated the Janjaweed into the Sudanese force. They are called, right now the boarder patrol.

Q: The boarder patrol.

A: Yes. And they are under the command of the President himself.

Q: Oh, the President of Sudan?

A: Yes. It's not under the defense force, or anything else. No, it's under the President himself. And recently we have tensions in the cities of Darfur where this boarder patrol intelligence, they have conflict with the regular police force. And they cannot control them, because they have the command from the President himself. Yes, so that is where there are the other leaders, under the President, and they cannot control them. The President himself is the one who's controlling them.

Q: If the President desired to control these Janjaweed forces, he could manage?

A: Yes.

Q: So it must fit his plan not to do that.

A: Yeah. I believe so. But they are less active to realize this in Darfur. Yet their constituencies, the civil society, not the international community, are very active to realize peace in Darfur. And that is where we see the rise, all over the world, we see the civil societies all over the world advocating for the Darfur cause, yet the international community is dragging its feet.

Q: The governments?

A: The governments.

Q: And what would you say specifically about the United States government? Since you're here in the U.S.

A: As I said, it's different interests. The United States has its oil interests. We know that now they have the sense that the Sudanese government is one of the strong allies in the war on terror. They want to stabilize Southern Sudan and the CPA. Actually, I don't blame them. They have tried a lot to unify the Darfurian rebel groups. Yet they failed because of the so many differences and the so many pulling forces to the Darfurian rebel groups. So that is where they are, up to now, it's almost more than a year there is no real efforts to bring the Darfurian factions together.

Q: Let me go back to what you were saying about U.S. government interests, and the consideration of the Sudanese government as a strong ally in the war on terror. I detect

maybe some uncertainty on your part. Do you think the Sudanese government is not a very good partner in the war on terror?

A: Actually, I believe the Sudanese government is a terrorist government. It's killing its people. How does a terrorist government become a very good ally to you against the terrorists? That's how I look at it. Not only that, the Sudanese government is not only killing its people in Darfur, in eastern Sudan, in the Luba mountains and in Southern Sudan, but in other encounters it is destabilizing Chad, it is destabilizing Central Africa Republic. And as we speak, just last week, we know that the insurgents in the Central African Republic, they have seized one of the major cities. Those groups they just infiltrated from Darfur. Just last week.

Q: You mentioned that even the U.S. government has tried to unify the Darfurian forces. But these forces are too many?

A: They are too many and as I said there are pulling factors, pulling back factors to these groups.

Q: What kind of factors are those?

A: We know that the Libyans are supporting some groups. The Eritreans are supporting some groups. The Chadians are supporting some groups. And those different countries, they have different interests. So it is not easy just to take Darfurians without those who are supporting them. So this how complicated the situation is in Darfur.

Q: It is complicated. Are these natural alliances? The Chadians, do they have natural ethnic ties with the Darfurians their supporting? The Eritreans? The Libyans, as well?

A: The Libyans have a long interest in Darfur, in relation to Darfur. The Chadians have ethnic groups, many of them have ties. So, like, I can say more than ten different ethnic groups that have ties between two countries. Yet everything else maybe just, what do you call, some personal connections or theories and political interests that are connected to these groups. But they don't have those group ties with the Darfurians. Yet they have influence on some of the Darfurian ethnic groups.

Q: And what would you say would be the key to uniting these Darfurian groups? Obviously they do have different tribal histories and leaders. But do they share enough in common, other than their territory, to be united?

A: Yes. The Darfurians have a lot of ties. They have coexisted for hundreds of years. They can bring the Darfur conflict to an end, if the Darfurian leadership is involved in the peace process itself. And that is where I go back to the Darfur-Darfur dialogue.

Q: Right. And what you told Mr. Zoellick too.

A: Yes. And actually still I am pushing on the Darfur-Darfur dialogue, how we approach it. Not how the others approach it or how it is recorded in the DPA. Because we think that Darfurians constitute more than 40 percent of the Sudanese population.

Q: So that's very significant.

A: Yes. If the Southern Sudanese people constitute between 35-40 percent, let us say, and the Darfurians, let us say, 40 percent, so that is, at least it is 75 percent of the Sudanese population. So if we approach the Darfur conflict as we propose it right now, the Darfur-Darfur dialogue, so number one we unite the Darfurians as a unique group to support the coming elections, that is one thing, to stand against the group that's ruling in Khartoum, which we think they are less than 7 percent of the Sudanese population.

Q: ...That really support the Congress Party.

A: The current Sudanese government, yes.

Q: That's what I understand.

A: Yes. Yes. So not only that, but if we approach the way we spell it out in our proposal, the Darfur-Darfur dialogue, that is a very concrete ground for democratic Sudan and democratic Darfur. And that is where we can have the 2009 elections in Sudan with a guarantee of changing the 50 years of Sudanese politics.

Q: I'm glad you brought up the elections, because that's where I wanted to go next and really being our discussion to a conclusion because you've covered so many of the main points already. Elections are scheduled under the CPA and some have questioned whether there will be adequate preparation for them and even whether they'll take place on schedule. What is your thinking on that?

A: Preparations from the Southern Sudanese point of view, I believe this the only one of the shortcomings as they are transforming themselves from a warring faction, a rebel party, to a political party. Although they have tried to establish it. But it is not an easy process. They are working on it. It takes a lot of experience. I don't believe they have that much expertise at this point of time, as they are trying to construct the basic infrastructure for the south itself.

Q: And they have to do a census to get ready for these elections.

A: Yes. On the other hand, the Sudanese government is well prepared, well structured, with different strategies. At this point of time they've tried isolate Darfur. And that is why they are reluctant to realize peace in Darfur at this point of time because that would be negative to the National Congress Party.

Q: It would be a negative for the elections if there's peace in Darfur?

A: It is negative not for the elections but for the National Congress Party. Because the Darfurians will not elect the National Congress Party. So if they are not electing, why would they let the elections be held in Darfur itself. So now they are trying to exclude that.

Q: Oh I see. Exclude them from the elections.

A: Yes, they are trying to exclude them from the elections.

Q: Which you might do more easily if there's no peace. You can't have elections.

A: Yes. So that is where I believe they don't have good will in realizing peace in Darfur at this point of time.

Q: Do you think they'll have elections in 2008 but not include Darfur?

A: Yes. And not include Darfur, yes. That is what, from the mechanisms that is employing right now, the National Congress Party, that is why they are trying to exclude Darfur. As much as they can try to exclude Darfur. Because as I said Darfurians constitute, in total they constitute 40 percent. So if they were united, and if there is peace, and people can communicate easily.

Q: Well even if Darfur is excluded though the National Congress Party might not win, since they have less than 10 percent of support.

A: But they have other mechanisms. They are professionals in relating the locals. So, as I said, the southern Sudanese, they are not quite ready for the elections. So that is where even the assessment...

Q: The Evaluation Assessment Committee.

A: Yes. So there are other factors playing in that.

Q: Well I want to thank you for sharing your thought and your expertise on Darfur and Sudan in general. Would you like to make a concluding statement? Something you'd like to offer as a lesson learned for future negotiators and implementers?

A: Yeah, thank you very much. One of the lessons learned is that whenever you do your homework, and that's in general, you will succeed. And that is well done in the CPA and not in the DPA. So if we want to realize peace in Darfur, we have to prepare the leaders that can negotiate in a good faith, skilled leaders. And that is what we are lacking now in Darfur, and we are pushing for well-prepared, well-skilled Darfurian negotiators.

Q: And now you're able to offer your assistance, right? Your helping hand?

A: Yes. I'm working on that with different Darfurian groups and different entities in the United States and elsewhere and hopefully we can succeed to bring the Darfurians together, declare them equipped with necessary skills to negotiate with the Sudanese government in a good faith and good will.

Q: Yes, well I think you're the right guy. Do you think the referendum of 2011 will take place?

A: I believe, yes, it will take place.

Q And is that an independent question from the 2008 separate question?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Yeah we want to ask you what you think will happen. But it's a little too soon to guess that.

A: Yes. Thank you very much.