

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

Interview # 82 – Executive Summary

Interviewed by: Daniel F. Whitman

Interview Date: May 11, 2007

Copyright 2007 ADST & USIP

The interviewee is a former Foreign Service officer and current professor at George Washington University. He served as a Deputy Chief of Mission in Khartoum in the mid 80's and was a director for East African affairs in the Africa Bureau from 1993 to 1996. As Ambassador to Ethiopia in the late 90's he had a number of contacts with the Sudanese as the U.S. did not have a delegation at that time.

The Clinton administration initially was focused on the isolation of Khartoum. Domestic pressures pushed the administration to support the SPLM/SPLA, and for a time harbored Osama Bin Laden. U.S.-Sudan relations changed with the Clinton administration's desire to improve counter-terrorism efforts which initially began after Bin Laden's removal in 1996. Counter-terrorism efforts accelerated after 9-11. The Sudanese seemed eager to return to the good graces of the United States, particularly because Khartoum feared they were next in line to be invaded after Afghanistan. The Bush administration has worked to balance the interests of continued cooperation with Khartoum on counter-terrorism and the anti-Khartoum lobby. The fact that the CPA was even signed should be considered a great success and a credit to an administration that has had few successes.

Domestic pressure was all organized on the "bash Khartoum" side of the issue. Some simply called for isolation others called for the overthrow of the al-Bashir government. Bush's selection of John Danforth as special representative to Sudan was a brilliant move because Danforth was respected by the very religious, who were a key part of the anti-Khartoum lobby. Selecting Danforth as special representative neutralized some of the domestic pressure.

The U.S. was able to accomplish its goals because of its credibility among the SPLM/SPLA, its history of involvement in the region and its position as the sole superpower. Of any single outside organization or country the United States probably had the largest role and the biggest impact.

The fact that only two parties were involved in CPA negotiations may prove to be a problem further down the road. However, it would have been nearly impossible to sign the deal if every potential party was involved. The excluded actors could make implementation difficult if Khartoum and the SPLM. Particularly as the disparity in capacity between the South and North continues to exist

Darfur is distracting the West from the concerns with the CPA. The Darfur crisis is sustaining sanctions put in place for other reasons that are no longer relevant. The Darfur debate is not complete because very few people have answered the question, "Why focus on Darfur?" The interviewee goes so far to call it a dishonest debate. The presence of the Darfur dilemma damages the chances of a successful CPA implementation and Khartoum has lost some of the goodwill built by the CPA agreement because of Darfur. Darfur significantly increases the chances that the CPA will fail.

The U.S. is short-sighted when it comes to International issues. We tend to believe that since it was signed, everything is going to be fine. As is common with many things, we focused a lot on the negotiation phase, but are not working nearly as hard to achieve a successful implementation. Also because we only look a year or two ahead, no one seems to have a plan about what happens if, as expected, the South chooses independence. While we may disagree with China's involvement in Sudan, it could be argued that China made the better decision by working in its long-term interest.

The lesson learned is to make a sustained commitment, while keeping a balanced, long-term picture of the issues at hand.

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

Interview # 82

Interviewed by: Daniel F. Whitman

Interview Date: May 11, 2007

Copyright 2007 USIP & ADST

Q: Let's start by asking you about your own personal past in Sudan and what involvement that you've had, if any, since the time that you were actually posted there.

A: Yes, it comes in sort of 2 ½ parts. In the first instance, I was Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, 1983-1986. I later returned to the Africa Bureau. Towards the end of 1993 I was the director for East African Affairs which includes Sudan, and I was in that position until about April or May of 1996. Then the half factor comes in I guess, after that I went off as Ambassador to Ethiopia. Our ambassador to Sudan was evacuated to Kenya most of that time. As a result he, for a long period of the time that I was in Ethiopia, which went until August of 99, there was no resident mission in Khartoum and we had a fair number of visitors from Khartoum to Addis Ababa. Since I knew Sudan and knew a lot of the personalities I would usually meet with them, and as a result got slightly more engaged than a neighboring ambassador would normally do in the neighboring country.

I retired from the Foreign Service in the year 2000 and have not had direct dealings with Sudan although I have made one return visit in connection with the effort to update myself on the situation there, that was in 2003, and I teach at George Washington University where Sudan is an important component of what I teach for it all deals with Africa and one of the courses I teach which is how to do political analysis is actually based on a Sudan case study. That forces me to follow the literature on it.

Q: Did your involvement in the Somalia task force have any indirect dealings with this?

A: Not really, the Somalia involvement in '92 and '93 was seen as pretty much separate from what was going in Sudan and even though Osama Bin Laden was resident in Sudan at that time, I don't think ever made the connection between Sudan and Osama Bin Laden and Somalia. All of that came out much later and even today there is considerable dispute as to whether there was an Al-Qaeda engagement in Somalia in that 92-94 period.

Q: Although you weren't directly involved in the CPA process, what is your feeling of what U.S. objectives were when we began to get involved? What do you think our intentions were, and how do you think we did in terms of realizing them?

A: In the Clinton administration at least up until the final six months or so, the focus was on isolating Khartoum. There was a great sense of pity and support for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, great hostility towards the government in Khartoum, and a tendency to react to an enormous amount of domestic pressure to penalize the government in Khartoum. There was not a great effort to seek a balanced approach until the final months of the administration. At which point, I wasn't in a position to know the intentions or decisions in the government, at that point I was out at a diplomatic residence in UCLA.

It appears to have been based on a desire to improve the coordination and cooperation on counter-terrorism and there were initial efforts made to shore up those links with the Sudanese intelligence establishment that was under way, some Americans did move back to Khartoum or at least they were in and out of there with great regularity and there was a beginning of a collaborative counter-terrorist effort prior to 9/11. After 9/11, it picked up with enormous speed and for obvious reasons the Sudanese saw it as a way to get back in the good graces of the United States and undo a lot of damage that had been done in previous years for a whole lot of reasons, not all of which were related to terrorism. Some of them were human rights problems, the issue of slavery, again the support from slavery, dictatorial government and the list goes on and on.

In any event I believe that Sudan saw an opening here and probably also concluded that the time was right to start severing its ties to some of these terrorist groups it had previously supported, and you will recall that it had already removed Osama Bin Laden from the country in 1996. As I was involved in that process, even though I left the East African desk at the point that it was consummated, it is my impression that the Sudanese were deeply disappointed that after having agreed to get rid of Osama Bin Laden, there was no sort of response from the American Government, or no "thank you" or basically no nothing. The response was, "Well, what are you going to do for us now?" and clearly the Sudanese had the impression that United States had raised the bar. I know that from my contacts with the Sudanese in Ethiopia later on. So they basically said, "Well okay we did something the United States wanted to do, there's no follow through, basically that's it, there's just nothing to be gained in this."

But for whatever reason, by the time they got to the tail end of the Clinton administration there was a rethinking of this cooperation or desire to cooperate with United States, and it began again albeit at a relatively low level. After 9/11 the process picked up steam enormously, probably in Sudan's own self-interest, maybe they figured, particularly after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that they might be next on the list or something, in that manner, also they further increased their desire to collaborate with the U.S.

That led to a fairly rapid build-up of the U.S. presence in Khartoum, rapid perhaps as the Iraq war, it led to a build-up of personnel in Khartoum in the last year or so, become very large, and an awful lot of that is based on the counter-terrorist cooperation element and of course the concerns about implementing the North-south peace agreement and monitoring the situation in Darfur, I suppose that's the biggest part of it today, but that did create a whole new situation in the U.S.-Sudan dynamic.

When you had a change of administrations, with Bush coming in to the White House, initially I don't think there was dramatic change in policy, just sort of going along with what the Clinton administration had put effect. But 9/11 began to change that in particular, and I think the Bush administration has been opening for getting something out of Khartoum on counter-terrorism and as I understand it they did get significant information out of Khartoum's government. That then caused a dilemma for the administration, which still had all of these domestic bills which almost unanimously were opposed to the government in Khartoum and supportive of the SPLM, and a lot of these were the religious right which was the base of the Republican party.

So the administration had a real dilemma on its hands, it wanted cooperation on counterterrorism on the one hand, and it wanted to mollify these interest groups, particularly the religious right on the other, and in my view came with a rather brilliant way of handling it.

They appointed John Danforth as the special representative for Sudan, who initially made some bite-sized steps in terms of dealing with the North-South agreement, focusing particularly on the Nuba Mountains, the settlement in the Nuba mountains. Several other small pieces of the puzzle in an effort to make progress, did make progress, I think much to the surprise of many people. Because Danforth was the one who was doing it, it basically nullified any negative concerns from the anti-Khartoum government lobby in the United States. This was one of those interesting foreign policy issues where almost, not uniquely but rarely, you had all of the groups supporting one side. That is bash Khartoum, support the SPLM, there were some that didn't fully support the SPLM but everyone bashed Khartoum, there was nobody out there who said, "Hey let's take a little more balanced approach to this and see if we can't deal with the government in Khartoum, if there isn't really something to work with here, and give them the benefit of the doubt on a few of these issues."

That just never appeared and you would have thought maybe the oil companies would have fallen into that category but they really didn't. I think they were totally intimidated by initially the Clinton administration when it essentially told Occidental Oil, "Stay out of Sudan," even though they were very interested in taking up Chevron oil blocks and had purchased the data that Chevron had on file I think in a warehouse in London. But they were told categorically, "Thou shalt not develop in Sudan," and sanctions woefully made it very difficult for an American company to go in, so the oil companies were intimidated, and remained intimidated even when Bush came into the White House. So they never performed a function that you might think they would otherwise perform, that is offset the civil-society bureaus, some of the non-governmental organizations, the religious right and the churches, and etc.

But, I say I give great credit Bush administration for neutralizing this lobby by putting Danforth in that job, and then focusing on trying to accomplish something real yet important, that is, parts of the North-South peace agreement and succeeding in doing that. Danforth wasn't around all that long, he passed on the agenda to the bureaucracy, they

have continued to work the issue and increasingly, and again I give the administration credit for this -- unlike my response on Somalia for example, where I have a real problem giving credit.

But in the case of Sudan they decided to focus full bore on the cease-fire and the North-South agreement and to bring the international community into the process. And lo and behold, they succeeded and it is become another signing of the CPA, and the United States deserves an enormous amount of credit for that and the Bush administration deserves an enormous amount of credit for it. How could any lobby out there that detested the government in Khartoum be against a ceasefire and an agreement between North and South? They couldn't, they were completely neutralized. So the whole thing worked, of course it remains to be seen whether this is going to be implemented in the way it's designed, and all of us have questions about that. But even if it all falls apart at some point in the future, you would have -- the ceasefire went into effect in about 2003 -- you would have more than four years of peace, more than four years where no one's getting in the South, or very few people were getting killed. That alone is a huge progress.

Q: You began with comments about anti-terrorism, then you talked about a dual-track agenda, one which perhaps deals with the terrorist threat to us, or to the West. Are you saying that the objectives morphed, when talking to the religious right... more North-South peace than anti-terrorism? Or is this all closely linked together?

A: I don't know for a fact how it worked on the inside or how they were thinking it through. Looking at it from the outside, it seems to me that that the really close connection was focusing on settlement of the war between the North and the South and using that to neutralize the groups in the United States that were interested in, quite frankly, some of them wanted to overthrow the government in Khartoum. I mean if they really were honest with you over a few beers, that's what I'm sure they would tell you, they just wanted to spend, to do whatever we could, just overthrow the government, get of rid of it.

Those who were a little bit more rational put it in the context of isolating the government, at one point Madeleine Albright called the government in Khartoum "The viper's nest" or something, I mean really tough language. So I think that's where the close connection is going on. To some extent I have the impression that the collaboration on counter-terrorism is sort of off to the side, and that it was going on a parallel track. I have no idea what the people in the administration were telling those on the religious right or those NGOs or civil society groups who were still kind of angry at not bashing Khartoum more. Maybe privately they were telling them, "Calm down and be quiet. We've got this thing going, and it's kind of important to us, you've got to understand that." Maybe they were doing that, maybe they were not.

Q: Danforth was a religious person, and part of the White House.

A: That was what I was getting at, that was how he was able to neutralize the religious right, because he had great credibility among people who feel strongly about their religion in the United States, and I think that's why he was picked. I would be surprised if that were not the reason and that's why I said it was a brilliant move to put him in that job.

Q: Let's assume that the North-South peace was a good thing and that the negotiations were effective. Could you give your sense of what was the importance of having an outside power, the United States... What was it about having somebody from the outside that you think made the agreement possible?

A: Several reasons, one the United States is the world's only remaining superpower and that counts for a lot in the developing world, in Africa. Second, and maybe more importantly, they have enormous credibility with the SPLM/SPLA, probably more so than any other country, due to a combination of contact both with the government and with private individuals and I think Khartoum understood that they really had to get the United States on Board in order to bring the SPLM along on any deal. Three, just a long involvement in the Horn of Africa, generally knew the issues reasonably well, probably better than most countries, not all countries but most countries, United Kingdom has a pretty good handle on the issues, Norway has a pretty good handle on the issues in the horn, the thing that counts is...the personnel and the capacity that the United States...

Q: Personnel and capacity. Do you have a sense of the state of effectiveness, if there were such of the American negotiators? I do want to discuss the role of the Norwegians... the Kenyans... You're saying we have the clout. Given that, were you close enough in observing the process that you had a sense of the actual tactics that the Americans used and in what ways they were effective?

A: I think you are talking with a number of other people who were deeply involved in that process. I am looking at it after having left the government, having occasionally talked with people who were involved in the process. My overall impression is simply that the United States was deeply engaged in the minutiae of the argumentation, and that it provided a fair amount of assistance and expertise for some of the issues, particularly some of the security-military issues. My impression is that all was pretty good, that all felt they were in agreement.

Q: Do you have a sense of the relative importance and effectiveness of the U.S., EU, Kenya? Was it your sense that they were all working very much in tandem, or is it certain that one will emerge as the really effective one?

A: My impression is that they worked pretty well in tandem, but whether they always worked well in tandem or not, I have no idea, because I wasn't close enough to it. Judging by what I have heard from a variety of different people, my impression is that the U.S. role was more important than the role of any other single organization or country. Now, collectively all of the other countries and organizations may have been more important, but if you had to single out one country or one organization, my impression is that it was the United States.

Q: Now let's turn to the Sudanese themselves. You mentioned SPLA/SPLM, and the Khartoum regime. Some previous interviewees have stated that they felt that not enough parties were involved, that there were people excluded from the process. Do you have a sense of those who were the most included or excluded? If so, who were the ones who really were working in a positive bent, and who were the spoilers?

A: As I understand it, there really were only two parties involved in the process, and it's a perfectly legitimate criticism of the process. Those two parties were the SPLM/SPLA representing the South, and the National Congress Party or the government in Khartoum, representing the North. All of these Northern opposition parties, opposition groups or whatever you want to call them, were totally excluded from the process. One lived in exile in Asmara, Eritrea, the National Democratic Alliance. Sadiq al-Madhi and the Umma party was variously in Cairo or parts of the South, I guess as much in the South as he was back in Khartoum, but he had no role in it.

The Democratic Unionist Party had no role in the process as far as I know, except maybe at the very beginning, after the agreement had been signed. On behalf of the South, the names of all of the groups were legion, and they did tend to change from one year to the next. There was more movement in the Southern groups, but none was involved directly. The Equatorial Defense Force... never part of the process, there were groups in the Nuer part of Sudan that were never involved, some of these groups ultimately joined the SPLA/SPLM, but during the early parts of the negotiation they were basically an independent group.

But no, this is a very legitimate issue. Having said that, however, it would be a totally unwieldy process if you had invited them all in. They were not spoilers because they were not part of the process, and therefore they couldn't spoil it, if they had been inside the tent, they might very well have been in a position to prevent it all from happening.

Q: So their absence made this agreement possible. Will it also compromise the implementation? Do you think this could be a factor in implementation at some point?

A: It makes implementation more difficult, there is no doubt about it. Some of these groups are still hostile to the agreement, or hostile to what is going on in either the North or the South, and some of them are still in a position to be spoilers. Whether they will in fact become spoilers remains to be seen. The terms in large part fall on both the government in Khartoum and the current challenges that it has, and how the SPLM does in the South. So far I think both sides have made plenty of mistakes, they're going to have to start doing better if they are going to insure that this agreement is implemented. And then the 400 pound gorilla in the room: even if all of the spoilers can be neutralized - - and that's a big if, a great big if -- there is still the question of how do you have a referendum in 2011? And will the Southerners opt, as conventional wisdom seems to think they will, for independence? And will the borders, the North-South border, have been drawn by that point? That's another big if.

No matter where the border is drawn, it's probably going to leave most of the oil in the South, and then you have to ask is that the North going to say, "Okay, we tried, we lost, take care and have a great time." I just find it really hard to believe that's going to happen.

Q: You mentioned the border. No one knows where Abyei belongs. Do you have a sense of the relative success of the various commissions? This appears complicated when seen from the outside, having to do with boundary division, revenue sharing or power sharing. Do you have a sense of which of these is going forward as they should, and which are not?

A: I'm not close enough to the issue to really comment intelligently on that, I think we're dealing with so many other people who are following this on almost a daily basis, that their guidance would be far better. I would be reluctant to comment on the relative success of those commissions because I am not part of the process.

Q: Okay, now we've looked at the outsiders, the insiders, the various governments. What about the NGOs, and especially the religious right? What about those who were on the ground and who are still? Perhaps this is more of a question of implementation than negotiation. Have independent NGOs during the negotiation or after played a major role?

A: I am not sure they've been a major player. I think NGOs basically do their own thing and it's a pretty limited mandate. They're either involved in relief work or humanitarian work or development work and they have important pieces to be grappled with, but I think it would be a real stretch to suggest that any one of them or even all of them collectively are that important to implementing the CPA. I just find it hard to believe that that's the case. I do sort of know how NGOs operate, I know the situation in the South and I just don't see them as playing that kind of role.

Q: Some of them of them who are in the South now are saying that, they are working on capacity building, and in that way are contributing to implementation.

A: That's what I would like to think. No, I am sure that some of them are doing so, and I don't even know what all they are doing, though they are very much involved in helping build capacity. If you've got...capacity though, you've got to set yourself up a government. So in that sense they play an important role, but any single one of them is going to be pretty limited role, collectively.

Q: You're going in June, but not to South.

A: My reasons for going have nothing to do with the CPA nor with Darfur. They have to do U.S. planning efforts.

Q: Earlier you mentioned some of the U.S. oil companies which were supposed to stay out. Perhaps we didn't know then how influential the other players would be. In hindsight do you think that was a mistake, to make it a moral issue for U.S. oil companies at that time, knowing now that other major powers were going to make off with the loot?

A: Once you put sanctions in effect there's really no option, end of the discussion. So the question really is, Was it appropriate to put sanctions in effect in the first place? I really have to put my political hat on at this point. Any administration, I don't care whether it's the Clinton administration or the Bush administration, and all of the lobbying groups are arrayed on one side, that is, we want sanctions, we want penalties against Khartoum. We really would like the government overthrown and if we send the 101st airborne in to do that to, no administration is going to stand in the road and block that kind of an effort when there is no offsetting lobbying group on the other side, and there wasn't any. So realistically, there really wasn't any other option. It was virtually a no-brainer from the standpoint of an elected politician.

Q: Some people say lift the sanctions on the South and keep them on the North. Why should the South be included in the sanctions?

A: I was under the impression that even though sanctions are still in effect that there is so much American assistance going into the South that it's almost as though they don't exist, so I'm not sure it's all that big of a deal in terms of the South. The question in my mind today about sanctions is, what are the sanctions for? My recollection is they weren't put into effect because of anything to do with Darfur, they were put into effect for a whole series of other reasons, particularly Sudanese support for terrorism. And the Sudanese are now collaborating with the United States on terrorism. So the reason for the sanctions has by and large disappeared.

Now that still begs the question, "Well okay, the United States has declared genocide is taking place, should we eliminate all the sanctions as currently stated because they are based on reasons that largely don't exist anymore and reinstate them because there's 'genocide' going in Darfur?" I suppose you could make that argument, personally I've never been a fan of sanctions because I've seen that they rarely work and I don't see that they're working in Sudan. So I'm still not in tune with sanctions. On the other hand, again, you have a domestic audience in the United States that I think would be very much opposed to removing sanctions and they don't really care whether they're put into effect for legitimate reasons or not. They're sanctions and we like them because we don't like the government in Khartoum, so let's leave them there, even though the reasons for staying have changed over to Darfur.

Q: You mention Darfur, which is certainly getting more attention currently than the North-South situation. Is the North-South peace in jeopardy because of the more recent and more grave crisis, or can it be dealt with as two separate incidents?

A: Now I think it is in jeopardy. It is a real pity that Darfur has sucked all the oxygen out of this Sudan debate, and my impression is that the North-South peace agreement is not getting the attention it deserves from the highest levels of the U.S. government, or virtually anywhere else for that manner, and this is a huge mistake.

I understand why there is all the fuss around Darfur because that's where all the political domestic U.S. political pressure is being put, and that's what American politicians react to. They don't necessarily react to what's right and what's wrong. It's a question of, Where is the pressure coming from? And there's enormous pressure on Darfur. I've stayed out of this Darfur thing, because I'm not convinced it's a totally honest debate. If you're going to declare genocide in Darfur, I can give you about six other places where you should've declared it also. So why are we just singling out Darfur? The number of deaths in Darfur pale by comparison to what is going on in the Congo, and no one cares about the Congo. I mean, this is not an honest discussion.

All the Hollywood celebrities and everyone else just pacing off to Darfur, actually most of them never make it to Darfur. They get out at the Chad border and stop, but never mind, they come back and say they've been to Darfur. I just completely turned off by this whole thing, I'm very critical of the Sudan government for what goes on in Darfur, but I think the dishonesty is coming up with some of the atrocities that are also appearing on behalf of the rebel groups that oppose the government, they're not as bad as the Janjaweed, but they are not very nice groups and there is just an awful lot of mayhem going on at there by a lot of different sources, and I'm just not sure this argument is being framed properly in the United States.

Q: Is this discussion actually going to undermine the North-South process that has been going for a much longer time? Will it distract attention to the extent that it will actually jeopardize the agreement?

A: It could. I'm not prepared to go so far as to say that it will, but it has that distinct possibility and I'm just not sure that the bureaucracy and in particular the more senior political leadership is sufficiently agile to be able to juggle both of these issues plus a host of other issues around the world that are also much more significant than Darfur or the North-South peace agreement in Sudan. I do give the administration credit for putting Sudan very high on its list of priorities, it's clearly their most important issue in all of Africa, and I question that if there is so much emphasis on Sudan, not much of the rest of the continent is covered. But I realize that's something of a cop-out. I really don't know that it will jeopardize the agreement but it clearly has that potential.

Q: Does somebody want there to be a distraction that would take people's attention away from the North-South?

A: No, I don't think so, I think the government in Khartoum would much prefer that Darfur never happened and I think it was quite prepared to take its chances with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I think it had an overly realistic or optimistic view. As to the likely outcome of the CPA, I think it felt it could successfully convince Southerners to remain part of the united Sudan, albeit with significant autonomy. I think it was prepared to pursue that as its ultimate goal.

Whether it would have done what was necessary or not is quite another matter, and that was frankly my big concern based on the lessons learned in the 1972 Addis Ababa

agreement. That agreement wasn't a bad agreement either, it's not nearly as good as the CPA agreement and a lot of lessons were learned at the CPA agreement because of Addis Ababa. It is a far, far more detailed agreement, infinitely more detailed. But, ultimately in the 1972 agreement the will was not there, for the Nimeiri government to carry out and they started undoing the agreement with each passing year, and that now is my concern with CPA. Even without Darfur, which has been terribly distracting, that might have happened. Now Darfur is just consuming everything, consuming a lot of internal activity of the national government in Khartoum.

Q: So where is this going? The experience in 1972 may have unraveled, and now we have distractions. Is this very ominous for the CPA? And what do you think are the chances of a credible implementation?

A: Of the CPA? The possible implementation of the CPA would be much higher if there were no Darfur problem. You have the situation in Darfur that does not seem to be coming to any early resolution. I think this significantly increases the chances of failure of the CPA.

Q: You were talking lessons from the Addis agreement of 1972. Is it too early to talk about lessons learned from the CPA of 2005?

A: No, I don't think it is. You're seeing some of the same problems that came out of the '72 agreement, the one most obvious one was that this was going to happen, and that's corruption, particularly in the South. It was a serious problem after the '72 agreement, and it's a serious problem again.

The other one is totally predictable, and that is the lack capacity in the Southern government, everyone knew that, who are drawn into this. I think people may be a little disappointed that the capacity-building effort is not moving faster than it is, and I'm not in a position to judge why that is or even necessarily if that is the problem. But I have the impression indeed that it is. Revenue-sharing is almost inevitably going to be an issue of dispute. Even if it is carried out to the letter of the agreement, it's going to be disputed because everyone wants more money, and there are issues of transparency in the national government that need to be resolved.

I don't know to what degree the national government is responsible for development activities in the South, that was huge problem after the '72 agreement, for they made all these promises and then little happened. This time around it seems that more of the responsibility has fallen on the Southerners' government rather than the Sudanese national government, so it may be that that's not as big an issue this time. But to the extent that the central government is responsible for development projects or funding them in the South, it appears they're moving kind of slowly on it, and that's a problem.

Q: We've heard comments that the transparency issue is enormous. I don't know if anybody has insight on this. Do you?

A: No, I don't

Q: Well we've covered basically what the Institute has asked of us. Do you have any more observations to offer about where we've been? The point of the study is to look back and assuming that the North-South agreement was a good thing, see where all the Americans might have approached it in a different way. Should we be congratulating ourselves? What would you say about people getting involved in this issue?

A: I think there's always a tendency among Americans, maybe Westerners generally, because our time horizon is short and we're not very good with history, to take an agreement, and work really hard at trying to come up with a good agreement. I think this was essentially a good agreement, for a lot of the incredible amount of detail in it and then sort of say "whoo" and walk away from it and just kind of figure that well, it's just going to work because it has been signed. I'm exaggerating obviously, because there's been a fair amount of follow-up, but I don't think there has been near the amount of effort on the implementation phase as there was on the negotiation phase, and I think that is happening with a lot of regularity in the American process and perhaps in the western process more generally. That would be by far my biggest criticism, the extent to which this a realistic agreement.

On the issue of the referendum, what happens if the option is to have an independent state? I realize that everyone has thought of this and that everyone is aware of the potential problem but what is plan B? If the Southerners opt for independence and Khartoum says, "That means we lose all that oil, that's not going to wash." Then is there return to warfare? Do they start sending arms to the smaller southern groups that aren't very pleased with what's going on in the South anyway, and mobilize them and start undermining the Southern government, so Khartoum can say, "See, see they're all just fighting among themselves, we've got to step in with our troops and stop this and end the mayhem and get control of the situation again"? This would mean getting control of the oil. I don't know whether there's any plan B for that option or not, and I doubt that because our time horizons are not that long, every single one of them will be gone by 2011.

If they had anything to do with it, they'll be gone. Not only will they be gone but there won't be anybody around who knows the history of it, and that's the way we work. I see that again and again, and it's really disappointing. There is this complete lack of understanding of what happened in the past and the inability to think more than a year or two ahead, and I don't think that we should operate that way, that certain other societies operate that way. In fact the Chinese I think are very forward looking on this, I know they've got a real dilemma on their hands with Darfur and the oil interests, but what do they do, they send in peacekeepers to monitor the peace agreement. Now they're sending engineering units into Darfur. Smart people.

Q: Is this is a way for China to ward off criticisms in the West?

A: It is investing in other activities in the country, the value of it is not insignificant. They have built a lot of the infrastructure in connection with the oil. Transport, the pipeline and the refinery. But I think they have wider interests in Sudan than just oil, though it's clearly the single most important feature in the relationship. It provides somewhere between 5 and 7 percent of their total oil imports in any given year...China

Q: Well we've gone through some very somber assessments. Might there be any sort of happy conclusion?

A: Well the only happy conclusion with certainty is that the war has stopped between the Northerners and the Southerners and that's a very good result. Sometimes we overlook the obvious, we're so focused on problems or challenges, and there are legions here, but the good news is that virtually no one is getting killed in that dispute. So that's the good news and there's every reason to believe that into the foreseeable future that's going to continue. The rubber meets the road in 2011 with the referendum.