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Sudan: From the Diplomatic Front Line in Search of Peace

Ambassador Richard S. Williamson

I want to thank my friend Dr. Kim Holmes for that kind introduction. Kim does a superb job heading the Heritage Foundation's Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, and it was my pleasure to work closely with Kim when he served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs and I served as Ambassador to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs.

It's a particular pleasure for me to be here at The Heritage Foundation. The foundation's President, Ed Feulner, was my first boss in Washington when I was a college intern on Capitol Hill. Ed Feulner, Phil Truluck, and other long-time colleagues and friends have done a remarkable job in building The Heritage Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen, for the past year while serving as President George W. Bush's Special Envoy to Sudan, I've seen a lot, and I have a few thoughts on a path forward in that troubled land.

Brief History

Sudan is a geographically large country, the largest in Africa. Its size would span from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, and its estimated population is 40 million people. It is where the Sahara and Sub-Saharan meet. It has a complex, difficult mix of races, ethnic groups, and religions. Dr. Mohamed Hassan Fadlalla has written in his book *Short History of Sudan*:¹

With about 600 ethnic groups speaking around 400 languages, [Sudan] has one of the most complicated ethnical structures in the region

Talking Points

- The most effective way to insure full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is to strengthen Southern Sudan.
- The United States should adjust its assistance from humanitarian aid to economic development, including a program to bring qualified Sudanese to American universities for 12-month management training.
- Southern Sudan needs help, including party building, media laws, and civil society development, to prepare for the upcoming elections.
- The international community should help Southern Sudan develop its military capacity. U.S. training exercises and support for military planning should continue and expand.
- Regarding Darfur, the international community should test the diplomatic opening while helping to facilitate full UNAMID deployment, seeking greater humanitarian access, and developing actionable robust actions if radical change on the ground is not achieved.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
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and the world, with Nubia and dominantly Arabic tribes in the north...the Nilotic south of the country with black African tribes, the west with numerous African as well as Arabic tribes and the east part with dominantly non-Arabic tribes.

These differences and deep divisions were not bridged during the nearly 150 years of colonization. Indeed, the divides were used by the occupying powers to control their vast holding. During the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire, and during the first half of the 20th century, the British Empire favored the Arabs in Khartoum and marginalized others. This pattern continued after Sudan achieved independence in 1956. It's a history of trouble, turmoil, and tragedy.

In her fascinating book *The Sudan—Contested National Identities*,² Professor Ann Mosely Lesch writes about the “identity crisis that has bedeviled the Sudanese political system.” She writes:

Racial, linguistic, and religious categories have become the basis for critically important power relationships that have resulted in the peoples who live in the northern and central Nile Valley wielding disproportionate political and economic power. These citizens' Arab-Islamic image of the Sudanese nation excludes citizens who reside on the geographic and/or ethnic margins: persons who define themselves as African rather than Arab, ethnically or linguistically. Those who reside in the south generally adhere to Christianity or traditional African beliefs, whereas the ethnic minorities in the north are largely Muslim. Their marginalization has intensified as political, economic and cultural power has remained concentrated in the hands of the Muslim Arab core and as the central government has intensified the drive to spread Islam and Arabic.

North–South Civil War

An early consequence of the polarization resulting from these divisions and marginalization was

the outbreak of the North–South Civil War in 1955 around the time Sudan gained independence. This became Africa's longest civil war. Except for a 10-year interregnum in the 1970s and early '80s, this bloody, brutal conflict continued until 2005. Two million people died during this civil war, and over 4 million people were displaced.

Writing in 2003, Douglas Johnson caught the way in which Sudan's North–South Civil War had metastasized into a confusing cauldron of catastrophic conflict defying easy categorization. In *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*,³ he writes:

The Sudan entered the twenty-first century mired in not one, but many civil wars. What had been seen in the 1980s as a war between North and South, Muslim against Christian, Arab against African has...broken the bounds of any North/South conflict. Fighting has spread into theatres outside the southern Sudan and beyond the Sudan's borders. Not only are Muslims fighting Muslims, but “Africans” are fighting “Africans.” A war once described as being fought over scarce resources is now being waged for total control of abundant oil reserves. The fact that the overall civil war, which is composed of these interlocking struggles, has continued for so long, far outlasting the international and regional political configurations which at one time seemed to direct and define it, is testimony to the intractability of the underlying causes of the conflict.

When President George W. Bush took office, the murder, mayhem, and misery of Sudan's North–South Civil War raged on. President Bush was well aware of the terrible toll paid by innocent Sudanese. In his first year in office, he appointed Senator Jack Danforth as his first Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan. Senator Danforth worked tirelessly and effectively with Kenya, Norway, Britain, and others to help broker a peace deal that had been illusive for decades.

Against all odds, these efforts proved successful. In January 2005, thanks in large part to the commit-

1. Mohamed Hassan Fadlalla, *Short History of Sudan* (Bloomington, Ind.: iUniverse, 2004).
2. Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Sudan—Contested National Identities* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).
3. Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

ment of President Bush and Senator Danforth, Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed. It was an amazing diplomatic achievement.

But like many other deals to end bloody, brutal wars, while it ended the large-scale fighting, the agreement is imperfect and the peace fragile. Like seeing a dog walk on its hind legs, it may not be pretty, but nonetheless it is an amazing achievement.

The CPA ended the war, but it has a long, complex implementation process extending six years to 2011, when it stipulates that Southern Sudanese will exercise their basic right of self-determination. In 2011, through a referendum, the South will determine whether they remain part of Sudan or are granted independence.

As one would expect, both sides are using this time to relitigate aspects of the basic agreement by trying to change facts on the ground. This, in turn, has resulted in friction and deep disagreements. At times, violence has erupted. Many fundamental aspects of the deal have fallen behind schedule. Certain border areas remain contested. Demobilization of Arab militias remains incomplete. Census results have not been posted. In all likelihood, the election stipulated to take place in 2009 will slip to 2010, and so on.

Abyei town and its surrounding area have had a population of nearly 50,000 people. It lies in an oil-rich area still contested by the North and South. Last May, a local incident resulted in the killing of a Sudan Armed Forces soldier. Over the next few days, local actors engaged in a tit-for-tat escalation of violence that quickly spun out of control. Fifty thousand were driven from their homes. There was looting, and then this metropolis was burned to the ground.

I visited Abyei just days later. Ruins were still smoldering. As far as one could see in every direction, there was utter destruction. It looked like the apocalypse. I've also visited Agok, a day's walk from Abyei, where most of the displaced persons relocated and survived the rainy season under plastic sheets, dependent upon international assistance for food and meager health care.

The United States played a central role in developing the Abyei Roadmap to which both Khartoum

and Juba agreed. Some progress has been made on implementing the Abyei Roadmap, but as is so often the case in Sudan, deadlines continue to be missed, implementation remains partial, and tensions rise. Just the other day, fresh violence broke out in Abyei. When the innocent displaced people will be able to return is anyone's guess.

We cannot let our attention wander from full CPA implementation. It is critically important that we not allow the CPA to unravel. A full-scale renewed North-South war would quickly claim innumerable new victims. It would destabilize neighbors. It might lead to Sudan's descent into a failed state. And any chance for progress to solve the Darfur conflict would be lost.

The United States and our international partners must redouble our efforts to strengthen Southern Sudan. That is the most effective way to ensure CPA implementation.

- The United States and other international donors should adjust our substantial assistance from humanitarian aid to economic development. Southern Sudan, which is the size of Texas, has less than three kilometers of paved roads. The South has abundant, rich agricultural land. It has oil and other valuable mineral resources. Southern Sudan needs roads, bridges, and other fundamental infrastructure. It needs small and large economic development projects. There is a desperate need for trained managers, in the government of Southern Sudan and otherwise. We should have a program to bring two, three, four dozen of their best and brightest to American universities for 12-month management training.
- Southern Sudan needs help in developing its political infrastructure to prepare for the upcoming elections. Party building, media laws, civil society development, and so on are all needed.
- And the international community should help Southern Sudan develop its military capacity. Under the CPA, Southern Sudan was allowed to keep its autonomous military units, the SPLA. The United States government has built a modern headquarters outside Juba for the SPLA.

We've engaged in various training exercises and supported military planning. This should continue and expand, perhaps even helping the South develop capabilities to neutralize Khartoum's aerial advantage.

Underneath the surface lies the issue of oil revenue. When Sudan's current government came to power in a coup d'état in 1989, the country's total exports were valued at about \$500 million per annum. Today, its exports are over \$9 billion per year. Almost the entire growth has been the result of the discovery and development of Sudan's oil reserves. Needless to say, this oil wealth is hotly contested. Approximately 40 percent of the oil reserve lies in the South. Much more is in border areas between the North and the South where there has not been agreement on final demarcation.

Both the North and South have grown deeply dependent upon oil revenue. The North would be crippled if it lost all revenue from oil fields in the South and in the contested border areas, and the South would collapse without the oil revenue it has grown dependent upon. But the only pipeline runs through the North to the Port of Sudan. Developing roads or building an alternate pipeline through Kenya or Ethiopia are risky, extremely expensive, and will take years. Without some accommodation on oil revenue sharing, there is little chance the 2011 referendum can proceed peacefully.

The United States has tried to get both sides together for negotiations on a long-term oil revenue-sharing agreement. Sadly, the Abyei flare-up in May broke off such discussions, and the situation has not calmed down enough for meaningful talks to resume. The Obama Administration should try to re-engage the parties in serious deliberations over oil revenue-sharing—a prerequisite, in my opinion, to long-term North–South political accommodation and sustainable peace.

Bottom line: The North–South conflict has deep roots in Sudan's racial, ethnic, and religious divisions, which contributed to marginalization in education, health care, economics, and political power. The CPA was a major achievement, but full implementation remains uncertain and the peace fragile.

The United States and others must be attentive and proactive in helping Southern Sudan become stronger and in assuring full CPA implementation.

Darfur: Genocide in Slow Motion

Let me now turn to the horrific, ongoing conflict in Darfur, the “genocide in slow motion” that relentlessly grinds on. As my discussion about the North–South Civil War sought to make clear, Darfur is part of Sudan's larger struggles for identity and the distortions that have been used to discriminate against and marginalize non-Arab Muslims indigenous to the land. As Gabriel Meyer wrote in his book *War and Faith in Sudan*,⁴ “The Western media seems intent on viewing Darfur as an isolated atrocity; but, in fact, it's part of the much larger, and more complicated evil.”

As progress was made in negotiations to resolve the long North–South Civil War, the marginalized people of Darfur were left out of discussions about power sharing. In 2003, a small rebel attack in Darfur killed a handful of Sudan Armed Forces and destroyed some government aircraft. Rather than a discreet proportional response, Khartoum chose to open the Gates of Hell.

The government armed various Arab militias in Darfur, the so-called Janjaweed. Then they sought to drain the river in which the fish, the few rebels, swam. A campaign of brutal coordinated attacks against civilians was initiated.

- Attack helicopters strafed villages, shooting indiscriminately, dropping large barrels of burning oil, inflicting devastation and terror.
- Then military jeeps and flatbed trucks would race through the village, full of soldiers firing rifles.
- They were followed by the Janjaweed, devils on camels and horseback. They destroyed crops, burnt villages to the ground, and poisoned wells. In their rampage, they killed males—men and boys—and they beat, repeatedly gang-raped, and branded with red-hot knives women and girls as young as seven years old.

These assaults were barbaric and brutal, savage and merciless, inhuman and repulsive; yet they were cold and calculated.

4. Gabriel Meyer, *War and Faith in Sudan* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005).

At first, the world gave little notice. As Gerard Prunier wrote in *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide*,⁵ “For the world at large Darfur was and remained the quintessential ‘African crisis’: distant, esoteric, extremely violent, rooted in complex ethnic and historical factors which few understood, and devoid of any identifiable practical interest for the rich countries.”

President Bush became the first world leader to condemn the ethnic cleansing in Darfur. As Darfur’s destruction, devastation, death, and deep despair spread with its clear racial and religious targeting, President Bush was the first world leader to call this planned, orchestrated, well-executed carnage by its proper name: genocide.

It is estimated that during this conflict, 300,000 to 450,000 have died and more than 2.7 million have been displaced and now live in desperate conditions in IDP⁶ camps and in refugee camps in Chad and the Central African Republic. These large numbers are shocking and properly enrage men and women of conscience everywhere. But statistics do not tell the real story; statistics never do.

Looking at this genocide from a distance, it is easy to dismiss it as some irrational emotional savage rampage of ethnic hatred. But it is not. I agree with Professor Benjamin A. Valentino, who, in his insightful volume *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century*, finds that “ethnic hatreds or discrimination...play a much smaller role in mass killing and genocide than is commonly assumed” and that “mass killing usually originates from a relatively small group of powerful leaders,” “is often carried out without the active support of broader society,” and “is a brutal political or military strategy designed to accomplish leaders’ most important objectives, counter threats to their power, and solve their most difficult problems.”⁷

Today, there is less violence in Darfur. This is not because of any change of heart or any fundamental

change in calculus or strategy. It is because there are fewer targets of opportunity. The river has been largely drained.

Nonetheless, millions of Darfuris living in the camps’ squalor have inadequate sanitation, health care, and food. The areas of insecurity are vast. Soldiers, militias, bandits, and rebels prey upon humanitarian convoys. Low-intensity violence is constant. And in recent months there was a flare-up and destruction of Abyei and government raids on Kalma Camp, Zamzam Camp, Hitfa village, and elsewhere. The destruction and death grinds on.

When I became President Bush’s Special Envoy to Sudan 12 months ago, my approach to these troubles was informed by prior diplomatic failures.

In the spring of 2006, the United States took the lead in trying to achieve a diplomatic breakthrough in Darfur. A comprehensive agreement was drafted. During intense sessions in Abuja, Nigeria, the United States tried to force the various rebel movements to sign onto the deal. Ultimately, only one rebel movement—and not the most significant one—signed on: the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minawi. Neither Khalil Ibrahim’s Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) nor Abdulwahid’s SLM/AW⁸ joined.

In retrospect, the deal was flawed. With only Minni Minawi’s signature, the Darfur Peace Agreement of April 2006, signed with great pomp and circumstance and touted as a great achievement, was destined to fail. Minni was marginalized by the Sudan government and discredited by many in Darfur. Rebels fragmented. Today, there are not just three rebel movements to herd into a common negotiating position but dozens.

Then, in the fall of 2007, another Herculean effort was made to jump-start comprehensive peace negotiations. The venue was Sirt, Libya. This time, however, many rebel movements boycotted, and this enterprise was stillborn.

5. Gerard Prunier, *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide, Revised and Updated Edition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005, 2007).

6. Internally displaced person.

7. Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), cover flap.

8. SLM under Abdel Wahid Mohamed Nur.

So at the outset, I told the President I would not focus on some grand deal but on concrete steps to expand the security footprint in Darfur and expand humanitarian access.

Then, last January, at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, I was approached by the government of Sudan with an invitation to begin a bilateral dialogue on issues of concern. This was followed by a Sudan government delegation coming to Washington, after which the President approved testing this opening.

An elaborate U.S. government interdepartmental review process and consultations resulted in an extensive list of specific items we believed would create greater security and more humanitarian access. Many dealt with accelerating deployment of the joint U.N.–African Union peacekeeping force, UNAMID.⁹ There were items dealing with multiple entry visas for humanitarian workers, release of goods from the Port of Sudan, security for humanitarian convoys, and so forth.

A series of negotiations were held in Rome and in Khartoum. Some progress was made, always grudgingly and often with only partial performance. In fact, UNAMID deployment has grown substantially, and many impediments to humanitarian aid have been eliminated. That's to the good, but there was no radical change, no fundamental new approach. This, of course, has been disappointing.

Why did Khartoum initiate this dialogue, and why wasn't more achieved? I believe several factors were at play.

- *One*, Khartoum had been able to work successfully with the Bush Administration on the North–South Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The process and the results had been pragmatic and acceptable. So perhaps the United States could play the same role in Darfur.
- *Two*, President Bush had demonstrated with Libya that he was prepared to fundamentally change U.S. relations with a country if it was willing to radically change its behavior. In the

case of Libya, Tripoli abandoned its WMD¹⁰ programs and its support of terrorist groups.

- *Three*, Khartoum was concerned that, whoever won the election in November, the next American Administration might be more rigid with them and more punitive.
- *Four*, the CPA-stipulated 2009 Sudan elections created uncertainties which created anxieties for the Sudan government. The election might result in a somewhat changed cast of characters.
- *Five*, in my opinion, Khartoum began to appreciate that having 2.7 million Darfuris crammed into seething camps was a growing security threat. They had become breeding grounds for violence and recruiting camps for rebel movements. Better the IDPs were dispersed and returned to their home villages. But having opened the Gates of Hell, the violence they had unleashed was not easily tamed. UNAMID deployment would help return the security required for the IDP return, and in the meantime, international humanitarian assistance was absolutely essential to avoid a more catastrophic situation.
- *Six*, Khartoum felt aggrieved by being kept on the United States list of state sponsors of terrorists and felt economic discomfort from international sanctions and U.S. unilateral economic sanctions.

I think it's important to recognize that these sanctions are hurting Sudan, but the pressure is discomfiting, not crippling. Due to a number of factors, but primarily due to its large oil industry and the diplomatic protection oil bought them from China, they would prefer not to be the target of such sanctions, but they feel no urgency.

So in the end, from Khartoum's perspective, it was worth testing the market, but they did not feel compelled to act. They might be willing to take a step here or there, but they saw no need to take the sort of dramatic steps required to end the carnage. There were neither significant enough benefits nor punitive measures they felt probable to compel the

9. African Union Mission in Darfur.

10. Weapons of mass destruction.

sort of fundamental changes that would bring sustainable security, return of the displaced, just compensation, and power sharing. So we muddled along as best we could. Ultimately, the progress made was woefully inadequate.

Next Steps

As we come to the closing days of the Bush Administration, I believe, in Sudan there is a great deal that President Bush has accomplished. The CPA was a great diplomatic achievement against all odds that ended Africa's longest civil war. The United States continues to be the largest donor to Southern Sudan, providing necessary humanitarian relief and development. The United States also is the largest donor of aid in Darfur, helping to sustain millions of displaced Darfuris.

President Bush led the campaign to authorize joint U.N.–African Union peacekeepers for Darfur. The United States is the largest financial contributor to UNAMID. And under President Bush's leadership, the "Friends of UNAMID" support group was launched to accelerate the rate of peacekeeper deployment. Above and beyond this, President Bush spent \$100 million to train, equip, and deploy more African peacekeepers to Darfur.

Nonetheless, Darfur's "genocide in slow motion" relentlessly grinds on. The world's largest humanitarian crisis continues. No one should be satisfied with the status quo in Sudan. American values and ideals should animate our foreign policy and compel us to act.

The next Administration can and should make a difference in Sudan. President-elect Barack Obama, Vice President-elect Joe Biden, and Secretary of State-designate Hilary Clinton all have been engaged in this issue. Each has called for a no-fly zone in Darfur. United Nations Ambassador designate Susan Rice has gone further, suggesting boots on the ground to end the carnage.

I believe America should develop more muscular options to compel progress in Darfur. I would urge the Obama Administration to direct early on the appropriate departments and agencies to develop actionable robust options for Darfur that are ready for execution if and when necessary. But before taking any of a wide range of muscular steps, I'd urge

the new Administration to seize the available diplomatic window.

Several developments have changed the environment, making it more propitious diplomatically.

- Last May, the JEM rebel movement made an assault that reached all the way to Omdurman, just across the Nile River from Khartoum. This was the first time since the ruling regime came to power in 1989 that fighting has reached the outskirts of the capital. Quite properly, this shook up the regime, forcing a reassessment of their vulnerability.
- The Abyei flare-up was unplanned and, for a time, unmanageable. This brought home how tenuous the situation is across the divide between the North and South and, therefore, how precarious are the oil fields.
- On July 14, Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo made a referral to the Pre-Trial Chamber seeking an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir on 10 counts of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. A decision by the Pre-Trial Chamber is anticipated for late January or early February.
- The fourth development focusing the regime's thinking in Khartoum is the election of Barack Obama. The new team is not tired from waging a war on terrorism for over seven years, from Afghanistan and Iraq. They have new energy, fresh eyes, and, at least rhetorically, seem to have an appetite for more muscular and dramatic punitive steps against Khartoum. Unquestionably, the regime is concerned about what might come next.

The Sudan government has pursued various routes to prevent an ICC arrest warrant. They sought a so-called Article 16 deferral, whereby a U.N. Security Council resolution could suspend ICC jurisdiction for one year, renewable. Early diplomatic momentum for an Article 16 resolution abruptly came to an end when the United States made clear that it would veto any such proposal. There can be no impunity.

Next, Khartoum fell back on what has worked for them so often in the past to avoid disaster. I call

it the “D” strategy: Deliberate, declare, delay, divert, delay some more, then deny through token performance or non-performance without ever repudiating the declaration. Soon the world’s attention shifts. The crisis is averted, and the bad behavior largely continues unabated.

In October, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir launched a large, elaborate Sudan Peace Initiative (SPI). Over 250 leaders participated, among them 60 percent from Darfur, though no rebel movements were represented. There were various committees, extensive consultations, and in November, a grand SPI declaration was issued, and President al-Bashir made a major address. The good news is that aspects of just compensation, rights of return, and power sharing were touched upon that went further than previous such exercises. However, as in the past, there were no enforcement mechanisms and, therefore, little to no reason to believe this declaration would ever be enacted.

The United States, United Kingdom, France, and others have said time and again that this time, process and promise was insufficient; progress was required, tangible concrete steps. A radical change in fact is needed, not another head fake.

At this moment, as Khartoum feels greater stress and urgency, it is probing what it can do to manage its current crisis, and there is a diplomatic window. In my opinion, before rushing to take muscular steps, the Obama team should test the diplomatic possibilities. Simultaneously, actionable robust steps should be developed and readied in the event diplomacy proves inadequate.

The Obama Administration should continue, if not deepen and widen, America’s efforts to strengthen Southern Sudan’s economic development, government capacity, political and civil society institutions, and military capabilities. A stronger Southern Sudan is the best insurance for full CPA implementation, and a collapse of the CPA will destroy any chance for peace in Darfur.

Also, the Obama Administration should strongly support the African Union–U.N. Chief Mediator, Djibril Bassole. In his brief tenure, he has proven to be energetic, tenacious, and discreet as a mediator. He has earned a level of trust from the various par-

ties to the Darfur conflict. Mr. Bassole is a valuable instrument for progress.

At the request of others, Doha has launched the Qatar Initiative to help mediate the Darfur conflict. It is designed to engage the parties with the support and assistance of Sudan’s neighbors, regional powers, and other interested parties. Mr. Bassole is playing an integral role in this initiative.

I am impressed by the serious, businesslike, energetic approach the Qataris are taking to construct the diplomatic platform and to engage all relevant parties. Experience with Sudan’s troubles suggests we should be cautious in our expectations for this peace initiative, but the CPA demonstrates that breakthroughs are possible. I believe this provides a vehicle for the Obama Administration to pursue a diplomatic solution to Darfur. It is a possibility well worth pursuing.

I would also urge the Obama Administration to try to engage China, to urge Beijing to adopt a more constructive role with Sudan. China desperately needs to expand its economic miracle inland to the 900 million-plus Chinese who have not benefited from the coastal economic boom. To do this, China needs energy. It receives about 6 percent of its imported oil from Sudan. Therefore, it holds its relationship with Khartoum most precious. Generally, notwithstanding how brutal Khartoum’s behavior, Beijing has been a reliable defender of the Sudan regime in the United Nations and other international fora.

However, while the United States would like China to be more helpful on Sudan, it has never risen to a sufficiently high priority for the Secretary of State or the White House to raise this directly and clearly as an item that affects U.S.–Sino relations. I believe that if the new Secretary of State in the Obama Administration were to raise this in her initial exchange of views with Beijing, it could alter this dynamic.

Furthermore, ultimately, China cares little about the Sudan regime one way or the other. Beijing wants to be with the winner. If the 2011 referendum takes place, a lot of the oil is in the South. This past fall, a number of Chinese oil workers near the North–South divide were kidnapped, and some

were killed. Perhaps China is ready to recalibrate their own interests in Sudan.

I unsuccessfully tried to launch a Joint Dialogue to include the U.S., U.K., France, and China. Beijing showed no interest in such a mechanism. Their Special Envoy to Darfur is a particularly difficult and unhelpful interlocutor. But going over his disagreeable head directly to Beijing by a senior member of the new Obama Administration might yield a more favorable return.

Conclusion

Sudan is a complex, difficult, troubled land. Bob Geldof once said about the Ethiopian famine traged-

dy that “a horror like this could not happen today without our consent. We had allowed this to happen, and now we knew that it was happening, to allow it to continue would be tantamount to murder.” In Sudan, murder, mayhem, and misery continue. We can do more to end it. We must.

—Ambassador Richard S. Williamson, a practicing partner in the law office of Winston and Strawn, has served as the President’s Special Envoy to Sudan, Ambassador to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs, Ambassador to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House.