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**THE PEACE PROCESS IN SUDAN:
NORTH-SOUTH ACCORD OR
EAST-WEST DISCORD ?**

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SPLM/A: Sudanese People Liberation Front/Movement

GoS: Government of Sudan

IGAD: Inter-governmental Authority on Development

RDC: Republic Democratic of Congo

SSDF: South Sudan Defence Force

SLA: Sudan Liberation Army

NIF: National Islamic Front

IDPs : Internal Displaced Persons

NDA: National Democratic Alliance (Sudanese opposition since 1989)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sudan war is Africa's longest conflict which broke out in 1983 when southern "rebels" took up arms against the predominantly Arab and Muslim north. Southerners claim that they are fighting in order to gain a greater economical and political equality for the South and for the right to self-determination. With the signing on 7 January 2004 of Naivasha Agreement on wealth arrangements, the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) were closer to peace than at any time in the past twenty years. However, the initial euphoria for the Naivasha events was facing the threat of new negative trends in the peace talks and of the deteriorating conflict in Sudan's western Darfur and in the eastern region of Bejaland.

By analysing the regional context and the direct involvement of international actors such as US, this paper will consider the role of IGAD as suitable mediator in the peace process. The aim of this is not to explain Sudanese conflict neither to pause to reflect on its effects for the civilians. In the current first stage of the peace process, the two sides, SPLM/A and GoS, are now negotiating on wealth-sharing, power-sharing and the contested three areas. The second stage must have the priority to include in the negotiations opposition parties and civil society within Sudan as well. In the second part of the essay, I will focus on the Darfur's ongoing conflict. This crisis in the west region of Darfur has claimed thousands of lives and has given rise to 830.000 internal displaced persons (IDPs). By describing actors and issues at the core of the question this paper seeks to understand links between Darfur conflict and the IGAD peace process in order to analyze determinants and prospects for a successful final peace agreement.

2. THE IGAD'S PEACE PROCESS

a) REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Greater Horn region is well-known to be one of the most explosive areas in the world. The root causes of the several wars hosted by this area are deeply internal, however due to the non-existence of a hegemonic state, the spread politics of beggaring the enemy suggests a regional analysis. With the exception of the Ethiopia-Somalia dispute for the Ogaden region, there has not been any inter-state wars, but every domestic conflict should be valued with the porosity of the boundaries and within the economic inter-dependency of the Horn. During the last decades the relations between Khartoum and regional actors has been characterized by a tit-for-tat pattern. A diplomacy based on mutual intervention is the result of the common belief among the countries of the Horn that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend".

Firstly, since 1961 the Eritrean Liberation Front was supported by Government of Sudan (GoS) and SPLM/A was backed from Addis Ababa. As Cliffe, claims this is a common pattern in the Region and it is a "root of the chronically unstable and volatile regional security regime that characterises the Horn"¹. Even if in the Ethiopia-Eritrea war the external influences were not determinants, on the other hand the Sudanese conflict has been "escalated by the involvement of neighbouring states"². Secondly, when the EPLF and TPLF assumed power respectively in Asmara and Addis Ababa the Ethiopian government ended to support the SPLM/A, consequently Uganda

¹ L. Cliffe, Regional dimensions of conflict in the Horn of Africa, *Third World Quarterly*, 20(1) 1999.

² Cliffe op. cit.

became its main regional backer³. By the early 1990s, despite the Ethiopian gesture, the NIF's government of Sudan began to pursue an aggressive Islamist-based foreign policy⁴. This policy caused in 1993 a decline in the relations between Sudan and its former allies such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Egypt and caused the isolation of Khartoum in the region.

As a result of the breaking out of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998 and by a more moderate foreign policies (marginalisation of the NIF leader Turabi), Khartoum achieved conciliatory relations with neighbouring countries. As a result of the current status of the relations between the GoS and the regional countries, IGAD can be a more suitable sponsor of the Peace Process. As the Sudanese conflict is related to Sudan's relations with its neighbours, it is a good sign that a regional organization holds the peace talks. IGAD mediation started with the concern that the Sudanese conflict was a security threat to the region and that could cause a spill-over in the neighbouring countries. While regional states may benefit in short-term from the conflict, "their long term interest may change, and they may see internal conflict in broader regional terms"⁵.

b) THE INVOLVMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The international community has remained united behind the regional process led since 1994 by IGAD, and even if Eritrea and Nigeria tried to reach an agreement through their direct mediation, no other alternative has been allowed. One of the key strengths of the IGAD initiative has been in including in the peace process international actors such as U.S, UK, Norway, Switzerland and Italy. In fact, the major change under IGAD mediation has been to include the US mediation in the Peace Process. The US foreign policy has redirected the international community's eye toward Islamic States like Sudan. As Gallucci suggested, due to the International environment, the GoS is adjusting their policies to this new realities in which United States has emerged as the sole remaining superpower⁶.

Washington is eager to achieve a successful peace process particularly in a Muslim country and by a multilateral initiative rather than the demonstrated willingness to use military force and unilateral actions. In addition "American interest in resolving the conflict increased as the situation in Iraq and U.S relations with the Middle East in general worsened"⁶. The eventual success lies as well on the support of the external actors during the post-conflict period, if the US commitment in the peace process will be transitory this will affect the regional stability.

It is crucial that both regional and international actors continue their pressure on both the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A. While in 1997 (due to the regional pressure and to the SPLM/A's military victory on the ground) Khartoum returned to the negotiating table, in the 1998 the decreased regional pressure on the GoS (due to the outbreak of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war and

³ As a consequence of the Ugandan support to the SPLM/A Khartoum began to be the maior backer of the northern Uganda rebel group LRA

⁴ National Islamic Front (NIF): Islamist movement established by Hasan Abdullah Al-Turami with other Islamic scholars in 1985. Originated as an Islamist student movement in the 1960s. Engineered and supported the military coup led by Brig (later Lt-Gen) Umar Hasan al-Bashir to overthrow the elected government of Prime Minister Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi in June 1989. See www.irinnews.org Report on Sudan: *Who is who?*

⁵ Cliff op. cit.

⁶ *Sudan: The Peace Process and Beyond*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholar – Events. 12 January 2004. Panelists Gerard Gallucci, Chargé d'Affaires of the US mission in Khartoum; John Prendergast, Special Advisor to the President of International Crisis Group; and Kate Almquist, Advisor on policy to USAID.

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=53510#

⁶ See International Crisis Group (ICG) Africa Report N.73, *Sudan Towards an incomplete Peace* 11-Dec-03 ICG. www.crisisweb.org

to the Ugandan government involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo) made the negotiation collapse. According to Cliffe, the Western and interventions worldwide and not only in Africa, often suffer from short-term perspectives⁷. The high expectation, especially for the Bush's Administration, of a success should not bring any un-flexibility to deadlines. By making agreements at any cost there is a risk that the post-conflict management will fail.

c) INTERNAL ACTORS IN THE PEACE PROCESS

Beyond the regional and international commitment in the Sudanese reconciliation process there is the common understanding between the two main internal actors that a military victory is not possible. The Sudanese People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) is the largest rebel movement in the country, highly centralised under the leadership of John Garang that is both chairman of the SPLM and C-in-C of SPLA. This faction is in favour of a secular, united, democratic Sudan. On the other side of the negotiating table there is the Government of Sudan represented by First Vice-President Ali Osman Taha. The Naivasha Agreement (7-Jan-2004) was signed only by these two parties, however, for the first time in the peace process it was negotiated exclusively by Sudanese, without the direct involvement of the mediators or observers.

The two main disputes in the last two decades between Khartoum and SPLM/A are about self-determination and religion. By signing of Machakos Protocol on 20 July 2002 the two parties agreed on a framework for future negotiations. The document could seem to favour SPLM/A, however the government, as holder of state power and resources, must give more in any agreement. As SPLA demanded, the Protocol granted a self-determination referendum to southerners, following a six and a half year interim period, in which they would have the option of remaining with the north or seceding. On the other hand Khartoum will maintain the right to keep Islamic *sharia* law throughout the north⁸. In addition the Machakos Protocol specified that the peace process could achieve legitimacy only if Sudan embarked a democratic transformation⁹.

d) THE PRIORITY OF INCLUSIVITY

It is over simplistic analyze the peace process considering SPLM/A and GoS as sole internal actors, as ICG suggests the negotiating table is addressing the north/south dimension but not the country's systematic governance crisis and the armed conflicts that are breeding in other regions. IGAD decided to include only the two main parties in the negotiations for several reasons¹⁰. Firstly, it was thought inappropriate to change the negotiating pattern at mid-course. Secondly, it seemed that "if the door was opened to additional participants in the negotiations, then it would be very difficult to close it"¹¹, thirdly the mediators didn't want to increase the leaks of what was held to be confidential information in order to avoid the galvanization of any dissident that would disrupt the process.

⁷ Cliffe, op. cit.

⁸ See International Crisis Group (ICG) Africa Report N.51, *Sudan's Best chance for Peace: How Not to Lose It*, 17-Sept-2002 www.crisisgroup.org

⁹ Machakos Protocol (20-July-2002) "that the people of Sudan have the right to control and govern affairs in their region" (Section 1.2) "that the people of South Sudan have the right to self determination" (Section 1.3) and that the Sudanese "establish a democratic system of governance" (Section 1.6)

<http://www.sudan.net/news/press/postedr/164.shtml>

¹⁰ ICG Africa Report N.73 op. cit. p. 17

¹¹ Institute for Security Studies (ISS), *The Sudan IGAD peace process: Signposts for the way forward*, 13-Feb-2004 p.8. [http:// 73 op. cit. p.www.iss.co.za/AF/current/2004/sudanfeb04.pdf](http://73.op.cit.p.www.iss.co.za/AF/current/2004/sudanfeb04.pdf)

Beyond the rhetoric of a more democratic peace process, there is the general belief among several reports and analysts about the priority to include in the negotiations those groups that have the capacity to undermine the process if they are ignored. The participation in the peace process of opposition parties and Sudanese civil society is not a luxury but the sole indemnity that ignored groups do not take up arms.

Among the Southerners, groups such as SSDF has the capacity to undermine the IGAD Initiative by spreading disorder across the South. The SSDF members claim legitimacy on the basis of Khartoum Peace Agreement and consider themselves freedom fighters. By excluding them from the peace process there is the risk to affront their dignity and to make the peace-conflict management unstable. The success of the peace process caused a ripple effect and minority factions along the country began to demand to be included in the negotiation. I will therefore later examine some Sudanese minority factions including Darfur, SLA and Beja in the east who can all be considered into this category of factions seeking to be included in the negotiations.

3. KEY-ISSUES

The negotiations are at the highest level. Since September 2003 in Naivaisha, Garang and Taha dealt by face to face talks rather than negotiating through the mediators as previously. As a result the parties are not only leading the process but are addressing the agenda. During the first session the SPLM/A and GoS decided to make security the first focus. In addition they chose to deal with issues such as wealth and power-sharing, and the contested areas separately rather than negotiating them all together.

a) A “NATIONAL” ARMY

As mentioned above the basis focus (do u mean main focus/ basis focus doesn't make sense) for a negotiation was the security arrangements. The SPLA wanted to create integrated units of 21.000 soldiers in order to install them in sensitive areas. In accordance to the proposal both SPLA and SAF would have also maintained independent forces. In addition government troops would be re-deployed from the south, reducing the SAF presence in the SPLA area. Even if the Khartoum military establishing, led by General Bakri, rejected the proposal, Taha and the government accepted it in general terms.

However on one hand, Khartoum demanded a larger integrated force in the south and an extended period for re-deployment, on the other the SPLA wanted a smaller integrated force and a shorter period for re-deployment. While the institution of joint units would have provided a “national army” controlled by Khartoum, by proposing integrated units SPLA tried to “undermine the governments attempt to paint the SAF as the true national army”¹⁴.

As a result of different interests, the two parties decided for joint/integrated units. The agreement was dealt only by the parties without the direct mediation of IGAD and observer. While Khartoum is to re-deploy SAF from south to north, the SPLA is to re-deploy its army from the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile to the south following creation of the joint/integrated units. This agreement was signed in order to give a general framework for the next negotiations.

¹⁴ ICG Africa Report N. 76

b) WEALTH-SHARING

On 8 January at Naivasha the GoS and SPLM/A signed an agreement on wealth-sharing. According to John Garang this will give an economic independence to the southerners during the six-years interim period. As Yasir Arman (SPLM/A spokesman) claimed “For the first time government will be self reliant in the south and will have the resources and wealth for development and providing basic services”¹⁵. The Agreement addressed issues related to the central bank, the question of currency, the division of oil resources and the status of the petroleum commissions.

The division of oil revenue was highly contested. World Bank and IMF analysts wanted to steer discussion away from percentage distributions and tried to focus the question on the fiscal needs of each side and each level of government. However SPLM/A rejected this proposal. Under the agreement, the southern government is to retain half of its oil and non-oil revenue and give the other half to the Khartoum-based central government during the interim period¹⁶. Each oil-producing state is to receive two percent of net oil wealth, while a National Petroleum Commission, with representatives from both sides, will be established to manage the oil sector.

The war in the oilfields has received wide publicity, partly because it disrupted relief operations, and partly because it helped to bring about the collapse of the Sudan government’s “peace from within”¹⁷. Since 1999 there has been several reports on human rights violation in the oilfields. According to Human Right Watch, for instance, “the large scale exploitation of oil by foreign companies in the theatre of war in southern Sudan has increased human rights abuses there and it has exacerbated the long-running conflict in Sudan”¹⁸

In addition the agreement provided two separate bodies, an independent Southern Sudan Land Commission and a National Commission are to arbitrate land disputes, and to decide on appropriate compensation for claimants who are allowed to make claims against the relevant government and/or parties interested in the land. Furthermore a dual banking system is to be established, with an Islamic system in the north, which is not allowed to charge interest, and a western system in the south, while a new national currency is to be introduced¹⁹.

c) THE THREE CONTESTED AREAS

At the time of the writing this essay there was no agreement on the status of the three areas and on the power sharing. The most intricate question is the status of the areas of Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, and Abyei. While there is a common understanding from the two sides on a concept of autonomy for the Nuba Mountains and the Southern Blue Nile, it is unclear the future definitions of the autonomy and the question of popular consultation within these areas. Basically, the status Abyei is the most dangerous question and could cause the collapse of the peace process.

One of the most relevant factor for the Abyei question is the discovery of large oil deposits in its area. While the SPLM/A demands a referendum in order to let the population choose between

¹⁵ Naivasha, 8 Jan 2004. IRIN news website. www.irinnews.org

¹⁶ At the end of the six-year interim period a referendum is to be held to determine whether or not the south remains part of Sudan (see chapter 2.C)

¹⁷ Douglas H. Johnson: *The root causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*. African Issues. Indiana University Press. 2003.

¹⁸ Human Right Watch: *Sudan, Oil and Human Rights*. Brussels/London/Washington D C/ New York. 2003. p. 48

¹⁹ Naivasha, 8 Jan 2004. IRIN news website. www.irinnews.org

joining in the south (Bahar El-Ghazal) or remaining in the north (Western Kordofan), the GoS is reticent to approve any proposal that could include the risk to give Abyei to the South. According to International Crisis Group interviews in Naivasha (October 2003) Taha suggested that Abyei should be separately from North and South, with no reference to its final status. If GoS will accept a referendum it will do everything possible to ensure a result in favour of the North.

As a consequence of the Abyei question the government in the past has been aggressively resettling the neighbouring Misserya people into Ngok Dinka territory and created a massive displacement of the Ngok Dinka population. By shifting the demography and by expanding the geographical definition of Abyei region the GoS is attempting to shift the balance of a vote in its favour²⁰. By allowing the future loser of the Abyei question to receive a generous revenue from the oil revenues during the interim period, it will be possible to avoid eventual sources of instability in the post-conflict management.

d) POWER-SHARING

As explained above, there are currently only two sides negotiating in the peace process. Consequently the most debated question surrounding of the power-sharing is the future position of John Garang and of the Vice President Taha in a post-conflict Sudan. During these years Taha used the peace process as a mere tool in order to achieve a peaceful image in the eyes of international community. By giving a suitable position to John Garang, Taha seeks to secure a major position for himself in a new government. Taha suggested to create a post of deputy prime minister for himself and that Garang become first Vice President, allowing Bashir to remain President. In addition these posts should be guaranteed for the full six years interim period.

The two sides have not already discussed on the national capital. Probably the SPLM/A want to use this issue as a negotiating tool with other outstanding issues. It is widely known that the question of the capital in conjunction with the exclusion of the presidency from elections are important issue to the northern opposition because the consequences could be damaging for them. In addition, according to the Nakuru Document in the National Assembly opposition groups (both non SPLA, non government) will only hold 23 per cent of the posts. The degree of representation of the oppositions in the Assembly corresponds to the “not so democratic” peace process.

4. DARFUR AND THE EAST: THE UNTOLD STORY

a) BACKGROUND

Even if the international community began to be aware of the steadily worsening crisis in Darfur only few months ago (more than one year after its eruption), Darfur can be considered an old Sudanese question. Over the last few decades however, the pattern of the conflict shifted continuously. Greater Darfur, a territory composed of three states (North, South, and West Darfur) borders Chad to the west, Libya to the northwest, and Central African Republic to the southwest. As a consequence of his position and due to the significant migration and trade, the inhabitants living in the large border area between Chad and Sudan have much in common.

²⁰ ICG Africa Report N. 76. p.8

There are two ways used to distinguish people living within the area: the language and the occupation. While non-Arab or African peoples historically don't speak Arabic, those claiming Arab descent are Arabic speakers. Usually African are agriculturalists depending on a subsistence economy (except for the Zaghawa, who specialise in herding camels) and Arabic inhabitants are pastoralists. However between the two descriptions there are also nuance and centuries of coexistence and intermarriage have reduced distinctions. The desertification and the drought affected Greater Darfur on and off since the 1970s. As a consequence of the impoverishment of Darfur people, the competition over land and water in the region has been many times at the root of conflicts between Arab and "Zurga" (black people).

These conflicts can be described as traditional, they were fought over the resources of the area within Arab and African factions as well as between them. Additionally these clashes were sporadic and were characterized by a low level of violence. Most of the time traditional leaders were able to promote reconciliation between the parties through mid-level coexistence building strategies. Yousef Takana, a Darfur scholar, lists three traditional, resource-based conflicts between 1968 and 1976; five between 1976 and 1980, and 21 between 1980 and 1998.²¹

During the late 1980s the involvement of the GoS in the Darfur region brought an alarming shift. By manipulating ethnic fabric in the region and by financing specific parties within the area the government promoted a series of ethnically driven conflicts in order to make numerous groups of southern Sudan turn against the SPLA²². Khartoum's shortcoming policies and the availability of small arms in the market from Chad caused the spread of the clashes in northern and central Sudan; the pattern of the conflict shifted from traditional to ethnic one. These new conflicts are based on "ethnic solidarity helping" relations between the parties. The "native administration" is not more able to manage reconciliation between the parties on the basis of a traditional co-existence. In addition, their failure to address the problems of the region has de-legitimised their power on the ground.

An important example of the shift within Darfur conflict is the Arab Gathering that made itself known in the 1987 in a letter to Prime Minister al-Mahdi. This letter presented Arabs as the "standard bearers for religion, culture and civilisation"²³, attributing with a supremacist tone to "Arab race" the "creation of civilisation in this (Darfur) region...in the areas of governance, religion and language"²⁴. This kind of ideology can easily give the opportunity to the faction leaders (properly warlords) to manipulate the collective fears and aspirations in order to gain personal advantage. On the other hand, non-Arab people (Fur, Masaalit, and Zaghawa) created a broader unity as a result of the common fear of Arab attacks. The ethnic polarization posed a threat to the long-term coexistence of Darfur, previously promoted by local moderate leaders.

b) ACTORS: JEM AND SLA

Initially the rebel groups were mainly composed of three ethnic groups: Zaghawa, Fur and Masaalit, however some smaller tribes such as the Jebel and Dorok have also joined the rebellion following Arab militia (Janjaweed) attacks on their communities²⁵. The new generation of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) emerged in February 2003

²¹ Yousef Takana, "Effects of tribal strife in Darfur" in Arabic, in Adam Al-Zein Mohamed and Al-Tayeb Ibrahim Weddai "Prespectives on tribal conflicts in Sudan, in Arabic (Institute of Afro-Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, 1998), pp. 195-225. In ICG Africa Report N 76 Nairobi/Brussels: *Darfur rising: Sudan's New Crisis*. 25 March 2004.

²² the intra-South conflict posed a threat to the implementation of the ongoing IGAD peace process.

²³ ICG Africa Report N 76 op.cit. p. 10

²⁴ Cited in Hussein Adam al-Haj, "The Arab Gathering and the attempt to cancel the other in Darfur" in Arabic, 31 december 2003, at www.sudanile.com/sudanile13.html

²⁵ Human Rights Watch Report: *Darfur in Flames: Atrocities in Western Sudan*. 02 April 2004 www.hrw.org

as a consequence of the failure of the government and the traditional leadership to implement reconciliation policies in the region.

SLA and JEM are composed by young graduates and school dropouts. Their political ideas are influenced by Sudan's parties in Khartoum such as NIF, Umma party, and the Democratic Unionists.²⁶ Both JEM and SLA demand to be included in a socio-economic development, they are in favour of an end to tribal militias, and they want a power-sharing agreement with the government. The SLA rhetoric of marginalization, domination of the riverine tribes, and the demand for an end to the policies of divide and rule and democratic governance, "bears a striking resemblance to that of SPLM/A"²⁷.

JEM was in the limelight during the ceasefire between SLA and government in September 2003. At that time JEM, that was not included in the negotiations, continued to attack the GoS and its local allies, as a result it gained the support of many SLA fighters who were unhappy of the Abeche Agreement. According to International Crisis Group report on Darfur, the rebels established a pattern of attacking government security targets and personnel but recent reports of looting, abductions and attacks against civilians suggest a possible deterioration of discipline. Despite the differences between the two rebel groups, the solidity and cruelty of the common enemy has increased the cooperation between them.

c) ACTORS: KHARTOUM, JANJAWEEED, AND CHAD

The situation in Darfur cannot be separated from the ongoing IGAD peace process. Khartoum took an advantage of the disagreement among the international community, it gave the army time to deliver a crushing blow in order to impose terms on a weakened SLA/JEM. While Khartoum has realized that it is impossible a military victory against the SPLA, it is sure that it can defeat Darfur rebels on the ground in order to arrive at the negotiating table with the total control of the region. The government considers Darfur a domestic question and it has a clear strategy to hide the conflict from its public and the world. Consequently, the GoS is reluctant to give permits to travel inside and outside the three regional capitals of Darfurs (at the time of writing permits to travel inside these urban areas are granted only after about eight to ten days. Permits to travel outside are often delayed for extended periods)²⁸. In addition Darfur has been a source of votes for the Umma Party (opposition party from the North) but now due to the manipulation of ethnicity in the region the government has replaced its power.

The most important armed faction among the Arab side in Darfur is called "Janjaweed". This term generally allude to armed outlaw horsemen. According to Amnesty International, International Crisis Group and Human Right Watch last reports the Janjaweed is responsible of continuing cruel attacks on the African civilians. In an interview with IRIN, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland said that Darfur region of Sudan was one of the world's most neglected humanitarian crisis and that a "scorched-earth" campaign of ethnic cleansing was taking place there²⁹. Furthermore, Human Rights Watch accused the Governments of Sudan to be the backer of Janjaweed crimes against humanity in Darfur. However it is widely known that the attacks against civilians and Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the denial of humanitarian assistance is a clear strategy of Khartoum³⁰.

²⁶ ICG Report *op. cit* p.9

²⁷ ISS, *op. cit.* p.9

²⁸ Interview with UN Emergency relief Coordinator Jan Egeland. 2 April 2004, IRIN. www.irinnews.org

²⁹ 5 December 2003, IRIN. www.irinnews.org

³⁰ Human Rights Watch Report *op. cit.*

Due to the presence of several tribes on both sides of the border, Chad is a natural external/regional actor. It is a fact that the continuing conflict in Darfur is a threat to the stability of Chad, according to Human Rights Watch, since early 2004 Janjaweed attacks inside Chad assailing Sudanese refugee as well as Chadian civilians³¹. The porosity of the border (a common feature in the Greater Horn) and the collapse of the law and order in the area is an attraction for armed groups eager to steal goods, cattle and other livestock. Due to the instability in this area, three successive Chadian P President, including the incumbent (Idriss Déby), have launched their bid for power from Darfur³².

Idriss Déby went to power in Chad through the support of Government of Sudan. However, he is a Zaghawa, one of the ethnic group in Darfur that is facing the Janjaweed attacks. As a consequence of its involvement, Chad hosted the Abeche process. The talks included the Government of Sudan, the Government of Chad and the SLA. The process began with the signing of a ceasefire agreement but it collapsed on 16 December before that the third round of the negotiations started. Chad's interior minister told the press "there has been a breakdown in negotiations because of unacceptable rebel demands"³³. As ICG suggested by opting to accuse one side of responsibility for the breakdown and by using the unbalanced ethnic composition of the SLA's delegation to challenge its legitimacy, Chad seriously compromised its credibility³⁴.

d) THE FORGOTTEN EAST

Observers warn of simmering conflict in the eastern region particularly by the indigenous Beja people (Muslims but not Arabs). According to the Beja in their area "there has never been any sign of government"³⁵. The Beja are composed by several groups. All of them are under the umbrella of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an Asmara opposition grouping. The Beja peoples are not seeking secession and want to be part of a federal system. In the area, according to Salah of the Buja Congress, there has been no fighting for two months in order to give the Naivasha peace talks a chance. "We are giving them (the GoS) a chance to include us in the peace process, but we are not going to wait much longer"³⁶. As Justice Africa suggested, this is the area with the lowest proportion of people holding positions in the central government³⁷. Despite the absence of attention of the international community (as the lack of information and reports on this question suggests), if excluded the Beja question could be a destabilizing factor in a post-conflict area.

5. CONCLUSION

At the core of the Darfur ongoing conflict is the lack of attention and the indecision on how to react to the current crisis of the international community. "Ironically" countries such as U.S and UK, who continue to use easily an iron hand on Iraq, have advocated a lower profile on the Darfur question in the Security Council. Consequently, Khartoum has acted with impunity there, confident that the international community will not do anything for fear of harming prospects at IGAD talks.

³¹ Human Rights Watch Report op. cit.

³² Idriss Déby went to power in Chad through the support of Government of Sudan. However he is a Zaghawa, one of the ethnic group in Darfur that is facing the Janjaweed attacks. In addition Chad is hosting the peace talks for Darfur.

³³ Sudan Government, Rebels peace talks break down in Chad" Associated Press, 16 December 2003

³⁴ ICG Report on Darfur op. cit.

³⁵ IRIN Report: *Sudan: the neglected east*. Asmara 24 Mar 2004. www.irinnews.org

³⁶ IRIN news op.cit.

³⁷ IRIN news op. cit.

Firstly, the United Nations Security Council should condemn the violations in Darfur (committed by all the parties). Secondly, the United States are in the position to increase the pressure on Khartoum in order to make it cease all attacks on the civilians as well as supporting the Janjaweed. Finally, International observers such as UK, Norway, and Italy could pursue a stronger diplomacy promoting reconciliations between the parties and insisting that Khartoum respect the international humanitarian law by protecting civilians, disbanding and disarming militias, and facilitating access to Darfur to humanitarian organizations.

At first it may have seemed clever to organize parallel talks on different issues and with different actors. However, currently there is a growing sense of regional identity among diverse communities sharing the same experience of marginalisation³⁸. An agreement between SPLM and GoS on the outstanding issues (power shearing and three contested areas) is now urgent. A quick solution of the IGAD peace process would focus the international community efforts on Darfur and would permit the beginning of a final and comprehensive peace agreement between all the actors, including the minority. It is natural that the Government of Sudan, as holder of the most of the power in the country, must grant more than the other factions. The U.S and his followers (UK, Norway and Italy), by making pressure on Khartoum, should act as watchdogs. At the time of writing this essay, the world press is commemorating the Rwanda genocide by re-viewing the non-intervention of international community ten years later. Clearly, the Rwanda experience leaves the Security Council with crucial lessons to be learnt, and for precisely this reason it is time to give much more attention to the Darfur question, in order to avoid another African massacre, by speeding up a comprehensive solution to end the internationally abandoned, yet long conflict in Sudan.

³⁸ IRIN news: The neglected east, op. cit.