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Highlights

Government is reviewing US policy – MFA spokesperson

MFA spokesperson Muawia Osman Khaled told reporters yesterday that the Government would review the new US strategy toward Sudan, adding the issues raised in the policy paper were purely domestic and the Sudanese are capable of addressing them, **Akhbar Al-Youm** reports.

According to **Al-Watan**, the National Umma Party and the Turabi-led Popular Congress Party have also reacted to the new policy. While the PCP expressed disappointment over the strategy, the Umma Party stressed the need for a review of Sudan's foreign policy for more rational engagement with the international community.

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports MFA Undersecretary Mutrif Siddique reacted to the new strategy by stating that "it is difficult to say that relations between Khartoum and Washington will improve soon".

Kamal Obeid, State Minister for Information, said the strategy was a product of the review by the Obama Administration of the floundering policies of its predecessors. He expressed Khartoum's rejection of any conditions by the US and dismissed claims of human rights abuse in Darfur. He said western NGOs, which operate under cover of humanitarian activities in Darfur, are discouraging IDP returns.

Sudan Vision reports that Sudanese political strategists viewed the US Administration new policy toward Sudan as a fresh start on the course of relationship between Khartoum and Washington.

Dr. Khalid Hussein, a strategist, described the new American policy as generally positive adding that it is the first time that the American Administration adopts a clear strategy with regard to Sudan. He noted that the strategy was free from terms used by former US Administration such as the use of military power and creation of no-fly zone.

UNSG welcomes Obama's interest to assist Sudan

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports that UNSG Ban Ki-moon has welcomed President Barack Obama's interest in helping Sudan to achieve peace. "We appreciate the efforts by the US and some influential partners to help Sudanese to achieve peace," SG spokesperson Michael Montas told reporters.

Khartoum to seek clarification on Chad's statement

Sudan Ambassador to Chad Abdullah Al-Sheikh said he was determined to seek clarification from the Chadian Government over statements attributed to the Chadian Information Minister to the effect that talk about improvement of relations between Khartoum and N'djamena is "propaganda", **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports.

Kiir welcomes Al-Bashir's initiative to enhance security in the South

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit has called on the federal interior minister Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid to tour Juba and the border areas to arrive at a clearer vision about the causes of insecurity and instability in the South, saying the GoNU has a role to play in discovering and preventing crimes. At a meeting with Hamid yesterday in Juba, Kiir appealed to

the interior ministry to undertake its role to build the capacity of police in the South, pointing out that the police has a role to play to disarm civilians, to organize customs at the borders, to prevent smuggling and infiltration of criminals across the border. He welcomed the initiative by President Al-Bashir to enhance security and stability in the South and the GoNU's programmes to build a police force in the South.

Meanwhile, Hamid has revealed a joint plan between the federal and GoSS police to secure upcoming elections. GoSS Interior Minister Qir Chong said the federal and GoSS Ministries have agreed that the Federal Ministry of Interior would undertake the training and rehabilitation of police units in the South.

SPLM briefs Diplomatic Missions in Juba on challenges

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports GoSS Presidency Minister Luka Biong as saying that GoSS yesterday briefed 18 Diplomatic Missions in Juba on the current challenges. Biong said the meeting discussed a range of issues including SPLM's walk out of Parliament, referendum, elections, census results, GoSS' stance on the US new policy toward Sudan, Darfur and insecurity in the South. Biong added that GoSS would take a formal position on the US policy today.

Governors of Southern Kordofan, Unity and Warrap to meet in Abyei

Al-Ayyam reports that governors of Southern Kordofan, Unity and Warrap states will hold a broad meeting on 30 October in Abyei to discuss security in the area. Abyei Deputy Chief Administrator Rahma Al-Nour said that the decision for the meeting was taken at a recent meeting convened between the Abyei Administration, governor of Southern Kordofan Ahmed Haroun and the state's security.

NCP asked us to remain in the south and leave them the north - Lino

Edward Lino, a member of the SPLM Elections Committee, revealed that the NCP had asked their party to remain in the south and leave them the north, **Al-Ayyam** reports. Addressing a mass rally yesterday in Kosti, White Nile State, Lino said that the SPLM had rejected the NCP's idea because they seek to build a new Sudan.

Lino also accused the NCP of seeking to divide the country. "Fall of the NCP in the forthcoming elections will lead to unity of the country," he said.

MPs exchange harsh words over voluntary return

Al-Raed reports that Humanitarian Affairs Minister Haroun Ron Lual has asked for the formation of a parliamentary committee to verify Darfur IDP return data prepared by the HAC which were questioned by Darfur MPs at a stormy meeting at the Parliament premises yesterday. The Darfur MPs said the figures provided by HAC Commissioner Hassabo Mohamed Abdul Rahman about voluntary return of IDPs in Darfur were incorrect.

Walkout parties reject threat of penalties over parliamentary boycott

The SPLM and southern Sudanese parties have rejected recent threats by Deputy Speaker Mohamed Al-Hassan Al-Amin to impose penalties on their MPs for boycotting parliamentary sessions, **Al-Ayyam** reports.

In a statement circulated yesterday, representatives of the SPLM and five other southern Sudanese political parties argued that such threats only serve to increase tensions within the parliament.

Lubna Hussein files defamation case against Assembly Speaker

Journalist Lubna Ahmed Hussein yesterday requested the National Assembly members to strip Parliament Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir of his immunity to face a defamation case (10735)

filed by the journalist, **Ajras Al-Hurriya** reports. Lubna said that the Speaker in an interview with a Gulf newspaper claimed that she wore indecent and immoral clothing. The Prosecution filed a case under sections 159, 115, 89 and 105.

She said she was surprised that there was no provision in the Constitution for lifting immunity from the Speaker although there are clear provisions for lifting the same from MPs, the President of the Republic and his deputies and judges. However, she has vowed to continue her case against the Speaker.

Sudan launches new website for president Bashir

Sudan Tribune website 20/10/09 – The Sudanese Government launched a multi-language personal website for president Omer Al-Bashir this week, according to state media. The site can be accessed at <http://www.albashir.sd/>

Sudan calls for international arbitration over border dispute with Egypt

Sudan Tribune website 20/10/09 – The issue of the disputed border region with Egypt should be transferred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), a senior Sudanese official said.

The Sudanese presidential assistant, Musa Mohammed Ahmed, stressed to reporters that the Halayeb triangle is part of Sudan “and cannot be forsaken”.

Ahmed, who is from Eastern Sudan, urged all Sudanese political parties to have a “clear and united stance” on the issue.

The Sudanese official said that Egypt should accept international arbitration in the same manner it did with Israel over the town of Taba at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Talks on South Sudan referendum progress in Khartoum

Sudan Tribune website 20/10/09– The Vice President of the republic and the Vice President of southern Sudan Government and SPLM deputy chairman today resumed discussions on an agreement reached last week on the details of the 2011 referendum.

After 12 months of heated negotiations on referendum law, Ali Osman Taha and Dr Riek Machar last Thursday reached a breakthrough deal according to which the South can secede with a simple majority but this requires a voter turnout of two-thirds.

During the talks they held on Thursday in Khartoum, the co-chairs of the Joint Political Executive Committee finalized other parts in the agreement but it should be endorsed by the leadership of the two peace signatories.

Machar is flying back to Juba on Wednesday morning for consultations with the SPLM leadership before the initializing the agreement.

Once initialed by the two parties, the bill would then be presented to the national Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) before it goes to the national Council of Ministers and parliament for final endorsement by the current last session before the end of the year.

The Obama administration's policy review on Sudan is now complete. Is it any good?

Foreign Policy Magazine 19/10/09 - Over the last nine months, the Sudan policy review has taken on something of a mythical air. Activists and others lost count of the number of times they were told the review would be completed "in weeks, not months" -- even as months stretched

on. Tales of sharp-elbowed infighting between the U.S. special envoy for Sudan, retired Maj. Gen. Scott Gration, and the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, dominated the narrative. So did a series of high-profile gaffes, ranging from the absurd -- with the special envoy talking of handing out "cookies" and "gold stars" to Sudan's ruling National Congress Party -- to the just plain bizarre, as former National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane was found to be lobbying the administration to normalize relations with Sudan, after receiving \$1.3 million from Khartoum passed through Qatar.

The Barack Obama administration was clearly eager to use the policy review as a chance to hit the much-needed reset button. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was joined by Rice and Gration in a carefully choreographed show of internal unity at Monday's rollout event, and everyone dutifully sang from the same song sheet. The public version of the policy is a modest five pages in length and says many of the right things. But it also reflects the bipolar views of an administration that, after nearly a year in office, still seems divided on Sudan.

Kicking off to a good start, the policy calls for a comprehensive approach to Sudan's interlinked crises and notes the genuine risk of a return to wholesale warfare in the run-up to a 2011 independence referendum for South Sudan.

The document also goes to some lengths to dispel the notion that U.S. policy toward Khartoum has become too accommodating. It insists that incentives be offered not for gestures of goodwill, such as "the signing of a MOU [memorandum of understanding] or the issuance of a set of visas," but "rather based on verifiable changes in conditions on the ground." The policy review also institutes a quarterly, senior interagency review of "indicators of progress or of deepening crisis" as a means to calibrate incentives and pressures, with an admonition that "[f]ailure to improve conditions will trigger increased pressure on recalcitrant actors." The administration also offers an overdue acknowledgment that "accountability for genocide and atrocities is necessary for reconciliation and lasting peace."

Yet in many ways, the policy feels like an uncomfortable compromise between feuding internal approaches, producing something that is neither fish nor foul. Those in the administration arguing a tough line gained some important concessions. The situation in Darfur is still viewed as an ongoing genocide rather than the "remnants of genocide" typology used repeatedly by the special envoy. Incentives are said to be conditioned on genuine progress rather than rhetoric. There is a fairly stark recognition that the South will opt for independence in 2011 and that the United States and the international community will need to deal with a new state.

Yet, those advocating a softer line are given a good deal of love as well. In interview after interview over the weekend, senior administration officials echoed the line of the policy review: "We have to engage with those with whom we disagree," meaning they have to deal with Khartoum despite its involvement in atrocities. The idea of engagement with Sudan's government is in itself not controversial, but there is a clear sense that the administration sees incentives as a powerful tool to deal with Khartoum -- perhaps even more powerful than pressure. The benchmarks established for grading Sudan's progress are left deliberately gauzy, making it more likely that Khartoum will benefit from the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Along these lines, there is also considerable emphasis placed on the importance of counterterrorism cooperation as a key pillar of the U.S. relationship with Sudan. In a July hearing, Sen. Russ Feingold argued strongly to Gration that he thought Sudan's cooperation in this regard was being overhyped. His reservations may well be well-founded.

The mix of soft and hard policies in the new document is awkward. The United States has again declared that genocide is taking place in Darfur, yet wants to constructively engage the

perpetrators of that genocide. If the administration truly sees genocide taking place on the ground, it should do everything in its power to stop it. If it doesn't see a genocide taking place and thinks a path toward normalization makes more sense, it should have the courage to say so.

Much of this might simply be realpolitik, an administration feeling overstretched in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond acknowledging that the lofty human rights standards that then-Senators Obama, Joe Biden, and Clinton expressed on the campaign trail need to be put on a back burner. At the end of the day, as much as President Obama may be interested in solving Sudan's multiple crises, he might settle for containing them.

Still, as a paper exercise, the policy review was oddly silent on perhaps the most important issue: the conduct of day-to-day diplomacy. Given the multiple missteps in recent months, the relative estrangement between Gration and the State Department hierarchy, and the sense among key allies that the United States is simply not paying attention to Sudan, there were no practical steps announced to better manage the portfolio. Unless Sudan policy actually begins to be owned by the upper reaches of the National Security Council and State Department, everyone involved will look at the policy review as a nicely crafted set of words that can gently be ignored.

John Norris is executive director of the Enough Project, a project of the Center for American Progress.