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Highlights

President Al-Bashir quits army top post

Local dailies report that President Al-Bashir yesterday issued a presidential decree relieving himself from the post of C-in-C of the Sudanese Armed Forces. The decision was taken pursuant to the Sudanese Armed Forces Act and Political Parties Act. Al-Bashir has been the army's commander since he took power in 1989.

According to **Sudan Tribune website** 11/1/10, Al-Bashir stepped down in a procedural step required in order for him to run in the upcoming presidential elections as NCP nominee.

The interim constitution prohibits members of the army, judges, senior civil servants and diplomats from running for elections unless they resign first.

Some observers in the Sudanese capital have speculated over the last few weeks that Bashir will ignore the requirement to abandon his position primarily for fear of being overthrown one day by his successor in leading the army.

In 1989, Bashir who was a Brigadier General at the time led a military coup against the democratically elected government led by former Prime Minister Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi.

Today's executive order put an end to the military career of Bashir who graduated from the Sudanese military academy in 1966 and rose through the ranks to become a Field Marshal in 2004. He is the third figure after former presidents Ga'afar Nimeiry and Abdel-Rahman Siwar Al-Dahab to attain this rank.

On Tuesday, the National Elections Committee (NEC) will accept nominations for presidential and parliamentary elections. The NCP, Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP) and other smaller parties named their candidates to run for elections.

Opposition parties have voiced skepticism that fair and free elections could be conducted in light of NCP domination over the state bodies, press and powers of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS).

Sudan official news agency (SUNA) quoted Al-Bashir as pledging to work for realization of democratic transformation through free and fair elections and to complete the peace process and stability in the country.

The Sudanese head of state made the remarks during a meeting with representatives of more than 28 political parties of the national unity government and other parties who gave him their backing in his bid for reelection.

The head of the Sudan's People Liberation Movement for Democratic Change (SPLM-DC), Lam Akol said that it is "normal" that political parties agreed to nominate Bashir for the presidency because the country's constitutional system is based on the peace agreement which was signed by the Government of Sudan, headed by him and not the National Congress Party, as many people believe, and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which was led by the late John Garang, a matter which necessitates cooperation with president Bashir to complete

implementation of the peace agreement and the other peace agreements.

Akol told reporters at Bashir's residence that the different challenges facing the country require a personality like Bashir, who is widely accepted and respected by all the Sudanese people, besides his experience and his clear achievements in the history of the country, saying that all these merits makes him eligible for realizing more national achievements in the presidency office.

The former foreign minister described the consensus of the political parties on nominating "citizen Omar Al-Bashir" as unique in the history of Sudan, urging other parties to join this national stance.

The General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Hibir Yusuf Nur-al-Dayem, said that al-Bashir has proved during the past period that he is "a principled man" and that he has been working to achieve certain goals in addition to his patriotism, a matter that makes him "a symbol of the country" and earned the respect of a tremendous regional and international levels.

The Chairman of the United Salvation Front, Joseph Malwal, and Amina Dirar, the Chairperson of the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan made similar expressions of support.

Most observers expect Bashir to comfortably win the elections particularly in light of the arrest warrant issued for him by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague almost a year ago. A reelection will provide him with the legitimacy on the international arena.

Last month, the Russian special envoy to Sudan Mikhail Margelov expressed skepticism about the chances for another figure to replace Bashir as president.

"I have not yet seen this alternative [to Bashir] even back in January when I had to convince [our] western partners that the arrest warrant by International Criminal Court (ICC) to arrest the Sudanese president is not viable and unrealistic" Margelov was quoted as saying in response to a question on availability of other candidates to run for president against Bashir.

GoNU parties nominate Al-Bashir as presidential candidate

Local dailies report that the Government of National Unity (GoNU) political parties have nominated Al-Bashir as presidential candidate. Meanwhile, the NEC announced that it would start receiving presidential and legislative nominations as from today.

National Security Adviser warns of elections violence

National Security Adviser Gen. Salah Gosh has ruled out violence in the north and east of the country during elections, **local dailies** report. However, according to **Al-Sahafa**, Gosh warned of orchestrated violence in the South, Abyei and in Darfur where IDPs were mobilized against the Government. Gen. Gosh made the remarks in a paper he presented to a conference held in Khartoum yesterday on "elections violence" organized by the Future Trends Foundation.

Al-Khartoum reports that Gen. Gosh revealed that the Government is weighing the need for a security strategy to protect upcoming elections, citing possible threat from some armed movements and regional powers.

According to **AFP** 11/1/10, Gosh on Monday warned that the threat of orchestrated violence hung over Sudan's first multi-party elections in nearly a quarter of a century.

"The elections face the danger of orchestrated, not spontaneous violence," said Gosh, who was replaced as intelligence chief in August.

"It could happen that we are faced with violence aimed at sabotaging the electoral process and orchestrated by a group opposed to these polls," the official SUNA news agency quoted him as telling a Khartoum news conference.

Gosh accused regional powers he did not name of trying to destabilize the country.

Deaths reported as South Sudan rival tribes clash

AFP 11/1/10 - New clashes erupted on Monday between two rival tribes in south Sudan, a military official said, with an independent local source reporting that at least 45 people had been killed in the fighting.

"We have information that civilians from Mayom County in Unity State have attacked a village in Gogrial-east county of Warrap State," said Kuol Deim Kuol, spokesman for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, a former rebel group which now acts as an army in the semi-autonomous south.

He said that members of the Nuer tribe attacked Dinka villagers but he was unable to give an immediate casualty toll. "We don't have the full details," he said.

However an independent local source said dozens of people were killed and wounded in the clashes.

"The combat left 45 people dead and 102 wounded," the source said on condition of anonymity.

The toll could not be confirmed by officials in the area.

Clashes between Nuer and Dinka tribes over cattle raids in the southern state of Warrap claimed at least 140 lives at the turn of the year, prompting the United Nations to call for an investigation.

Gunmen kill 7 people in Bor as disarmament continues

Sudan Tribune website 12/1/10 – Gunmen, local people claim to be Murle tribesmen, killed seven people since the break of New Year in Bor County, Jonglei as disarmament cover the state's host County.

Among the dead two students of Werkok Secondary School, three women and two men, Sudan Tribune has learnt. The students were attacked last Friday on their way from Kapat to Werkok Boma, about 12 miles eastern Bor Town, after attending a church meeting there. One student died on spot while the other passed away on Sunday at Bor civil hospital, relatives say.

The attacks on civilians and cattle raiding coincide with on-going disarmament that has already covered Duk, Twic East and Bor Counties. A similar guns retrieving is also reported in Uror, Ayod and Nyirol Counties.

Since the disarmament commenced early last December, thousands of arms have being peacefully handed-in. However, civilians say the Sudan People Liberation Army - Division 8 has aggravated the voluntary process by harassing civilians.

Sudan Tribune cannot independently verify that SPLA is using excessive force during this disarmament. However, past evidence in Jonglei disarmament and elsewhere in the south pines SPLA soldiers of shooting armed civilians.

“Get ready for the decisive battle” – Edward Lino tells rally in Abyei

SPLM leading figure Edward Lino speaking at a rally in Abyei called on the residents to get ready for the “decisive battle”, *Al-Wifaq* reports. He urged the Abyei people to defend geographical boundaries of the area, citing threats to overrun the area. He accused the NCP of having been behind those threats. “We must be vigilant to avoid recurrence of incidents of May 2008,” he said. Lino has also accused the NCP of providing arms to the Messeriya.

Meanwhile, *Al-Intibaha* reports that SPLA soldiers have killed two Misseriya herders in “Al-Khashkhash” area in Southern Kordofan state.

In another development, *Sudan Tribune website* 11/1/10 reported that the Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, is soon expected to swear in Deng Arop Kuol as Abyei’s new Chief Administrator to replace Brigadier General Arop Mayak Monytoc who had been relieved recently.

On Thursday 7, Deng traveled to Khartoum where he went to submit his application for the same position as chief administrator in the forthcoming national election scheduled to take place in April 2010.

After sworn in, he is expected to return to the region for consultations with local leaders and population over nomination of a new cabinet before returning to Khartoum for approval by the presidency.

The new chief administrator told Sudan Tribune that he would try his best to do anything possible during period leading to elections.

He said his first interest is to ensure close and better working relations within a coalition cabinet composed of the dominant National Congress Party and Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Movement and to create suitable atmosphere for peaceful elections in the area.

"There is a need for the future cabinet to consider working together in harmony with unison understanding that creates and allows good planning and policies within cabinet," he said.

Arop further added that security of the area tops his priorities, adding improved security allows better thinking and concentration on proposals and implementation of developmental projects in the area.

With regard to the new cabinet, he said it would represent all segments of the region without bias. Those who will not be appointed as head of department will have opportunities to serve in the administration at equal levels because, he said, there will be advisory positions.

NCP to release its nominees today, SPLM on Thursday

The NCP Council of Leadership will hold a meeting today presided over by President Al-Bashir to endorse the party’s nominees for the National Assembly and state governors, *Al-Sahafa* reports. Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie will hold a press conference tonight to release the list of nominees before it is submitted to the NEC.

In another development, **Sudan Tribune website** 11/1/10 reported that SPLM office in Southern State of Northern Bahr el Ghazal has released 73 names of nominees aspiring for parliamentary seats at the State level, Juba, and National Assembly in Khartoum.

Three from 73 aspirants are for gubernatorial position with incumbent governor Paul Malong Awan Anei leading the list of the contestants with remarks saying the final nomination to be decided by political Bureau, the highest body in the SPLM hierarchy.

However, according to Electoral College popularity rating obtained by Sudan Tribune, the governor is given popularity rate of 100%, followed by Jal Malith Jal with 84% and General Dau AturJong Nyuol being the last with 79%

The Electoral College rating serves as primary base for referral by Political bureau making him the best candidate to be picked by the leadership.

The State SPLM Electoral College in Northern Bahr el Ghazal also named 29 geographical constituency aspirants for parliamentary seats remaining in Aweil town, 7 on party list, 12 on women list, and 5 on geographical constituency list for National Assembly in Khartoum with one on party list and 2 on women list while Juba list contains 9 from geographical constituency with two on party list.

Jacob Yel Garang, who chairs Electoral College supervised by the two representatives from the SPLM head office in Juba, told Sudan Tribune the week long selection exercise was conducted with honesty.

"We devoted our time for fairness by giving appropriate rating based on popularity of each candidate in the area," he said.

He called on the local population to give their supports to the successful nominees during election saying these are the same people they selected to represent their affairs in various places in the country.

"Do not let them down during elections while contesting with candidates from other political parties," he said.

UN agency warns of massive food deficit in southern region

UN News 11/1/10 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned today that Southern Sudan is facing a massive food deficit fuelled by drought and widespread insecurity.

The warning comes as Sudan marks the fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which ended two decades of conflict between the central government in Khartoum and the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

The 2005 peace deal established a semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan, and a referendum on independence is to be held in February 2011. In addition, national elections are scheduled for this April.

Food aid will be key for the region in 2010, noted WFP, which is aiming to feed 4.5 million people this year in Southern Sudan, where drought has pushed cereal prices up and livestock prices down.

In addition, widespread insecurity has displaced families from the places where they had livelihoods. According to WFP, intertribal fighting killed more than 2,500 people last year and

displaced over 350,000.

"With tribal tensions reportedly mounting, there could be similar disruptions to vital food distributions in 2010," warned the agency, which hopes to feed a total of some 11 million people across the entire country this year.

In a related development, the top UN envoy in Sudan has called on the parties to the CPA to ensure the success of the peace deal in the face of the challenges that have emerged.

"2010, which will be the final full year of the Interim Period of the CPA, will present its challenges, and the responses of the two signatory parties will determine whether or not the CPA is successfully implemented and whether or not the peace will be sustained in Sudan," Secretary-General's Special Representative Ashraf Qazi said in a statement issued yesterday.

"Accordingly, an historic responsibility devolves upon the leadership of the signatory parties not to allow any difficulties, any impediments, or any perceptions to stand in the way of achieving durable peace."

Archbishop accuses China over role in Sudan

Reuters 11/1/10 - The Archbishop of Sudan accused China on Monday of pursuing a damaging policy of economic gain in his country and urged Beijing to use its influence to help ease rising tension ahead of elections.

Archbishop Daniel Deng said Beijing, which imported \$6.3 billion of Sudanese crude oil in 2008, should try to help bring together parties at loggerheads over the full implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including the delivery of credible elections.

"China is looking only for minerals; they are looking for economic benefit. That is all. That is damaging the country. They are not even making peace," the Anglican archbishop said during a visit to Lambeth Palace in London.

"They are not interested in whether Sudan goes to war or not. That is not their mission, which is not their problem."

Deng said it was in China's long-term interest to work in a peaceful and stable environment.

"If they want to have a long process in Sudan, they are supposed to help Sudan not go back to war because if Sudan goes back to war, China will lose," he said.

Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the spiritual head of the Anglican Church, called for a single senior negotiator to unite the different parties.

"I would like China to say how they use their influence to make a united Sudan advantageous to the people on the ground themselves," he said.

Foreign Office summons US Charge d'Affaires

Al-Khartoum reports that Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday summoned the US Charge d'Affaires Robert Whitehead for consultation on the press release issued by the Embassy about potential threat to flights between Juba and Kampala. Reportedly, Undersecretary Mutrif Siddiq and the Charge d'Affaires discussed a range of issues including the measures the US Administration intends to apply on nationals of some countries.

SLM leader Minnawi may not return to Khartoum – sources

Sources close to SLM said that the leader of the movement Minni Minnawi might not return to

Khartoum, **Ray Al-Shaab** reports. Reportedly, Minnawi is currently with his forces in the field. SLA leading commander who spoke on condition of anonymity said chances of Minnawi returning to Khartoum were slim because he does not have anything to do in Khartoum after the DPA implementation has ceased due to procrastination on the part of the NCP.

Deby asks Sudan to disarm Chadian rebels before normalization

Sudan Tribune website 11/1/10 —President Idriss Deby has said he is not satisfied with measures taken to control the Chadian rebels in Darfur and asked Sudan to do more before normalization.

President Omer Al Bashir since last October has twice dispatched Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salah Al Deen Attabani to Ndjamea to discuss normalization between the two countries, expressing Sudan's readiness to respond to the Chadian demands.

Deby had said he is willing to normalize relations but demanded Sudan to implement its pledges first in order to reestablish its credibility. Also the follow-on visit of the Chadian foreign minister was delayed until the Sudanese would take "concrete measures".

The Sudanese government recently evacuated the Chadian rebels to some localities from the border as Al Sayah area in North Darfur. After this move Minister Moussa Faki Mahamat was in Khartoum at the end of December where the two parties agreed to finalize the deployment of border-monitoring teams.

During the visit of the Sudanese Presidential Adviser to N'djamena last week, Idriss Deby asked that Sudan disarm the Chadian rebels and remove them from Darfur. He also requested Sudan to expel their leadership from the country.

Deby mentioned to the Sudanese delegation, which included the chief of the security service, that he himself was based in the 1990s near Al Sayah before he overthrew former President Hussein Habri. This statement was an expression of his discomfort with the Chadian rebels being removed just to Al Sayah.

Therefore, he asked to delay the signing of the normalization agreement till Sudan implements these measures.

During his meeting with the visiting Sudanese official on January 8, President Deby "once again reaffirmed his position not to allow the mercenaries to continue bringing grief to Chadian families," said a statement released by the Chadian presidency.

Sources familiar with the issue of Sudan – Chad relations wondered if the two countries would normalize relations any time soon. The sources said as long as there is a rebellion in Darfur, Sudan needs to use the Chadian rebels in its war against the rebels as it has been doing during the past years.

Sudan may find it difficult to remove them from Darfur while the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) is unwilling to commit to a ceasefire agreement and engage in talks with Khartoum.

Technical security committee is meeting this week in N'djamena to discuss the deployment of forces by the two countries along the border as it had been provided in Dakar agreement signed in March 2008

Wild animal causing havoc in Khartoum imported dogs – Police

Khartoum Monitor reports that citizens in Khartoum have complained recently about wild animals entering houses at night and attacking domestic animals. They said these wild animals came from farms around the River Nile. Khartoum State Wildlife Police has confirmed the existence of these wild animals in the state saying that these wild animals are actually imported dogs. Director of Wildlife, Maj. Gen. Mohamed Suraj said that these dogs do not attack humans but have killed twenty domestic animals. Investigations revealed that a local trader had imported the dogs from abroad but when the business failed he could not afford to feed them and decided to abandon them.

Somalia signs currency printing agreement with Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 11/1/10 – A batch of new Somali currency will be printed in Sudan following an agreement signed in Khartoum today, Sudan state media reported.

The Managing Director of Sudan's Currency Printing office Mohammed Al-Hassan Al-Bahi signed for Sudan Government while the Somali Finance Minister Sharif Hassan Sheikh signed for his government.

The cost of the printing process will top \$17 million, SUNA reported

The Sudanese minister of Finance and national economy Awad Al-Jaz and the governor of Sudan's Central Bank Saber Mohammed Al-Hassan were present at the ceremony.

Al-Jaz noted the "historical relations" between the two countries adding that the printing of the currency can contribute in realizing stability and development in Somalia. He said that Sudan's experience as a country emerging from conflict can be a good experience for Somalia.

The Somali minister hailed Sudan's efforts in achieving peace saying that the presence of legal currency would contribute positively to the economy.

Somalia has been seeking Sudan's help in rebuilding its government's institution and security forces in a bid to assert control over the lawless country. The issue of currency was discussed during the visit of Sharif Hassan to Sudan last year.

Somalia has had no effective central government for 19 years. Regional and international efforts to install one have so far been undermined with rampant insecurity fueled by Al-Shabab Islamic insurgency.

Drought, insecurity hurting food production in South

IRIN 11/1/10 - Several states in Southern Sudan are facing food shortages due to widespread drought and conflict, officials said.

"The yield of the [sorghum] crop was generally poorer in some locations in 2009 than in 2008," John Chuol, a member of a government team that conducted an assessment of the food situation in five states, said.

More than 80 percent of cereal production in the region is grown via traditional methods, and farmers rely heavily on the weather. Sorghum, according to Chuol, is the most widely cultivated cereal.

According to the assessment, organized by the Southern Sudanese Ministry of Agriculture and

Forestry, the states of Unity, Northern Bahr Ghazal, Jonglei, Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria and Warrap are food-insecure.

The assessment was carried out in the first and second half of 2009. However, in some places of Central Equatoria, the second rains were more generous.

Southern Sudanese farming is particularly susceptible to the vagaries of weather. According to the assessment, 90 percent of agricultural production is rain-fed.

"It is the failure of the rains," Betty Angwero Achan, state Minister of Agriculture in Eastern Equatoria told IRIN on 6 January. "In case you haven't noticed, I have for months now issued appeal after appeal for food aid."

In Western Equatoria, where Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army rebels have disrupted livelihoods, the maize yield was 10 to 15 bags of 50kg per feddan (roughly 0.42ha) in central counties. In the drought-affected eastern and western areas, it fell to 1-10 bags of 50kg per feddan.

Even where the rains came, the patterns were different, making it difficult for the farmers to plan. In Unity State, there was an unfavourable onset of rainfall. The early rains, coupled with an outbreak of pests and diseases, reduced the crop yield.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net), in a report covering October-December 2009, said preliminary findings from the year's Crop Food Supply Assessment Mission indicated that the harvest was below average.

Juba - Torit road reopens on Monday

Miraya FM 11/1/10 - A road linking Juba and Torit has been reopened after a heavy military truck lost control and blocked the road near Kor-Englizi Bridge in Eastern Equatoria last week. Bus operators in Torit told Miraya FM that the truck has since been removed and that buses can now reach Torit using the same route. Transport between Torit and Juba was problematic last week due to the blocked road and people could only travel through Magwi County. The Federal Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges, Philip Thon Lek, said his ministry plans to construct seven main roads linking the south and the north this year. Lek said the ministry has already received funds to construct two main roads linking Renk, Malakal, and Sobat. The Transport ministry will also reconstruct the Malakal-Damazin road.

Meanwhile, Lek said that the government is also planning three routes to connect Sudan with Uganda through railway lines. Plans are underway to construct railway routes from Wau, Juba, and Gulu to Uganda.

Analysis: Is Sudan Moving Back to the Brink of War?

By Alex Perry

Time 9/1/10 - Sudan enters 2010 poised between war and peace — in Darfur, in its decades old conflict between north and south, and in a host of smaller internal conflicts. The largest country in Africa and home to some of its largest oil reserves, the country faces a general election in April, an independence referendum in the south a year from now, and the indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of its president, Omar al-Bashir, on war crimes charges. Here's TIME's guide to (yet another) year of living dangerously in Sudan:

How likely is a new civil war?

Fairly likely, not least because this has always been a combustible part of the world. Sudan straddles the fault-line between the Muslim Arab world and black, largely Christian Africa and the two sides have a long history of enmity: The first Sudanese civil war lasted from 1955 to 1972 and the second from 1983 to 2005; combined, the conflicts cost more than 2 million lives. Ten aid groups warned this week that 2009 saw a "major upsurge in violence" along the north-south frontier, with 2,500 people killed and 350,000 displaced, and they expressed a widely shared view that such violence is likely to escalate this year to the point of a breakup of Sudan, and a major humanitarian crisis. Rob Crilly, author of the forthcoming *Saving Darfur: Everyone's Favorite African War*, cautions that aid agencies "have sometimes cried wolf in their attempts to raise funds." But with much of Sudan still controlled by militias, the boundaries of the oil-rich areas between north and south still unresolved, and convincing evidence of large-scale re-arming on both sides, he adds: "At best, the [general election and independence referendum] could ease Sudan along the path towards democracy. At worst, they could herald a new phase of repression, followed by a resumption of war."

So what can be done?

In a word, engagement. As Crilly points out, "Under pressure from China, Bashir allowed peacekeepers into Darfur. Under pressure from the U.S., he signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the south in 2005. In short, with the right combination of carrots and sticks, [Bashir] is prepared to do deals." In a report for the British parliament in October, Jon Lunn wrote that engagement was also crucial to helping create a "stable, cooperative and confident leadership in the south" without which, he wrote, a peaceful and successful outcome was unlikely.

Both the U.S. and China, which drills much of Sudan's oil, are engaging Khartoum through special envoys. Also attempting to mediate at one point or another have been Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Jimmy Carter, Muammar Gaddafi and the royal family of Qatar. But more pressing international problems from Iran to Afghanistan and North Korea tend to divert attention away from Sudan. And while world powers agree on the need for engagement, disputes continually arise on how best to proceed.

What are the international differences over how to deal with Sudan?

Particularly contentious has been the role of ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo. The U.S. opposes the ICC in principle, while China, Russia, African leaders and many Sudan experts oppose Ocampo's 2009 indictment which, they say, has pushed Bashir into a corner and imperiled diplomatic efforts to avert a crisis. Ocampo has also been accused, along with the Save Darfur lobby group, of inflating casualty figures in the conflict and thereby allowing Khartoum to discredit international critics.

Of course, without such activist efforts, most people would never have even heard of Darfur. Still, even if you can forgive a little hyperbole, the Save Darfur lobby succeeded in garnering support in part by portraying a complex conflict in a faraway land in simple good-versus-evil terms, Darfuris against an evil genocidal regime in Khartoum. The simplistic picture of Africans being victimized by Arabs ignored the wider context and ethnic complexity of Sudan, and also the human rights abuses committed by Darfuri separatist forces. And the international attention won for Darfur came largely at the expense of southern Sudan, which is now threatening to become the center of a new civil war. To keep the peace, Crilly warns, the West needs to reacquaint itself with the complexity and interconnectedness of Sudan's conflicts, and to understand that the country is "not run by the madmen or genocidal maniacs of popular opinion

but by a carefully calculating cabal, intent on securing its own hold on power."

What's climate change got to do with it?

The conflict in Darfur, and most of the disputes across Sudan and indeed the wider Sahel region, are fights over increasingly scarce vital resources — water, fertile land and, latterly, oil. Climate change exacerbates desertification, which aggravates those disputes, potentially sparking new wars and humanitarian disasters. The situation is not all bleak, however: Desertification since the 1970s in Mali, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia has prompted villagers to undertake massive re-greening efforts, generally without any outside assistance, that have reclaimed millions of acres. Similar efforts in Sudan, currently being mooted by environmental groups, would likely ease the pressures for war.

What if the Sudanese are set on a return to war?

International pressure and mediation can only do so much. And nobody expects a more robust intervention than the U.N.-African Union peacekeepers already deployed in Darfur. Whatever the calls for the world to act, to a great extent the future of Sudan — war, peace, unity, disintegration — will be left to the Sudanese to decide.

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