

# Political Transition in the Sudan The Role of Political Actors

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# Contents

<b>Abbreviations and Acronyms .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Map of the Sudan .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Research Questions and Objective .....	2
1.3. Reading Guide .....	2
<b>2. Power-Sharing and Political Transition .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Power-Sharing in Divided Societies .....	4
2.2. Power-Sharing to Trigger Political Transition? .....	5
2.3. Unravelling the Political Transition Model.....	6
2.4. Conclusion .....	7
<b>3. Sudan’s Society and Political History .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1. A Plural Society .....	8
3.2. Regime Changes in Sudan’s Political History.....	9
3.2.1. Pre-Independence .....	9
3.2.2. Post-Independence Political Developments .....	10
3.2.3. Al-Bashir Era .....	11
3.3. Civil Wars .....	12
3.4. Conclusion .....	15
<b>4. Power-Sharing Arrangements in the Sudan .....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1. Power-Sharing Provisions.....	16
4.1.1. A “Democratic” and “Decentralised” Governance System .....	17
4.1.2. Wealth-Sharing and Military Autonomy.....	18
4.2. Implementation of the Provisions in the CPA and INC.....	19
4.3. Conclusion .....	21
<b>5. Actors in the Political Transition Process.....</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1. Political Leadership and its Challenges.....	22
5.1.1. President al-Bashir and the National Congress Party .....	22
5.1.2. Salva Kiir and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement.....	25
5.1.3. Challenges to the Political Leadership.....	28
5.2. Opposition Parties and their Challenges.....	29
5.2.1. Opposition to the Transitional Government .....	29



5.2.2. Challenges to the Opposition.....	33
5.3. Civil Society and its Challenges .....	34
5.3.1. Civil Society in the Transitional Process.....	34
5.3.2. Challenges to Civil Society .....	37
5.4. The International Community and its Challenges .....	38
5.4.1. The International Community in the Transitional Process.....	38
5.4.2. Challenges to the International Community .....	42
5.5. Conclusion .....	42
<b>6. Conclusion: A Challenging Political Transition Process in the Sudan .....</b>	<b>44</b>
6.1. Political Transition, Democracy and Unity in the Sudan?.....	44
6.1.1. Political Transition in the Sudan: Reality or Sham? .....	44
6.1.2. Doubts about a Democratic Sudan .....	45
6.1.3. The Unity Project in a Divided Society.....	46
6.2. Opportunities and Challenges for Political Transition in the Sudan .....	48
6.3. Conclusion .....	49
<b>References.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Agreements, Legislation and Resolutions .....	50
Literature .....	50
Press Articles .....	57

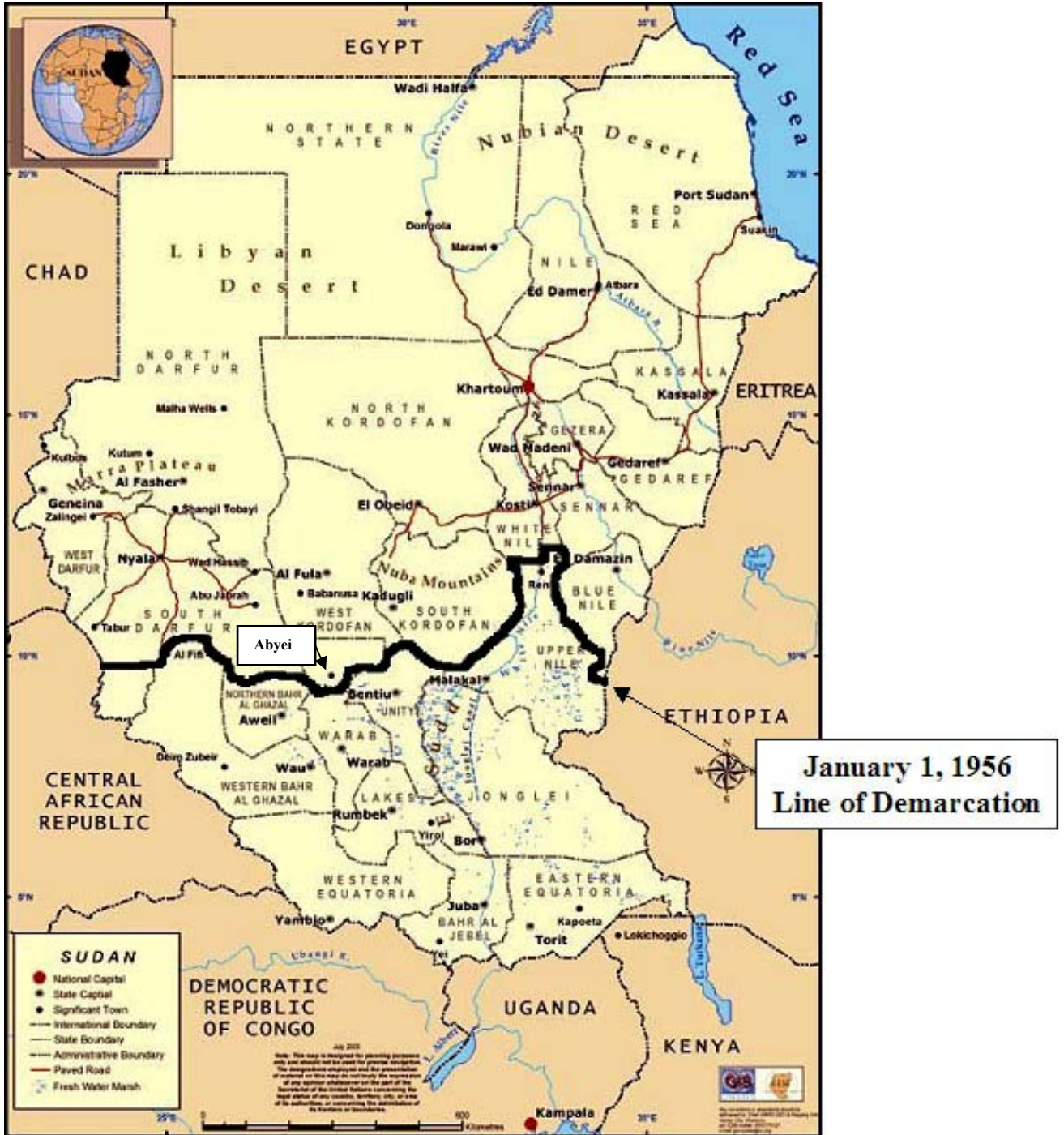


## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEC	Assessment and Evaluation Commission
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GoNU	Government of National Unity
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development
INC	Interim National Constitution
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
MDTF	Multi Donor Trust Fund
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NCP	National Congress Party
NIF	National Islamic Front
NUP	National Unionist Party
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PNC	People's National Congress
SCP	Sudan Communist Party
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Forces
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan



# Map of the Sudan



(Source: ICG, 2007)



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The Sudan is a country that has been at war for more than four decades in its 51-year independence. Recently, hope has bloomed that the Sudan is at the doorstep of a new era. In January 2005, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the southern rebel movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) with its military wing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA)<sup>1</sup>, agreed on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Six months later, mutual consensus was reached on an Interim National Constitution. These events brought an end to a long war that ravaged Southern Sudan and opened a way to dismantle the authoritarian regime that was in place for 15 years. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Constitution provide for political, territorial and economic power-sharing between the NCP and SPLM parties. Furthermore, they reflect the commitment to organise internationally monitored elections and they grant the southern region the right to opt for secession at the end of the six year interim period.

In the Sudan, power-sharing is not just a tool for conflict management but also a means to get going a process of political transition in this divided society. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Interim National Constitution both recognise that peace can only be legitimised and sustained through democratic governance. Principle 1.1 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement refers to “democratic governance, accountability, equality, respect, and justice for all citizens of the Sudan” and in the preamble of the Interim Constitution the NCP and SPLM state their commitment to “establish a democratic system of governance”. Experiences in other (African) countries and previous experiments with democratic governance in the Sudan have shown that political transition can be an empty exercise and does not guarantee a democratic outcome. Political transition is even more challenging in countries that also have to make a transition from war to peace like in the case of the Sudan. An absolute necessary condition for a possibly successful political transition process is political willingness but, as this paper will show, this is not enough. It requires great efforts to be undertaken by all actors involved.

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations SPLM and SPLA are often used interchangeable. This paper uses SPLM to refer to the party as a whole whereas the SPLA will only be used in reference to the military organisation of the party.



## 1.2. Research Questions and Objective

This paper seeks to examine *to what extent a process of political transition from authoritarian to democratic rule has unfolded in the Sudan with the power-sharing arrangements and what role political actors are playing*. The objective is to gain insight in the prospects for and challenges of political transition in the Sudan. For this reason, this research specifically addresses the following questions:

1. *To what extent is the Sudan experiencing a political transition?*
2. *What role do the power-sharing arrangements as outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Interim National Constitution play in the process of political transition in the Sudan?*
3. *What opportunities and challenges lie ahead for the political actors in the Sudan?*

## 1.3. Reading Guide

The paper is build up as follows. The next chapter examines the literature on power-sharing and political transition. It will briefly discuss the consociational theory before elaborating on the question whether power-sharing can bring about a process of political transition. Lastly, some critical notes will be added on the political transition ideal.

Chapter three starts with a description of plurality in Sudanese society. Thereafter, it provides for a brief overview of the most important political developments and gives a background to the civil wars that ragged the south of the country. This historical overview is necessary to understand the current (political) situation in the Sudan.

Chapter four presents the power-sharing agreements as outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim National Constitution. The emphasis lies on the political and territorial power-sharing arrangements but also the economic and security arrangements are shortly discussed. The chapter also highlights the progress the parties have made in implementing the power-sharing provisions more than two years after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed.



The fifth chapter maps out the most important political actors in the political transition process with special attention to the challenges these actors are facing. Political transition stands or falls with political leadership; therefore, the first paragraph deals with the leadership role of the NCP and SPLM. In the three subsequent paragraphs the other important actors are analysed, namely, opposition parties, civil society and the international community.

The sixth and last chapter concludes this paper by giving an answer to the question to what extent a political transition process has unfolded in the Sudan.



## 2. Power-Sharing and Political Transition

In the quest for a democratic world, political transition has been a focal point of study. Numerous countries find themselves in a process of political transition from authoritarian to democratic rule or a transition from war to peace and democracy. Political transitions are difficult processes and are especially challenging in plural societies with various ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural communities because of the conflicting claims of the groups in society. The power-sharing principle has become a popular recipe for political transition in such deeply divided plural societies.

This paragraph describes what can be understood by power-sharing. The significance of the power-sharing principle in divided societies will be considered. Further, the potential of power-sharing to trigger political transition is discussed. The chapter concludes with some critical notes on the political transition model.

### 2.1. Power-Sharing in Divided Societies

Power-sharing in this paper refers to a system of governance wherein the major segments in a society enjoy a share in power (Sisk, 1996). Probably the most influential account on power-sharing in divided societies has been provided by the consociational theory developed by Lijphart. Lijphart (1977) developed the theory of consociationalism<sup>2</sup> to explain the stability in some European democracies with divided societies. Instead of majority rule that emphasises opposition, consociational systems require institutions that encourage cooperation and consensus between the political leaders of most, if not all, groups in society. Lijphart (2002) asserts that consociational democracy will be the most feasible and stable form of democracy that can be established in divided societies.

The two primary characteristics of consociational democracy are a grand coalition whereby the executive power is shared among the different groups, and group autonomy that gives groups the authority to govern their internal affairs. These two characteristics can be strengthened by two additional institutional provisions, namely, minority veto in decision-making and proportional representation in elected and appointed office (Lijphart, 2002).

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<sup>2</sup> For further reading on consociationalism, see, for example, Lijphart, A. (1977) *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven, Yale University Press; or Lijphart, A. (2004) "Constitutional design for divided societies" *Journal of Democracy* 15(2): p 96-109.



To Lijphart the main function of power-sharing is to establish democracy in an ethnically divided society. However, this is one strand of research on power-sharing. The other strand applies power-sharing as a means to end violence. The first strand concerns political and territorial power-sharing whereas the later also comprises economic and military power-sharing<sup>3</sup> (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2003). There is discussion as to whether the two goals can go together. Power-sharing agreements after civil wars require that all former warring parties have a share in power. This implies that dictators and rebel groups will also get a share in ruling the country for the sake of peace, which can, at the same time, undermine the democratic legitimacy of the power-sharing arrangements (Jarstad, 2006a and 2006b).

## **2.2. Power-Sharing to Trigger Political Transition?**

Political transition is defined by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986:6) as “[...] the interval between one regime and another” whereby the word ‘regime’ refers to a particular set of political procedures such as the access to positions in the government, the characteristics of the actors that are given such access, and the strategies or means that the actors can apply to gain access. In a period of transition, political actors struggle over the right to define the rules and procedures of the political game and the resources that come with it.

In answer to the question whether power-sharing will encourage political transition towards peace and democracy in divided societies, several scholars claim that power-sharing is an effective way to end conflicts in divided societies but it makes consolidation of peace and democracy very difficult (i.e. Lawson, 1993; Roeder and Rothchild, 2005). Their main argument is that the inclusion of all major groups in power-sharing undermines the very principle of opposition and contestation in democracy. Besides, Norris (2005) points out that power-sharing can hamper the emergence of a vibrant democracy because it creates an incentive for group cooperation but does not encourage cross-group cooperation. She asserts that power-sharing might deepen the societal divisions because groups are not encouraged to look for support outside their own community. In particular, during election time there is the risk that political leaders seek electoral support by heightening ethnic hatred and social tensions. Therefore, several scholars prefer an integrative or centripetal approach whereby

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<sup>3</sup> Economic power sharing refers to the distribution of natural resources such as water and oil. Military power sharing implies that the armed forces of the former warring parties are brought together in one army and whereby representatives of all parties have leadership positions within the military sector (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2003).



incentives are created to encourage the groups to reach out across the divisions and become responsive to cross-group issues. This approach, however, only gives suggestions on how incentives can be created within electoral systems such as a legal provision that political parties should be national in character (Reilly, 2003).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the advocates of the integrative or centripetal approach also agree in principle that some joint rule is necessary to bring about peace and democracy in divided societies (Jarstad, 2006b).

### 2.3. Unravelling the Political Transition Model

In the 1970s and 1980s, numerous countries in Asia and Latin America embarked on a process of political transition towards more democratic political systems. Huntington (1991) has called this the “third wave” of democratic transitions that were preceded by two other “waves” from 1828-1926 and 1943-1962. During each “wave” great optimism prevailed on the success of political transition but Huntington shows that they were often followed by “waves of reversal”. In essence, the outcome of political transitions has proved to be very uncertain whereby a reversion to a new authoritarian rule is one of the possible outcomes.

Since the 1990s, reversals, and flawed and blocked political transitions have also been seen in Africa. Bratton and Van De Walle (1994) show that of the 42 countries with authoritarian regimes in 1989, 40 moved away from military and one-party regimes.<sup>5</sup> However, only 16 of the 40 countries experienced free and fair elections, which are generally believed to mark the transition to a full-fledged democracy. In fact, Bratton and Van De Walle (1994) argue that many African countries experienced liberalisation without democratisation. Mere cosmetic political reforms were launched and not free and fair elections have been organised to provide the political leadership formally with political legitimacy but accountability and transparency have remained weak.

The reality that numerous countries got stuck in the middle of political transition has made scholars question the validity of the political transition model. Carothers (2002) has identified two characteristics of countries that find themselves in the so-called “gray zone” of political transition, feckless pluralism or dominant-power politics. Feckless pluralism is

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<sup>4</sup> For further reading on the centripetal approach, see Horowitz, D.L. (1985) *Ethnic groups in conflict*, Berkeley, University of California Press; or Reilly B. (2001) *Democracy in divided societies: electoral engineering for conflict management*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. For an elaboration on the integrative approach, see Sisk, T.D. (1996) *Power sharing and international mediation in ethnic conflicts*, Washington, United States Institute of Peace Press.

<sup>5</sup> Only two countries in Africa did not embark on political reforms in the 1990s, Liberia and the Sudan.



experienced when there is political contestation with power changes but whereby the political elite has cut itself off from the population, which gives way to a mere self-interested elite. Another group of countries in the “gray zone” suffer from dominant-power politics wherein one can speak of formal political contestation but where one political group dominates so that an alternation of power is unlikely. As a majority of the transitional countries suffer from these political characteristics and barely make progress towards a full-fledged democracy, Carothers urges to abandon the political transition model and take the semi-democratic situation of many countries as a point of departure.

## 2.4. Conclusion

From this brief literature review one could draw a rather pessimistic outlook for peace and democracy in countries like the Sudan. Power-sharing is expected to trigger some political transition but will hamper the establishment of a full-fledged democracy. It is likely that the Sudan gets stuck somewhere on the road to democracy. Even more alarming is the possibility that power-sharing arrangements result in heightened tensions due to the absence of cross-group cooperation. It is probably too early to examine the validity of this conclusion drawn from the literature in the case of the Sudan. This paper will, however, be able to analyse the current dynamics that can give an indication of the direction of political transition.



### 3. Sudan's Society and Political History

The Sudan is with 2.5 million sq km the biggest country on the African continent. Divided along ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic lines, it has one of the most plural societies. This chapter starts with a description of this plurality. Thereafter, an overview is given of the political history in the Sudan from colonialism until 2005. This historical insight is necessary to understand the analysis of power-sharing and political transition in the Sudan later in this paper. The last paragraph highlights the civil wars fought in the south and the issues at the heart of the conflict.

#### 3.1. A Plural Society

The approximately 35 million inhabitants of the Sudan belong to 570 different tribes and ethnic groups. These can be re-grouped in seven categories. Around 39 per cent can be considered as Arabs, about 30 per cent have been classified as southerners with African affiliation, 13 per cent are non-Arab inhabitants in Darfur and parts of Kordofan, 6 per cent are Beja who live in the east, 6 percent are Nuba from the Nuba Mountains, 3 percent are Nubians in the north, and 3 percent are non-Sudanese (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

The general belief that the religious composition in the Sudan corresponds to the Arab and non-Arab division is not true. With about 60 per cent of the Sudanese being of Muslim faith, there is a large non-Arab Muslim population. These are the Muslims of black African descent who mainly live in the west of the Sudan. Only 20 percent of the population is Christian; they live in the south and Khartoum. However, Christians in the south form a minority as 60 percent of the southerners follow indigenous beliefs (Rogier, 2005c; Schüepp, 2006).

Linguistically, the Sudan shows also a rich diversity, with more than 110 languages spoken. Arabic is the most dominant language, spoken by 50 per cent of the population. About 18 per cent speaks Nilotic languages and Nilo-Hamitic is spoken by 12 per cent (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

As can be concluded from the above, the often used stereotypical characterisation of the Sudan's civil wars as conflicts between the north and the south of the country, between the Arabs and the non-Arabs, and between the Muslims and the Christians is an oversimplification. The north and south can not be divided along such clear ethnic and religious lines. As will be



seen later in this chapter, the most important source of the civil wars has been the concentration of political and economic powers in the hands of Arab elite from the central region and the area north-east of Khartoum. This small group has pursued policies that encouraged regional disparities in socioeconomic development whereby the southern region in particular has been systematically marginalised. Governments' policies that aimed to islamise the south of Sudan and the refusal to grant Southern Sudan a federal state brought the grievances of southerners to a boiling point and triggered a civil war twice (Ahmed, 2004; Ahmed, 2007; Flint and De Waal, 2005; Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

### **3.2. Regime Changes in Sudan's Political History**

This paragraph presents a brief historical overview of political developments in the Sudan until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005. Firstly, the Sudan under colonial rule is discussed and how the basis was laid for future conflicts. Secondly, the political developments between 1955 and 1989 are outlined whereby we see that the Sudan earlier experimented with democracy and power-sharing. In the third sub-paragraph, the authoritarian regime under President Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir from 1989 until 2005 is described. This overview will show that politics in the Sudan has been a mere northern affair, barely influenced by southern actors or the civil war in the south.

#### **3.2.1. Pre-Independence**

Until 1820, changing kingdoms and empires ruled in the northern and central parts of the Sudan. These parts slowly Arabised and Islamised following the migration of Arab tribes from Arabia and Egypt. The southern part of the Sudan was not so much exposed to external influences due to rivers, swamps and mountains that made it very inaccessible. People in the south continued to live in tribal form with very few supra-tribal centralised political structures. Furthermore, the population in Darfur and Nuba Mountains, and the Beja tribe in the east retained a strong regional identity (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

Between 1820 and 1885, the Sudan was ruled by the Egyptians who were part of the Ottoman Empire. In this period, the Sudan with approximately its current borders came formally into existence as one political entity (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005). However, the Egyptians had limited influence and control over the south because of the resistance they experienced there (Rogiers, 2005a).



In 1898, the United Kingdom captured the Sudan from the Mahdiyya<sup>6</sup> who ruled the country for 13 years. Under an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the northern and southern regions were governed under separate administrations because the British were anxious to protect Christianity and put a halt to the subjugation of the south. However, this prevented integration as Cotran put it aptly in 1955 when he wrote that it “[...] prevented the Sudanese from knowing each other, feeling with each other, working with each other and learning from each other (in: Ahmed, 2007:7). The British policy laid the basis for Sudan’s civil wars as it led to an undeveloped and marginalised south. Economic development remained limited to northern Sudan (Schüepp, 2006). Only in 1947, the south was reincorporated into the Sudan when the British anticipated the end to their colonial rule. It was as well the result of a deal with Egypt whereby the Egyptians promised to allow the British to keep control over the Suez canal and the British promised to abandon their idea of separating the north and south of the Sudan (that Egypt hoped to annex as a whole). However, the Arab north in the Sudan that took power with independence refused to join Egypt. Prunier (in: Rogier, 2005c:7,8), therefore, argues that the Sudan was “created in error” because its culture, language and the absence of a common history and identity does not justify the current borders.

### ***3.2.2. Post-Independence Political Developments***

Independence started with an elected parliament and a coalition government of the Umma Party and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). The Umma Party and the PDP were established by the two major Islamic sects in northern Sudan – respectively the Ansar and Khatmiyya – during the struggle for independence. The differences between the two parties led to growing disagreement within the coalition government, which gave way to a bloodless military coup by General Ibrahim Abboud in 1958. However, as Abboud did not keep his promise to reintroduce civilian rule, strikes and riots broke out in the north and triggered the fall of the military government six years later in 1964 (Ouma, 2005). A transitional coalition government was installed that was replaced by a democratically elected coalition government of the Umma Party and the National Unionist Party (NUP) in 1965, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) following the amalgamation of NUP and PDP in 1967. Again the

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<sup>6</sup> The Mahdiyya was a coalition of clans in the north of Sudan that wanted to free Sudan from the Egyptian colonisers and establish a pure Islamic state (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).



coalition government was paralysed by quarrels between the two parties and disputes within the parties (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

In 1969, another military coup brought Colonel Jafa'ar Nimeiri to power. Two years later, Nimeiri transformed the military regime into a one-party state for which he established the Sudanese Socialist Union. Nimeiri's regime survived several coup attempts by the Sudan Communist Party (SCP) and the National Front, a right-wing opposition coalition of the Umma Party, DUP and Muslim Brotherhood. However, these same opposition parties all ended up backing Nimeiri at one point during his 16-year rule (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

By 1985, public discontent with the bad economic conditions, the collapsed public services and the escalating civil war in the south had grown and led to public uprising (ref. to paragraph 3.3). This enabled an easy military takeover. Within a year elections were organised and for the third time the Sudan experimented with democracy. However, the period between 1986 and 1989 was characterised by extreme instability with five different governments that were formed in four years time. This created a situation conducive to coup attempts and it was the National Islamic Front (NIF) (formerly the Muslim Brotherhood) led by Dr. Hassan al-Turabi that took power in 1989 (Salih, 1990).

### ***3.2.3. Al-Bashir Era***

The coup by the NIF brought General Omar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir to power. He, with al-Turabi and Ali Osman Taha<sup>7</sup> playing important roles behind the scene, embarked on a policy of harsh repression. The Constitution was suspended, parliament was dissolved, all political parties were banned, political party leaders were detained and the press was restrained. Secret detention houses, known as the 'ghost houses', were established where leaders of trade unions and student unions were tortured in order to break any resistance (Human Rights Watch, 1996). Furthermore, the NIF pursued an agenda of Islamic indoctrination whereby it sought to impose Islam on non-Muslims and launched 'jihad' against those that opposed the call. It launched a socioeconomic programme that favored Muslims in the south and NIF sympathizers in the north (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

In 1996, presidential and parliamentary elections were organised, but with only NIF members and allies running, they were mere showcases. Under allegations of fraud, President

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<sup>7</sup> Flint and De Waal (2005:27) have characterised Ali Osman Taha as the "chief executive" of al-Turabi's desire to establish an Islamic state. Taha focused on the details of the policy and was responsible for the implementation strategy. Taha and al-Turabi wanted to play their roles behind the scene until the NIF had consolidated its regime.



al-Bashir won 75 per cent of the votes. Two years later, in 1998, a law was adopted that allowed for 'political associations' but only those that supported the goal of an Islamic state. In the same year a new Constitution was written and adopted by parliament. In order to take on a legal cover, the NIF transformed into the National Congress Party (NCP) (Mariam, 2001; De Waal and Ajawin, 2002).

In 1999, a power struggle surfaced between al-Bashir and al-Turabi when al-Turabi embarked on his plan to take power and proposed amendments to reduce presidential powers (Ali, 2006; Schüepf, 2005). President al-Bashir dissolved parliament, suspended the constitution and declared a state of emergency. As a result, al-Turabi split away from the NCP. Ali Osman Taha and the security services remained loyal to al-Bashir whereas several regional party cells of the NIF and large numbers of students went into opposition with al-Turabi (Flint and De Waal, 2005). In February 2000, a new Political Parties Organisations Law came into effect that legalised political parties. In December of the same year, new elections were organised that were boycotted by opposition parties. President al-Bashir was re-elected with 86 per cent of the votes and the NCP won 355 out of the 360 seats in parliament (ICG, 2002).

### 3.3. Civil Wars

The Sudan experienced two civil wars in the south of the country, from 1955 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005. In contrast to the general belief that Islamisation and the disregard of the southern quest for a federal state are the main causes of the Sudanese civil wars, these factors are only the more proximate causes of the civil wars and explain their lengths. The ultimate or structural cause has been the concentration of political power and economic wealth in the hands of elite whose majority comes from Arab tribes in the central region and the Nile Valley north-east of Khartoum, the so-called riverain region (Ahmed, 2004; Flint and De Waal, 2005; Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

As the previous paragraph showed, the ruling elite have not been a united block but are comprised of various political groups with different ideologies and sectarian loyalties. All these elite groups have been affiliated with different business groups. The inherited dominant public sector from the British colonial era with state ownership of land and large economic projects enabled a struggle for power within a framework of control over the distribution of the state's resources. What has been witnessed is that power holders attracted business entrepreneurs that pledged their support and loyalty in exchange for economic privileges (Sidahmed and



Sidahmed, 2005).<sup>8</sup> Although the political groups in power and their affiliated business classes changed several times since independence, there was continuity in denying most Sudanese citizens political and economic rights. Economic activity remained concentrated in the home areas of the different power holders and business groups: the central and northern riverain regions and a few regional urban centres. The eastern, southern and western parts of the country remained underdeveloped (Flint and De Waal, 2005; Young, 2007). As a result, the instability and wars in the Sudan have generally been explained as a matter of a centre-periphery conflict. This has been more true for the civil wars in Southern Sudan than for the violent insurrections in eastern Sudan and the rebellion in Darfur that have shown that there are centres in the peripheries wherein local elite have occupied a position as guardians of the interests of the national centre in the periphery (Ahmed, 2004; Ati and Warrag, 2007).<sup>9</sup>

With independence the southern region was the most undeveloped and deprived region in the country. The resulting feeling of marginalisation, the British policies to isolate the south, a history of slavery and violence, and northern racism against southerners contributed to an easily inflammable situation (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005). The southern region wanted the country to become a federal state that would allow the south some autonomy in governing its own affairs. The provisional constitution remained, however, silent on the federal-unitary issue. There only existed the promise of the government, led already by the Arab elite, to consider a federal state (Rogier, 2005c). However, the three delegates of the south were outvoted in the 46-member committee on a permanent Constitution whereby the government could backtrack

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<sup>8</sup> With the state ownership of land and large economic projects, the various power holders were able to buy the support and loyalty of agricultural capitalists, landlords and businessmen. Things changed when Nimeiri came to power. Nimeiri's strategy to turn the Sudan into the 'bread-basket' of the Arab world gave rise to a new brand of Sudanese business entrepreneurs who entered the scene as investors or managers, helped with the unprecedented flow of foreign capital. When Nimeiri aligned with al-Turabi, another group came into being, namely an Islamist business class. With the return of democratic rule in the 1980s, the old agricultural capitalists and businessmen associated with Umma Party and the DUP rapidly regained their access to the economic resources. This situation enabled the NIF/NCP to win the (financial) support of the business class that emerged under Nimeiri's rule and the Islamist business class who had lost their privileges in the democratic period. After gaining power, the NIF/NCP embarked on rigorous privatisations whereby prominent figures in the Islamist business class bought land and parastatals for bargain prices (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Darfur and the eastern region were long kept in check by local elite. Both dictatorial regimes and political parties like Umma Party and the DUP awarded these elite economic privileges and power positions within the centre and the regional urban centres. In return, these elite served as agents of control of their ethnic groups in times of growing discontent by making many promises on behalf of the power holders. In this way, these local elites work for their self-promotion. Some of these elites only started to acknowledge the socioeconomic disparities in the country when they personally experienced political and economic marginalisation. This has been the reason that they started to erect rebel movements and mobilise the masses to fight their marginalisation. Other local elites profited from this when the national power holders turned to them to help fight the rebellion. This explains phenomena as the Muhajideen and Janjaweed militias (Ahmed, 2004; Ati and Warrag, 2007).



on its promise of a federal state. This triggered Sudan's First Civil War that dragged on due to a policy of Islamisation in the south under the rule of General Ibrahim Abboud (Schüepp, 2006).

Only when Nimeiri came to power in 1969, prospects for a peace agreement increased. Nimeiri considered his government militarily and politically weak and therefore decided to look for a peace settlement with the southern rebels. After several weeks of negotiations, the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement ended the First Sudanese Civil War in 1972. The agreement granted an autonomous status to the south in regard to internal affairs, restricted the application of Sharia law to family and personal matters concerning Muslims, and entitled the southern states to a share of the revenues accruing from natural resources in the south (Flacks, 2005; Ouma, 2005).

Dissatisfaction in the south with the implementation of the agreement rose slowly over the years and reached its boiling point in 1983, when Nimeiri tried to redraw the boundary between north and south in order to incorporate an area rich in oil resources in the northern region. This deprived the southern region of an important resource that could be used to develop the south. Not much later, Nimeiri cancelled the autonomous status of the south and introduced Sharia law throughout the country (Ouma, 2005).<sup>10</sup> As a result, the Second Sudanese Civil War broke out and a new rebel movement came into existence under the leadership of John Garang, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) as its political wing (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

Numerous peace initiatives were launched in the 22 years of civil war that followed.<sup>11</sup> However, the unwillingness of the Khartoum governments and SPLM to make concessions, the splits and breakaways within the SPLM, and the involvement of the neighbouring countries that all had an interest in a certain outcome of the conflict, explain why it took two decades before peace talks became effective. Sudan's Second Civil War was officially settled with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that was signed by the NCP-government and the SPLM on January 9, 2005 (Rogier, 2005c).

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<sup>10</sup> This introduction of Sharia law must be seen as a mere act of political survival. The economic decline and erosion of public services had made Nimeiri regime very sensitive to the influence of al-Turabi and his NIF (Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> For an extensive description of the peace initiatives launched during the Second Sudanese Civil War, see Rogier, E. (2005c) *No More Hills Ahead? The Sudan's Tortuous Ascent to Heights of Peace*, The Hague, Clingendael.



### 3.4. Conclusion

Since independence, the Sudan has continuously been ruled by a small Arab group from the central and riverain regions. Their monopoly over the political and economic rights has resulted in regional disparities in socioeconomic development. The deliberate marginalisation of the southern region under the different regimes was source of grievance among southerners. Consequently, the denial of a federal state and the introduction of Sharia law was enough to trigger two long civil wars in the south of the country. Socioeconomic underdevelopment in the periphery also partly explains the current crisis in the Darfur region<sup>12</sup>, growing tensions in the north<sup>13</sup> and earlier insurgents in eastern Sudan.

This chapter has also made clear that the ruling Arab-elite is not a homogeneous group. There have been continuously changing hegemonies of ruling elites. During the two democratic periods political parties merely responded to the positions of their opponents and played one group against the other in order to obtain or maintain power. Without exception, the political parties are weak and have failed to develop their own visions and political programmes and failed to work on issues like economic development and national unity. Sidahmed and Sidahmed (2005:36) argue that the main concern of these parties was not liberty and multiparty democracy and they explain the two revivals of democracy in 1965 and 1985 as mere accidents caused by the “[...] weakness of military regimes, not the strength of democrats”.

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<sup>12</sup> In Darfur, the reason for the conflict is also related to environmental problems. Desertification increased the competition over resources (water, pastureland, and land for agricultural activities) between nomadic camel herders and farmers. Over several decades the competition gradually took the identity of an ethnic conflict as the camel herders are mainly Arab tribes whereas the farmers are from African ethnic groups (Flint and De Waal, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Tensions in northern Sudan are the result of two hydro-electric dam projects that have to meet the increasing demand for electricity in Khartoum and Port Sudan. The construction of the Merowe dam is almost finished and will displace around 50.000 people. In the last years, the government has ordered the police to disperse several protests with tear gas and live bullets. Organisers were arrested, detained and in some cases tortured. The mostly small-scale farmers have been resettled (with some money as compensation) in the Nubian Desert where they will not be able to continue their farming lifestyle (Askouri, 2004). Currently, tensions have risen over the plans for another dam. The construction of the Kajbar dam has just started despite several protests in the region that will be flooded once the dam will become operational. In June 2007, four protesters were killed when the police prevented protesters to destroy construction equipment. Several journalists and activists have been arrested and detained. Since then reporting on the dam has been banned (Sudan Tribune, 15 June 2007). The International Crisis Group (2007) reports that the local communities are becoming increasingly militant whereby youngsters travel to Eritrea for military training, join the SPLA, or join small armed groups like the Northern Front in the region.



## 4. Power-Sharing Arrangements in the Sudan

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) marked the end of the Second Civil War in January 2005. It was the result of a long peace process that was frequently brought to a standstill due to disagreement about sensitive issues like the application of Sharia law and oil revenue distribution (Flacks, 2005). The negotiations took place between the NCP-government and the SPLM under the guidance of several mediators from Sudan's neighbouring countries and the international community. The exclusiveness of the peace process was criticised because it left a majority of the Sudanese population unrepresented and it is believed that the negotiations between north and south had a catalytic effect in Darfur (Rogier, 2005c).<sup>14</sup>

Despite the incomprehensiveness of the CPA, it has been a decisive achievement. The power-sharing arrangements between the NCP and SPLM brought peace in the south and opened a way to government reforms. In the six months after the entry into force of the CPA, an Interim National Constitution (INC) was written that applies until a referendum on self-determination will be held in the ten southern states in 2011. The next paragraph gives an overview of the most important political power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security arrangements as outlined in the CPA and INC. The second paragraph focuses on the implementation of the arrangements and the main stumble blocks.

### 4.1. Power-Sharing Provisions

The INC outlines a time schedule for a six-year interim period. Firstly, it states that a population census must be conducted by the end of the second year of the interim period (Art. No.215). The INC further provides for elections at all government levels by the end of the fourth year of the interim period in 2009 (Art. No.216). This should bring about fully representative executive and legislative branches. The final step will be a referendum of self-determination whereby the people of the southern states can vote for unity of the Sudan or the secession of Southern Sudan (Art. No.222).

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<sup>14</sup> Although the tensions in the east and west were not addressed during the peace process between north and south, there was the promise to reach agreements with the rebels in the east and west after the CPA was agreed upon. This resulted in peace agreements with one of the rebel groups in Darfur in May 2006 and the rebel group in the east in October 2006 (Sudan Tribune, 16 October 2006).



#### 4.1.1. A “Democratic” and “Decentralised” Governance System

The INC provides for a political transition process towards a Republic of the Sudan that is democratic (Art. 1). In July 2005, the first step in a political transition was taken by turning the one-party state ruled by the NCP into a transitional coalition government with the SPLM, the Government of National Unity (GoNU). The Presidency of the GoNU consists of the President and two Vice-Presidents – one from Southern Sudan and the other from northern Sudan – whereby the First Vice President will be from Southern Sudan in case the elected President is from northern Sudan (Art. 51 and 62). Currently, Omar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir is the President of the GoNU, the position of First Vice President is held by Salva Kiir Mayardit from the SPLM, and Ali Osman Taha from the NCP fills the position of second Vice President.

Power-sharing is also provided for in the National Council of Ministers and the National Assembly according to a mutually agreed 70% – 30% north and south ratio. Article 80 states that the representation in the GoNU shall be as follows until elections take place<sup>15</sup>:

- (a) The National Congress Party shall be represented by 52% (49% northerners and 3% southerners);
- (b) The SPLM shall be represented by 28% (21% southerners and 7% northerners);
- (c) Other northern political forces shall be represented by 14%; and
- (d) Other southern political forces shall be represented by 6%.

For the portfolios of the ministers this means that the SPLM holds nine minister posts whereas the NCP fills 16 minister positions. In parliament, the NCP and SPLM together hold 358 seats out of 450, 233 NCP and 125 SPLM (UNDP Sudan, 2006). Amendments to the Constitution require the approval of at least three-quarters of the National Assembly (Art. 224) whereas bills need a simple majority (Art. 99), which gives the NCP decisive power. The national civil service should also reflect the regional disparity. A National Civil Service Commission is obliged to fill the middle and upper level positions in the national civil service with 25% of southerners within five years of the interim period (Art. 139).

The GoNU is only one part of the governance system because the INC provides for a decentralised system with four levels of government. Next to the GoNU that has the task to protect the national sovereignty and territorial integrity, there are the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), state authorities, and local governments (Art. 24). The GoSS and states have

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<sup>15</sup> The power-sharing percentages are based on an estimation of the population and will remain provisional until the population census has determined the exact population and its distribution over the regions.



their own elected executive and legislative branches and a judicial branch. Besides, the GoSS has an Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (Art. 160) and each state has its own State Constitution (Art. 178(2)).

The GoSS is an autonomous regional government that should exercise authority in Southern Sudan and the states of Southern Sudan. At the same time it should act as a link between the GoNU and the states of Southern Sudan (Art. 162). The INC confirms the secular status of Southern Sudan whereas Sharia law will remain the source of legislation in the north of the Sudan but will not apply to non-Muslims (Art. 5 and 156). Until elections in 2009, the Chairman of the SPLM is the President of the GoSS who serves also as Vice President in the GoNU. He has a veto over the decisions of the President that violate the rights and freedoms of the citizens in Southern Sudan. The Vice President of the GoSS, Riek Machar, is appointed by the President of the GoSS (Art. 176(1)). The representation in the Southern Sudan Council of Ministers and the 170 seats in the transitional Southern Sudan Assembly is also provisional until elections have taken place. Article 176(3-4) states that the SPLM has to be represented by 70 per cent, the NCP by 15 per cent, and the other southern political forces by 15 per cent.

#### ***4.1.2. Wealth-Sharing and Military Autonomy***

The CPA and INC do not only provide for political and territorial power-sharing but also for economic power-sharing. Most important for the financial autonomy of the GoSS is article 192 that declares that 50% of the revenues derived from oil wells in the ten southern states will be allocated to the GoSS, after 2% has been allocated to the concerning oil producing state. To this end a Petroleum Commission will be established that has to manage the oil revenue sharing.

Military power-sharing has not been agreed upon in the CPA. Due to the suspicion of the SPLM after several earlier broken agreements, the two parties decided to abandon the idea of integrating the armed forces in a common army during the interim period. Instead, the Sudan Armed Forces and the SPLA remain separate forces and will only form a single army when the southerners opt for unity in 2011. In order to create a minimal link between the two armed forces, joint/integrated forces have been established composed of equal number of soldiers from both armies. These forces are deployed in the south, Nuba Mountains, Funj region and Khartoum (Rogier, 2005c; Schüepf, 2006). Furthermore, the SPLA had to withdraw their forces north of the north/south border of 1956 by January 2006. The Sudan Armed Forces had



to be redeployed north of the north/south border of 1956 by July 2007 (CPA, Security Arrangements Art. 3b and 3c).

The oil-rich Abyei area in the south of Southern Kordofan state and bordering Bahr al-Ghazal state has been given a special status. The INC provides for a Abyei Border Commission that has to determine the exact borders of the Abyei area. The residents of the Abyei area will decide in a separate referendum in 2011 whether they want to become part of the southern state Bahr al-Ghazal or to have a special administrative status in the north. Until this referendum the oil revenues will be shared between the north and south (INC, Art. 183).

#### **4.2. Implementation of the Provisions in the CPA and INC**

The time schedule for the interim period is very tight and unrealistic. The census was supposed to take place in July 2007. This proved to be unrealistic and unfeasible in the rainy season. Besides, the government has been slow in releasing its pledge of \$30 Million to the Census Commission. As a result, the census has been postponed to February 2008 (Sudan Tribune, 2 August 2007). Elections are scheduled to take place in 2009 but the preparations have not started. An Electoral Commission has to decide on the electoral system but the Commission has not yet been established neither has the electoral law been passed by the National Assembly (Interview with representative of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, Khartoum, July 2007).

The GoNU was installed very soon after the INC was adopted. However, SPLM ministers within the GoNU have been facing difficulties in their work as they are isolated within their ministries. The National Civil Service Commission has not been established yet so that no steps have been undertaken to fill 25% of the middle and upper level positions in the national civil service with southerners. The seats in the National Assembly have also been filled according to the power-sharing arrangements. However, the role of the Assembly is very weak. The NCP and SPLM hold together 80 per cent of the seats, which allows them to make amendments to the Constitution. Furthermore, although the INC enables the NCP to pass bills with its simple majority in the Assembly, Art. 99 urges that decisions are taken by consensus whenever possible. This has implied that representatives of NCP and SPLM continuously discuss and negotiate outside the Assembly. When they reach an agreement, the assembly will just approve what have already been agreed upon. This tendency is exaggerated by the strong party discipline whereby especially NCP and SPLM members of parliament are very loyal to



their parties. This, of course, was expectable since they were nominated by their parties and not elected by constituencies. (UNDP, 2006).

As expected, the GoSS has faced many difficulties as it has to be established from scratch. Minister posts were rapidly filled and the Southern Assembly was quickly installed but people in the south have been very unhappy with the performance of the GoSS. The Southern Assembly has adopted five laws so far whereas nine bills are still waiting to be examined. Ministers face daunting tasks with under-resourced ministries and just a handful of professional staff. In July 2007, Salva Kiir announced a long awaited reshuffle of six ministers because of the poor performance of their ministries (Sudan Tribune, 3 July 2007). Furthermore, rumours about corruption in the south can be read almost daily in the newspapers after a corruption scandal in the southern ministry of finance (ICG, 2007).

Implementation of the wealth-sharing, redeployment of the armed forces and the Abyei arrangements has proved to be far more problematic than the implementation of the political and territorial power-sharing. Most worrying is the current deadlock on the Abyei issue. The International Abyei Boundaries Commission drafted a report concerning the exact border of the Abyei area. This report was rejected by the NCP. The report concludes that the Abyei area belongs entirely to the southern Dinka Ngok tribe because the other residents in the area who claim the Abyei area, the Arabic Missiriya tribe, migrated much later into the area. Acceptance of the Commission's report would imply a yes-vote for incorporating Abyei area, with all its oil resources, in the southern state Bahr al-Ghazal and thus in Southern Sudan. In the meanwhile, the Missiriya get increasingly frustrated with the NCP, for whom they fought against the SPLA. They feel deprived and left out. There are reports of Missiriya men joining the SPLA and some of their armed groups approaching Dafur rebel groups (ICG, 2007). There are no prospects that the Abyei issue will be solved soon. There is neither progress in demarcating the entire north/south border, which should ideally take place before the census is organised. The North-South Boundary Commission is operational but not properly funded. The Commission has not been informed on the total budget that is available for its work. As a result, the Commission has been unable to plan ahead (Sudan Tribune, 28 August 2007).

Closely linked to the Abyei issue is the delay in redeploying the armed forces. Both the SPLA and Sudan Armed Forces did not meet the deadlines to withdraw their troops, which is related to the unresolved demarcation of the north/south border. The NCP insists to maintain the presence of the Sudan Armed Forces in oil-rich areas in order to protect the oil fields. As a



result, the SPLA is moving some of its troops again to the oil-rich areas (Interview with Professor at Ahfad University, Khartoum, July 2007).

The disagreement on the exact north/south border and the lack of transparency in the oil sector has enabled the NCP to prevent full compliance with the 50-50 per cent agreement. In 2005, the GoSS received 21 per cent of total oil revenue (US\$ 782 million). In 2006, it was 28 per cent of total oil revenue (US\$ 1,3 billion) (Veenhoven, 2007). The problem is that the NCP is in full control of the oil industry. The minister of finance and the minister of energy are both from the NCP and do not give full disclosure on the exact oil production. The Petroleum Commission has not been able to intervene as it faces financial difficulties and met for the first time in April 2007 (Interview with SPLM representative, Omdurman, July 2007).

### 4.3. Conclusion

In the Sudan, the power-sharing arrangements are widely regarded as unfair. It has given political legitimacy to a dictator and a rebel group, and made a small group in the north and Southern Sudan the legitimate beneficiaries of the country's oil revenues. Other groups and regions in the Sudan have been left out. Sidelined political parties are, however, obliged to be supportive of the CPA in order to take part in the elections in 2009.

The SPLM is the biggest beneficiary of the power-sharing arrangements. The INC has established a de jure effective asymmetric federal state with consociational features whereby the south has a regional government whereas there is no such provision for other regions (Schüepf (2006). The provisions in the INC address important issues for the SPLM like regional autonomy, exemption from Sharia law, right to self-determination, and wealth-sharing. Besides, military autonomy and a veto over amendments of the constitution have given the SPLM some safeguards.

Recently, the implementation of the provisions in the CPA and INC has seen some cracks for which both the NCP and SPLM are blaming each other. There are several delays, which are worrying observers. The wealth-sharing agreement, provisions to solve the Abyei issue and the security arrangements are especially problematic because there is so much at stake for both parties. In the following chapter it becomes clear that the full implementation of the CPA and INC will put the different political actors before enormous challenges.



## 5. Actors in the Political Transition Process

The CPA and INC marked the start of a political transition process. The envisaged outcome is either a democratic united Sudan or the emergence of two independent democratic countries. The feasibility and likelihood of this perspective in a country characterised by societal and political fragmentation, hostilities, and suspicion is highly doubtful. In addition, the continued crisis in the Darfur region engineered by the NCP does not give much hope for optimism on the emergence of a democratic governance system in the Sudan. It is a matter of commitment to democratic principles by the political leadership and political parties and it depends on their willingness to cooperate. Furthermore, the political space given and taken by civil society like trade unions and non-governmental organisations can influence the direction and speed of political transition. Last but not least, international actors can be decisive in the process, either by encouraging the domestic players to keep track or by acting as spoilers to the process. This chapter maps out these actors in the political transition process, highlights the role they play and emphasises the challenges they are facing.

### 5.1. Political Leadership and its Challenges

Political leadership is probably most decisive in a political transition process. It is the leadership that is responsible for final decision-making and implementation. Thereby, the leadership also influences the other actors involved. Political leadership makes or breaks the success of political transition. In the Sudan, the leadership is in the hands of two key figures who deeply distrust each other, al-Bashir with his NCP and Salva Kiir with the SPLM. How easy it can escalate between the two sides became clear in November 2006. In the southern town of Malakal fighting broke out between a northern militia group and the SPLA but turned into a three-day warfare between the SPLA and the Sudan Armed Forces when the latter provided the militia group with shelter in its garrison in the town. More than 150 people died and the NCP and SPLM continue accusing each other (Sudan Tribune, 30 November 2006).

#### 5.1.1. President al-Bashir and the National Congress Party

Przeworski (1988) has argued that political elites will only be supportive of a political transition towards democracy if their interests are accommodated for. In the Sudan, the NCP is given the lion's share of power and President al-Bashir is still very powerful. However, the



INC provides for free and fair elections that should bring about a fully representative government. As the popular support for al-Bashir and the NCP is very low, they will probably be unable to remain in power if they act along the rules of the democratic game. Therefore, it seems extremely unlikely that President al-Bashir, who is known as one of the world's worst dictators, will voluntarily hang him by observing the terms of the power-sharing arrangements and facilitate free and fair elections. As will be seen in this paragraph, al-Bashir and the NCP have already started with a strategy of delaying and derailing the implementation of certain provisions in the CPA.

The decision of the NCP to embark on peace negotiations with the SPLM was merely regarded as a political strategy to secure the survival of the regime<sup>16</sup>, normalise its relations with the international community (especially the United States), and continue the oil exploration in the south (ICG, 2006; Rogier, 2005c). President al-Bashir was not directly involved in negotiating the CPA and INC. The current second Vice President Ali Osman Taha was negotiating on behalf of the NCP-government (Rogier, 2005c). President al-Bashir has tried to convince the Sudanese people and the international community that he is supportive of the power-sharing arrangements but it is generally believed that he has been frustrated with the agreements (Sudan Tribune, 15 February 2006). During the formation of the GoNU, al-Bashir awarded several minister posts to NCP members who have been very critical of the power-sharing arrangements and who are known as Islamic hardliners (ICG, 2006; Öhm, 2006). Furthermore, he was reluctant to give minister posts in key ministries like the ministry of energy to the SPLM. Salva Kiir argued that the SPLM should fill the post of energy minister because it would be important to make unity attractive for the south. Al-Bashir refused and argued that the southerners "[...] were going to vote for separation irrespective of whether they had the energy ministry" (in: ICG, 2006:3). He expressed similar frustration when he responded to accusations that the NCP continues to dominate the civil service at national level. Al-Bashir argued that the SPLM has been slow in filling positions in the civil service because the movement would do its very best to slow down steps towards unity in the Sudan (Roughneen, 2007).

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<sup>16</sup> The SPLA was growing in military strength in contrast to the weakening of the government forces. With rising military expenses and a worsening economic situation, al-Bashir feared that the military setbacks of the government forces would lead to growing criticism in the north (Rogier, 2005c).



One year after the INC was adopted, the fear that the NCP would delay the effective implementation of the power-sharing arrangements was confirmed by the country representative of the Friedrich Erbert Stiftung who observed that al-Bashir and his political entourage tried to hamper the full implementation of the power-sharing agreements to such an extent that it was not provocative but at the same time sufficient to prevent political change (Öhm, 2006). Currently, the NCP is thwarting the negotiations on determining the exact border between north and south whereby the heated discussion focuses on demarcating the Abyei area (cf. paragraph 4.1.2.).

The NCP is very much aware of the power it possesses. A representative of the NCP (Khartoum, July 2007) said that “[...] we (the NCP) have the cards of the game in our hands and we have to trust other groups if we want to share the cards with them. We have as well the power to organise elections or not.” A secret strategy of the NCP has revealed that the party will probably not prevent elections to take place but the NCP will try to manipulate the elections. Currently, the NCP is actively approaching imams in the north, student unions, labour unions and women organisations. But the strategy reveals that the NCP hopes to gain most of its votes from women. They are considered easy to convince to vote for the NCP as they are not as strongly affiliated to political parties as men. The NCP has been setting up Quran groups for women through which women can be linked up to the party. A higher percentage of illiteracy among women makes them also easier to convince (Interview with Senior Programme Officer of UNDP, Khartoum, July 2007). Furthermore, the NCP plans to announce a one day voter registration on very short notice. Other political parties will be taken by surprise and it will be too late for them to target their constituencies. Another strategy of the NCP will be to convince other political parties to have two candidates running for elections in every district whereas the NCP plans to have one candidate for every district. This might seem a very transparent strategy but it has good chance of being effective given the internal divisions that characterise most opposition parties (cf. paragraph 5.3) (Interview with Professor at Ahfad University, Omdurman, July 2007). The only thing that could break the position of the NCP is a split between al-Bashir and Taha and this is what many Sudanese have put their hopes on. It is, however, questionable to what extent this will mean a blow to the NCP. It is generally believed that there are several other key figures that hold the power but it is hard to see who exactly because there seem to be many dynamics going on within the NCP (Interviews with a



representative of a CSO and a representative of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, Khartoum, July 2007).

### ***5.1.2. Salva Kiir and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement***

As al-Bashir and the NCP will not voluntarily hang themselves, Salva Kiir and the SPLM must be the forces driving the process of political transition in the Sudan. The International Crisis Group (2006:19) argues that “[...] the future of the Sudan may rest in the ability of the SPLM and other political parties to somehow assuage the fears of the NCP and provide them with a political exit strategy”.

In 2002, when peace talks started to become fruitful between the SPLM and NCP-government, the SPLM was growing in unity and the SPLA in military capacity.<sup>17</sup> However, late Chairman and Commander in Chief John Garang realised that the SPLA would never win a decisive victory over the government forces because of the access of the NCP to oil revenues. Besides, Garang witnessed with growing worry the rapprochement between his long-time ally Uganda and the NCP-government. Most decisive was, however, the growing pressure on Garang from within the SPLM and the population at large to look for a peaceful solution (Rogier, 2005c).

The current Chairman of the SPLM, President of the GoSS, and First Vice President of the GoNU, Salva Kiir has been given the immense challenge to replace Garang after he died in a helicopter crash in July 2005. Garang developed the vision and policies of the SPLM, he enjoyed massive support as leader who transcended the north-south divide and he built up credibility with the NCP with his united Sudan ideology. As he was the co-designer of the CPA and INC, his death resulted in a decreased weight of the SPLM at the national level whereby the NCP saw the opportunity to undermine the agreements. The lack of focus on issues as good governance and development in the CPA and INC shows the extent to which the implementation was supposed to rest on the strength of Garang (Interview with a representative of a CSO, Khartoum, July 2007). Therefore, it is believed by some that the helicopter crash was not an accident but a deliberate act by the NCP to weaken the SPLM (HRW, 2006:3; interviews with representatives of Umma Party and SCP, Omdurman, July 2007). However,

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<sup>17</sup> In January 2002, the SPLM/A signed an agreement with the Sudan People's Defence Force of Riek Machar that ended a ten-year conflict between the Dinka and Nuer groups. As the SPDF soldiers joined the SPLA troops, the SPLA forces were suddenly much stronger. A few weeks later the northern based Muslim Sudanese Allied Forces also decided to join the SPLM/A (Rogier, 2005c).



replacing Garang has not been the only challenge for Salva Kiir. The other challenges relate to the difficulties to transform a rebel group into a political party, and the divisions within the SPLM and in the southern region.

The SPLM with its military wing SPLA was a rebel group for more than two decades. The INC provides for a governance system in which the SPLM is no longer a rebel group but a fully-fledged political party. Such a transformation has been a huge challenge for several reasons. Firstly, the SPLM has lacked institutional capacity to respond quickly to the multiplicity of tasks. Most difficult has been to set up the GoSS and state authorities in a region where a governance system has to be established from scratch. The SPLM was fast in filling the minister posts in the GoSS but has found it difficult to set up a civil service to make the ministries operational. Secondly, political parties should in theory adhere to democratic principles in their operation. The SPLM has a history of central decision-making by a few people whereby accountability and transparency were not a priority. Time is needed to overcome this legacy. Optimism rose briefly when Salva Kiir replaced Garang because he had been critical of Garang's over-centralised leadership with exclusive decision making. Days after Kiir's inauguration as President of the GoSS, he organised grassroots consultations in the south to select the representatives of the SPLM to the National Assembly, Council of States, Southern Sudan Assembly, and Southern State Assemblies. Optimism faded again when Kiir decided on the minister posts for the GoNU and GoSS without much consultation (ICG, 2006).

Another related challenge is the divisions that characterises the SPLM; some of which are the result of an effective divide-and-rule strategy by the NCP. An important source of conflict has been the overrepresentation of the Dinka tribe in the movement. The Dinka tribe is the largest non-Arab ethnic group in the Sudan but comprises just twelve per cent of the total population. The Dinka have continued to control the SPLM and SPLA and this has been a source of conflict with the Nuer tribe in particular, the second largest tribe in the south (Interview with Senior Programme Officer of UNDP, Khartoum, July 2007).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, divisions within the Dinka have also caused some tensions within the SPLM as was shown by the split between John Garang and Salva Kiir, both Dinka, in November 2004. Although the two settled their disagreement before the death of Garang, there still exists a division between

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<sup>18</sup> In the early 1990s, the Dinka dominance within the SPLM and SPLA and the authoritarian rule by Garang resulted in a split whereby Nuer leader Riek Machar formed his own movement, the Sudan People's Democratic Front. Machar sided with the NCP-government in the hope to destroy the SPLM/A but changed his mind when the SPLM embarked on peace talks. Garang included him again within the ranks of the SPLM (Flacks, 2005).



what has become known as the Garangites and Kiires within the SPLM. Salva Kiir has been accused of deliberately appointing newcomers to minister posts instead of appointing the persons who negotiated the CPA and INC and thus excluding those closest to Garang (ICG, 2006). In addition to this, there exists suspicion between the different regions within the south whereby SPLM leaders would appoint people from their own sub-tribes or hometowns to key positions because they trust them most. On several occasions this has led to tensions like for example when Garang appointed several delegates to undergo governance training in South Africa in March 2005. One fourth of the delegates came from the area around the southern town of Bor, the hometown of Garang (ICG, 2005). Also Salva Kiir has created some controversy by appointing a disproportionate number of people from his home area, northern Bahr el-Ghazal, to prominent positions within the GoNU and GoSS (Lokuji, 2006).

Lastly, Salva Kiir faces a challenge to cope with the differences in the south. Although the SPLM presents itself as the most popular representatives of the southern population, in reality the support is not as unanimous as claimed. Many southerners blame the SPLM for the decades of civil war and suffering and are disappointed about the slow reconstruction in the south. Furthermore, the vision of a united Sudan is not understood by many southerners (ref. to paragraph 6.1.3.). The overrepresentation of the Dinka in the GoSS is also a point of frustration to the non-Dinka southerners. Although the southern political organisations are not very credible as opposition to the SPLM, they can take the opportunity to mobilise disappointed and frustrated southerners against the SPLM (Interviews with Senior Programme Officer SPLM, and Professor at Khartoum University and project manager of Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Khartoum, July 2007).

Two years on, it is said that the SPLM is doing well in the southern region but at the expense of the SPLM in the north<sup>19</sup>, its engagement in the GoNU<sup>20</sup>, and the prospects for a united Sudan. Many northerners have put all their hopes on the SPLM to lead the struggle for democracy and justice as embedded in the INC. Besides, large parts of the population in the marginalised regions have looked to the SPLM to establish a more fair allocation of political power and national wealth concerning their regions. However, it increasingly becomes clear

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<sup>19</sup> For instance, Salva Kiir has re-located the SPLM politicians that are believed to be most qualified to the south to serve in the GoSS (Sullivan, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> The SPLM has nine minister posts within the GoNU but these ministers are greatly hampered in their work because they have found themselves on islands within their ministries, surrounded by a NCP-dominated civil service (ICG, 2006).



that the SPLM fails to challenge the NCP within the GoNU. Most notably this is illustrated by the absence of a party position on the crisis in Darfur (ICG, 2006). Only since March 2007, Salva Kiir has increased the pressure on President al-Bashir to facilitate a comprehensive peace agreement and allow United Nation forces into Darfur. This political impotence of the SPLM has resulted in increasing frustration in the other marginalised areas. The Darfur crisis shows the dilemma the SPLM is facing. In order not to endanger the power-sharing arrangements, elections and a referendum on self-determination, the SPLM deems it unwise to take an aggressive stand against the NCP and avoids putting the bounds of the GoNU to a test (Sudan Tribune, 3 March 2007). This was confirmed by a representative of the SPLM who argued that “[...] the SPLM agreed to be a partner so we (the SPLM) have to negotiate instead of opposing them (the NCP)” (Omdurman, July 2007). To further complicate the dilemma for the SPLM, opting for an alliance with opposition parties might imply the collapse of the CPA as all opposition parties complained about the exclusive nature of the CPA. The NCP is more likely to safeguard the CPA (ICG, 2007).

Salva Kiir and the SPLM are certainly more committed to bring about a process of political transition than President al-Bashir and the NCP. In the south it has been rather easy to establish themselves as the political leaders due to the absence of a credible opposition movement. The reality at the national level is different. Their reluctance to challenge the NCP does not only reveal a lack of commitment to a united Sudan but also shows that the SPLM is still struggling to become an effective political party.

### ***5.1.3. Challenges to the Political Leadership***

As there seem no incentives for President al-Bashir and the NCP to guide the Sudan smoothly through a political transition process, the challenges lie on the shoulders of Salva Kiir and the SPLM. These challenges are immense. The NCP is a very unreliable partner for the SPLM. It has proved to be a master in manipulation, divide and rule tactics, it has frequently dishonoured agreements and the NCP is still in control of the military and security organs. But the NCP is not the only challenge for the SPLM which is facing various internal problems. The movement has to transform itself in a coherent political party that adheres to democratic principles. However, at this moment in time, most critical for the SPLM is to stay united and carry out one vision, which means that the SPLM has to overcome the internal differences within the movement based on tribal and regional affiliations in the south. The smooth and peaceful



succession of Garang after his sudden death with a unanimous vote for Salva Kiir gave space for optimism that the SPLM has been sufficiently united and dedicated to the cause of peace and political transition in the south and nationwide. However, most respondents are very pessimistic about the unity within the SPLM and Southern Sudan, and about the prospects for peace, stability and democracy in Southern Sudan in case of secession (Interviews with Professor at Ahfad University and representative of the Umma Party, Omdurman, July 2007).

## **5.2. Opposition Parties and their Challenges**

The importance of an active and strong opposition in a democracy is undisputed. More discussion exists on the desirability of very competitive opposition parties in countries that recover from civil wars. For instance, the idea of power-sharing is based on the conviction that decision-making in ethnic conflict-prone countries should be the result of consensus between all groups in society. This implies that any strong opposition to the government could endanger the transition to peace and democracy (Reilly, 2003). As only two parties agreed on power-sharing in the Sudan and the opposition parties have been granted a very small share in power that only a some of the parties accepted<sup>21</sup>, the call for moderate opposition cannot be justified as much. In order to urge the NCP and SPLM to implement the CPA and apply the INC, opposition parties should play a visible role.

### **5.2.1. Opposition to the Transitional Government**

Currently, there are more than 60 political parties in the Sudan but only half of these are active. They can be characterised as weak and fragmented. Political parties lack the capacity and resources to strengthen their organisations. They lack the basic infrastructure to operate and have severe funding problems. Most parties rely on the financial contributions of their leaders and businessmen (cf. footnote 8). Furthermore, parties lack a political vision. For most parties their political identity is drawn from a regional, ethnic or religious base. As a result many parties do not have a party programme or hire a consultant to write their programme. Furthermore, political parties are lacking a democratic internal organisation. Their existence

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<sup>21</sup> Umma Party and the Popular National Congress of al-Turabi have remained in opposition whereas the SCP and DUP have taken parliament seats that were set aside for northern parties (14 per cent). Only some break-away factions of the DUP and Umma Party joined the NCP and are now part of NCPs 52 per cent. A break-away faction of Umma Party has filled the position of minister of information, the minister of industry is from a break-away faction of the DUP, and the Union of Sudan African Parties and United Democratic Salvation Front - who both represent the interests of southerners in the north - respectively hold the positions of minister of parliamentary affairs and minister of tourism (Gurtong Peace Trust, 2007; ICG, 2007).



depends on a few strong personalities who rule over the party. The centralisation of the parties' power in the hands of one person partly explains why so many political parties have split up in several factions. Local branches of the bigger parties sometimes exist but only become lively during election periods. The members, provided that the party has an official updated membership, are rarely informed in key party decisions and only a few parties give their members the opportunity to endorse the party constitution and the party leadership (IDEA and UNDP, 2006). The fragmented character of many political parties, the absence of a political vision, and their funding problems means that meaningful participation of most political parties during the upcoming elections will be impossible.

The history of some northern political parties dates back to the struggle for independence. The two most important parties are the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which were formed by two powerful Sufi religious sects. They dominated the three democratic periods in the Sudan. However, their coalition governments showed that they were unable to collaborate due to disagreement on nearly every issue and their traditional rivalry. Mariam (2001) asserts that the parties have merely served as vehicles for the political ambitions of the families – al-Mahdi and al-Mirghani – that founded and since then control the two parties. They have used their influence to manipulate public resources to benefit their private interests and the business group affiliated to them.

The right-wing Umma party was founded in 1945 by supporters of the Mahdiyya movement that ruled the Sudan between 1885 and 1898 and is based on the Islamic teachings of the Ansar sect. Until now the party has been headed by the al-Mahdi family and enjoys support in northern and western Sudan. Currently, the most prominent faction of the party is headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi who is also an Imam of the Ansar. Next to the faction led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, there are four other factions of the Umma Party that claim political legitimacy, each led by members of the al-Mahdi family, which shows the rivalry within the family (Mariam, 2001). The internal divisions have hampered the party to do its work as opposition and this has eroded the popular support for the party (Interview with Professor at University Khartoum, Khartoum, July 2007).

The second largest opposition party after the Umma Party is the moderate DUP, formerly the National Union Party (NUP) and later the People's Democratic Party (PDP). It was founded by the spiritual leader of the Khatmiyya Islamic sect, Muhammed Osman al-Mirghani, who decided to join political forces with the Ashigga Party during the struggle for



independence. Today, the al-Mirghani family still heads the DUP. The party enjoyed substantial support throughout northern and eastern Sudan but was never able to outstrip the popularity of the Umma Party (Fleischhacker and Doebbler, 1999). Internal divisions also undermined the political effectiveness of this party. Notables of the party splintered off and formed their own factions (Interviews with Professor at Ahfad University and a representative of the Umma Party, Omdurman, July 2007).

The most important issue of discussion in Sudanese politics has been the (un)desirability to establish an Islamic state. The Umma Party and the DUP have been in favour to apply Sharia law with regard to family matters of Muslims but have opposed the establishment of an Islamic state. Founded in 1946, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) has been the most organised party that has advocated a secular state. The left ideology appealed to students, intellectuals and trade unions and turned the SCP into an important opposition force. In 1971, the SCP was accused of complicity in an abortive coup. It was decimated when the party leaders were executed by the regime of Nimeiri. Following the overthrow of Nimeiri, the SCP reinstated itself and became the only effective opponent to the NCP government because of its activities such as a secretly circulated newspaper and frequent publications (Mariam, 2001). Currently, the SCP plays a marginal role under the leadership of Muhammed Ibrahim Nugud. It supports the democratisation agenda of the CPA and the INC but opposes the possibility of secession of Southern Sudan (Interview with Professor at Khartoum University, Khartoum, July 2007).

Following the military coup in 1989 and the banning of political associations, Umma Party, DUP, SCP and several trade unions decided to join forces in an opposition movement, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The SPLM joined the NDA one year later. The alliance needed several years to clarify its vision so as to be a credible force to challenge the NCP-government. From its headquarters in Asmara and Cairo the alliance found mutual consensus on the issue of separation between state and religion and decided on a draft constitution to be adopted when the NDA parties would rule the Sudan. In order to overthrow the government, the alliance decided on the use of military means to change the regime. However, its military thrusts, whereby the forces tried to invade the country from the east, remained without significant military advances. This, the disagreement on the degree of southern autonomy, and the frustration among the Sudanese with the inability of the NDA to politically challenge the NCP-government resulted in the crippling of the NDA. Following the



split between President al-Bashir and the Islamic hardliner al-Turabi, the Umma Party decided to return to Khartoum and withdrew its membership of the NDA. This left the alliance without the leadership of Sadiq al-Mahdi of the Umma Party which put the NDA further in disarray (Mariam, 2001; Sidahmed and Sidahmed, 2005). Its credibility further eroded when the SPLM joined the GoNU in 2005 (Ahmed, 2007). Currently, the NDA fills 20 seats in parliament (UNDP, 2006).

A determining factor in the Sudan's political history has been Dr. Hassan al-Turabi. Al-Turabi became political active in the early 1960s and has tried everything in his capacity to pursue his goal of an Islamic Sudanese state. He was very influential during the several regimes Sudan has seen. He was the brain behind the coup in 1989 that brought General al-Bashir to power. In 1999, when al-Turabi as Speaker of Parliament tried to reduce the powers of President al-Bashir, a power struggle broke out between the two. Al-Turabi broke away from the NCP and established the Popular National Congress (PNC) in 2000. With supporters from within the NCP-government and the security services, some highly committed politicians, and access to financial resources through an international network, al-Turabi's PNC has posed a constant threat to the NCP-government and later the transitional government.<sup>22</sup> In 2006, al-Turabi was able to convince the Umma Party and the SCP to join forces in a 'Loyal Opposition' to the GoNU (ICG, 2006) but this alliance was soon dissolved. The SCP members were highly unhappy with the alliance as al-Turabi was responsible for the torture of several SCP representatives after the 1989 coup (Interview with representative of the SCP, Omdurman, July 2007).

With Sudan's legacy of religious political parties, political parties are male-dominated. Women's participation in parties is very low; most parties have less than 15 per cent of their positions filled with women. Most parties also lack a clear vision on gender issues in society and only include it during election times because of pragmatic reasons. Also the SPLM has

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<sup>22</sup> In the past al-Turabi was instrumental in polarising the country along religious lines and thereby fuelling the war in the south. When it had become clear to al-Turabi that a peace agreement with the SPLM would be inevitable, he turned to a strategy of polarising the country along racial lines whereby he hoped to drive a wedge between the Arab-dominated NCP-government and the Sudanese Africans. His 'play ground' for this has been Darfur where he encouraged the marginalised black Darfurians ("Africans") to take up weapons against the government. Al-Turabi is suspected to be the brain behind a manuscript that was distributed in Khartoum in 2000 and 2002. *The Black Book: Imbalances of Power and Wealth in Sudan* points out with statistics that Sudan has been ruled by the northern region since 1956. The writers argue that whereas the northern region hosts 5% of the population, it has held 80% of the ministerial posts. Initially, the writers called themselves the "Seekers of Truth and Justice". Only later it became clear that the writers were linked to the black Darfuri rebel group "Justice and Equality Movement" who voiced their grievances through this book (Rogier, 2005b)



found it difficult to increase the participation of women. For instance, the attitude of men within the SPLM has hampered the aim of the party to fill 25 per cent of the positions at all government levels in Southern Sudan with women. The broader inclusion of women in political parties is necessary to give some vibrancy to the parties and encourage a democratic system by involving women in the design and implementation of policies and legislation (Sudan Tribune, 2 August 2007; Interview with Senior Programme Officer of UNDP, Khartoum, July 2007).

In the south, there are no credible opposition parties to the SPLM with only a few small political organisations. In January 2006, an agreement was signed between the SPLM and the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF). The SSDF was an umbrella organisation of southern militia groups that aligned with the NCP to destroy the SPLM. For many years, the NCP exploited its alliance with the SSDF to divide and rule the south by arming the SSDF. The agreement between the SPLM and the bulk of SSDF militia groups has been important to encourage the unity in the south. Salva Kiir appointed the Chairman of the SSDF as the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the SPLA and gave a small number of positions in the GoSS to the SSDF, thereby providing for a better tribal balance in the Dinka-dominated GoSS as the SSDF enjoys wide support among the Nuer tribe (ICG, 2006). The unity in the south will probably be a temporary situation. In the run up to the elections, several small political organisations and certain key figures within the SPLM will see an opportunity to mobilise popular support by pointing at the failures of the SPLM to develop the south, playing the ethnic or regional card or campaigning for secession of Southern Sudan (which the SPLM allowed to do according to the CPA).

### ***5.2.2. Challenges to the Opposition***

In the Sudan, political parties are difficult to grasp given their complex configurations of ideologies, loyalties and policy preferences. One can distinguish Arab nationalists, socialists, communists, religious sectarian loyalists, Islamists and secularists. To add to this complexity, parties have merged and split due to internal divisions. This has resulted in continuous name changes. Ahmed and El Nagar (2003) argue that the family, ethnic and/or religious based leadership of almost all political parties is the biggest problem in the Sudan that has resulted in an underdeveloped political awareness. Their inability to cooperate, as shown in the previous democratic periods, is a problem for their involvement in the political transition process and has implied that they lost much of their credibility among their supporters. The opposition



parties have further been weakened during the authoritarian regime of the NCP when all political parties had to operate clandestinely or in exile. In the absence of credible northern opposition parties and a viable political organisation in the south, the opposition has largely failed to challenge the GoNU and in particular the NCP. During the upcoming elections, it is likely that opposition parties will form coalitions. Especially the smaller parties will realise that it is necessary for them to cooperate in order to form a credible opposition to the ruling parties but also to the influence and power of the Umma Party and the DUP. How viable these coalitions will prove remains highly questionable. A representative of the NCP (Khartoum, July 2007) made clear that the party is not worried about the possibility of alliances. “[W]e are not afraid of alliances between political parties because they cannot work together. They rely on their charismatic leaders that pursue their own personal ambitions.” The weakness of opposition parties has increased the pressure on the SPLM to play the role of opposition party to the NCP whereas, at the same time, present itself as a credible and committed partner to the NCP.

### **5.3. Civil Society and its Challenges**

The weak and fragmented opposition parties in the Sudan and the state formation in progress has left a large gap that could be filled by active civil society organisations. Civil society includes non-governmental organisations, community organisations, professional associations, trade unions, religious organisations, independent press and human rights organisations. Strong organisations like this can give Sudanese citizens the possibility to keep an eye on the government, press the government partners to implement the agreements and deliver results.

#### ***5.3.1. Civil Society in the Transitional Process***

Fifteen years of repression under the authoritarian regime of the NCP and several decades of civil war in the south did not only leave behind weak political parties but an equally weak civil society that lacks the capabilities and social anchorage to effectively influence the political developments. A Professor at Khartoum University (Khartoum, July 2007) argued that many Civil Society Organisations (CSO) are nothing more than one-man shows, run by elites that are based in Khartoum and often do not have links with their grassroots.

Until the coup in 1989, civil society in northern Sudan was described as strong and vibrant. It played a key role in bringing down the authoritarian regimes of General Abboud in



1964 and General Nimeiri in 1985. The Sudanese trade unions in particular were known as among the most active in Africa and the Middle East.<sup>23</sup> With President al-Bashir coming to power, non-governmental organisations, trade unions and the media became subject to a harsh repression. Legislation was adopted that restricted and repressed any organisation that was considered a potential threat to the regime whereby the NCP also penetrated trade unions by imposing its own leadership. As a result, the organisations that remained did this by keeping a political low profile, avoiding human rights activities and focusing on service delivery (De Waal and Ajawin, 2002).

After the break away of al-Turabi in 1999, President al-Bashir gradually started to ease the regime's control over civil society. He eased the repression on freedom of speech, which gave more freedom to the media. Journalists were less frequently jailed, nonetheless experiencing a lot of harassment. In the current transitional period, there is more freedom of speech and freedom to set up political organisations but also now politically motivated arrests continue to be daily practice and media restrictions still exist. The International Crisis Group (2007) claims that an increase in arrests of journalists and reporting bans on sensitive issues was seen in the first half of 2007 (cf. footnote 13). For instance, in May 2007, an independent daily newspaper was closed down for several days by the minister of justice because the newspaper had accused him of money-laundering. The same newspaper already had fallen prey to harassments by authorities on several occasions in 2006 (Sudan Tribune, 17 May 2007). In July 2007, the government banned all reporting on the arrest of 17 politicians and military officers accused of planning a coup (Sudan Tribune, 26 July 2007).

Human rights activism by domestic groups has also increased, following the growing condemnation of the NCP regime by international human right groups. Human rights activists experienced less harassment after the break away of al-Turabi as was illustrated by the statement of a Sudanese human rights activist in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States. The activist said in the Washington Post that “[...] undemocratic and unaccountable governments are the breeding ground for the kind of social unrest that gives rise to terrorism” (in: Peterson, 2002:65). The fact that he was not jailed for this showed that there has been growing political space. In the same period, initiatives started to emerge among southerners living in the north. After experiencing discrimination and repression for many

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<sup>23</sup> For an extensive historic overview of trade unionism in the Sudan, see p126-132 in: Sidahmed, A.S. and Sidahmed, A. (2005) *Sudan. The Contemporary Middle East*, New York, Routledge Curzon.



years, they have become more aware of their rights and have started to demand for it (Peterson, 2002). Nevertheless, the prohibition to report on human rights violations committed in Darfur and the arrests and torture of journalists who did, has shown that the NCP wanted to avoid an international outcry of the severe human rights violations in Darfur (Flint and De Waal, 2005).

Although repression was much more severe in the north during the NCP authoritarian rule, civil society was not free either in its operations in the south for a long time. The SPLM only allowed those advocacy organisations on its territory that confirmed their support for the SPLM. In addition, four decades of civil war and the fact that the majority of civil society organisations were donor-driven, weakened civil society activism in the south (De Waal and Ajawin, 2002). However, a culture of community activities is deeply rooted in the Southern Sudan because decades of civil war forced the southerners to be self-reliant. This explains why civil society started to flourish in the south in the run-up to the CPA. Several organisations began operating on programmes such as women's rights, education, and youth empowerment. The New Sudan Council of Churches has tried to encourage civil society organisations to go beyond their service delivery activities by convening a Sudan Civil Society Forum with its northern counterpart (Sudan Council of Churches). By bringing civil society organisations together, the Council hopes to join forces to press for respect for human rights and democracy (Peterson, 2002). The Council has gained trust among the southern population because of its success to mediate reconciliation between the Dinka and Nuer by bringing traditional elders together in 1999. The Council was the only civil society group that was allowed by the SPLM to continue its work with relative independence in Southern Sudan (Flacks, 2005).

Sudan's rich history of civil activism suggests that if civil society is given the opportunity, it will rapidly re-merge and regain much of its former strength. In this respect it was a missed opportunity to exclude civil society organisations during the peace negotiations that led to the CPA. Not only because their participation would have contributed to strengthened civil society organisations but also because it would have made the peace process more inclusive. Nevertheless, since 2005, civil society activism is flourishing in the north and south of Sudan. Donors have been eager to foster this development. They have launched numerous initiatives to strengthen CSOs by capacity-building, informing them about the power-sharing arrangements and training them in how they can make a difference. These programmes reflect the belief of the international community that a vibrant civil society is indispensable to attain a democratic future with respect for human rights in the Sudan



(Interview with Senior Programme Officer of UNDP). In order to attain this goal, three conditions have to be met. Firstly, there should exist some degree of political willingness to enable a vibrant civil society. However, CSOs are still looked at with suspicion, especially those organisations that are considered to pose a threat to political stability. Secondly, CSOs need to have the financial capacity to be able to have some influence. Lastly, there should be legal provisions for civil society. Currently, there are nine laws dealing with CSOs and this is very confusing (Interview with Professor at Juba University, Khartoum, July 2007). The most recent law on non-governmental organisations has been subject to heavy criticism as it requires that every proposal of CSOs and their funding should be approved by the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (Interview with Senior Programme Officer of UNDP, Khartoum, July 2007).

It remains, however, to be seen how much influence civil society can have in a regime where one party is anti-democratic and the other has never experienced or experimented with democracy. A Umma Party representative (Omdurman, July 2007) pointed out that the emphasis of donors on civil society that engages in lobby and advocacy is dangerous in the Sudan. The new emerging CSOs are not involved in service delivery and the gap has been filled by Islamic groups of which some are affiliated to the NCP. This gives the NCP the opportunity to portray itself as a benefactor. In July 2007, floods caused severe human suffering and a CSO run by the wife of President al-Bashir got actively involved in supporting the flood victims. Development has become a key word for the NCP. Two respondents from the NCP continuously stressed the importance to invest in infrastructure, reduce unemployment and improve health care (Interviews with a NCP representative). A respondent from UNDP (Khartoum, July 2007) argues that this is an important strategy of the NCP in order to win the elections in 2009. The respondent added that the SPLM is also trying to get electoral support by supporting development programmes. In July 2007, the SPLM announced its commitment to financially support an Islamic CSO in a Sufi religious neighbourhood in Khartoum.

### **5.3.2. Challenges to Civil Society**

Civil society lost all its strength during the 15 year authoritarian rule by the NCP. Despite the proliferation of CSOs since the CPA was signed, CSOs are not able to challenge the government and press for implementation of the CPA. The result has been financially strong CSOs affiliated to the NCP and weak independent CSOs. Ahmed and El Nagar (2003:112) have qualified Sudanese CSOs as being in “an embryonic phase”. Some experiments have been



launched to unite CSOs in so-called umbrella organisations. However, it has proved difficult to keep these network organisations active. The main challenge of CSOs in the Sudan is to strengthen their capacity, to start working with their grassroots, increase their financial capacity, and find a good balance between service delivery and advocacy activities. On the government side, there is the task to ease the restrictions on the registration of CSOs and also to ease the control on the funding of CSOs (Interview with Professor at University Khartoum, Khartoum, July 2007).

#### **5.4. The International Community and its Challenges**

The 'international community' is a rather loose term that has various meanings depending on the context. In aid dependent countries the international community is often a synonym for the western donor countries and organisations. They form a group because they have certain principles, values and interests in common. In the Sudan, the situation is more complicated where various international communities seem to exist. Firstly, there are the countries, international institutions and organisations that aim to introduce principles as human rights, democracy and peace in the Sudan. This group is, however, divided on the degree of pressure that should be exercised on the regime. Secondly, there is a group of countries that have business interests in the Sudan and that abstain from interference in its political affairs. A last group is the neighbouring countries of the Sudan, which can barely be classified as a group because of their different interests and loyalties.

##### ***5.4.1. The International Community in the Transitional Process***

The peace agreement and power-sharing arrangements are largely the result of the persistence of some members of the international community to bring the war to an end. Peace negotiations took place under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD).<sup>24</sup> The IGAD member countries were increasingly worried by the destabilising policies of the NCP-government and its support to Islamic movements in the region. Besides, they recognised that the development in their countries was influenced by the ongoing war in the Sudan (ISS, 2004). However, the efforts of IGAD suffered too much from changing interests and loyalties

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<sup>24</sup> IGAD is a regional organisation in East Africa that focuses on development and conflict resolution in the region. Currently, it has six members: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan, and Uganda. On 21 April 2007, Eritrea suspended its membership due to its disagreement with other member countries of IGAD on how to deal with the crisis in Somalia (New Vision, 22 April 2007).



of its members, and mistrust between them. The involvement of the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway (the so-called 'Troika Friends of Sudan') was important to reassert value and seriousness to the faltering IGAD process. Together with the IGAD members they increased pressure on the NCP and SPLM to agree on the CPA (Rogier, 2005c).

As was very much predictable, the political engagement of IGAD, the 'Troika Friends of Sudan' and other international actors soon faded after the GoNU was installed. This was exaggerated by the crisis in Darfur that further distracted the attention of the international community and drained funding away for the implementation. Furthermore, the death of John Garang decreased the attention of the international community. Garang was an expert in raising international attention through the network he built up. Salva Kiir lacked the expertise and networks to sustain the involvement of the international community. He has failed to publicly call for a more intrusive role for international actors (ICG, 2006).

An important reason for the declining international involvement in the implementation is that the CPA does not provide for a clear description of the role of the international community. A United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has been established following the signing of the CPA with close to 10.000 military personnel. Its main task is to monitor and support the implementation of the CPA. UNMIS publishes every month a detailed report on the latest developments in the implementation of the CPA. Problematic is that it lacks the mandate for any follow-up action. The fact that there was a vacuum of 10 months between the moment former United Nations special representative and head of UNMIS Jan Pronk was expelled from the Sudan and the appointment of Ashraf Qazi as the new special representative also contributed to a deteriorated weight of UNMIS monitoring. Furthermore, UNMIS has a facilitating role in the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced people and is involved in de-mining activities. In addition, UNMIS is tasked to provide logistical and political support to the African Union Mission in Darfur, which has distracted the attention of UNMIS for its main task in regard to the CPA (ICG, 2007:13; Resolution 1590, 2005; Sudan Tribune, 30 August 2007).

Currently, some countries are represented in several commissions of which the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) is the most important.<sup>25</sup> The Commission

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<sup>25</sup> The AEC has 13 members with representatives from Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Kenya, 3 NCP members, and 3 SPLM members. In addition, there are four observers from the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the Arab League. The Commission is chaired by



meets in a plenary session once a month. The reports of these sessions are not made public. The tasks of the Commission are to monitor the progress in implementing the agreements in the CPA and to advise the Presidency on how to improve the CPA arrangements and institutions in order to make unity attractive. Problematic for the functioning of the AEC is the absence of mechanisms to hold the NCP and SPLM accountable. As the two parties are also member of the Commission, the effectiveness of the AEC depends very much on the willingness of the two parties to cooperate. Besides, there is a problem of frequent absence of the NCP and SPLM representatives due to their busy agendas which has inhibited the work of the AEC (Interview with AEC representative, Khartoum, July 2007). In addition to the AEC, the World Bank has brought the GoNU, GoSS, several international organisations and donor countries together in the Sudan Consortium. The Consortium has been organised twice and was instrumental in reaching consensus on development priorities.<sup>26</sup> In March 2007, during a second Consortium, the participants agreed that capacity-building of all levels of government is very important. They further acknowledged that a solution for the Darfur crisis is a precondition for successful implementation of the CPA (UNMIS, March 2007; World Bank, 2007a).

The effectiveness of the international community in the Sudan is heavily undermined by the diversity of the actors, which makes coordination of its involvement and information-sharing a challenge. Representatives have different mandates and for some countries there are interests at play that make them hesitant to cooperate with other international actors and wary to put too much pressure on the Sudanese parties. This has frequently led to infighting within the international community and hampered initiatives to form a united block (ICG, 2006). The disagreement among international actors to tackle the Darfur crisis shows the dynamics at play. Several countries with a business interest in the Sudan like China, India and Middle Eastern countries are opposed to meddle in what they call a domestic affair. But there is not only disagreement between Western countries and the new international players such as China and India but also between the Western players. For instance, it is widely believed in the Sudan that

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the Norwegian Ambassador Tom Vraalsen. There are four Working Groups: Power-Sharing chaired by Italy; Wealth-Sharing chaired by the United States; Security Arrangements chaired by the United Kingdom; and the Three Areas (Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei) chaired by the Netherlands (UNMIS, March 2007).

<sup>26</sup> In 2005, 14 donors and the World Bank agreed on bringing their aid to Sudan together in two Multi Donor Trust Funds (MDTF). The funds in the MDTF-National are used for development and reconstruction projects that focus on war-affected areas in the north of the Sudan, mainly Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei. The MDTF-Southern Sudan provides for funding for projects in the south. The aid for Darfur is not managed through these MDTFs (World Bank, 2007b).



the security and oil interests of the United States outweigh their concerns with the humanitarian situation in different parts of the country. Sudanese newspapers regularly speculate about intelligence cooperation whereby security information is shared between the Sudanese Security Service and the American Central Intelligence Agency (Sudan Tribune, 13 March 2007).

Another category in the international community is the neighbouring countries of the Sudan. The Sudan has nine neighbours which all have their own interests in regard to the Sudan. Egypt is opposed to an autonomous Southern Sudan because of its dependence on the Nile River and an independent Southern Sudan would mean another stakeholder that can make claims on the water (ICG, 2002). In the past, President Gaddafi of Libya used the Khartoum government and Darfur as an intermediary to annex Chad, which was Gaddafi's first step in reaching his dream to merge several northern African countries in one Arab state. As a result, he promoted the idea of Arab supremacy in the region and was involved in arm deals with the Khartoum governments<sup>27</sup> For Ethiopia and Eritrea it is important to have a good relationship with the NCP because this can be of decisive importance when a war resumes between Eritrea and Ethiopia. For many years, Uganda supported the SPLM and only suspended it in 2002 when the NCP stopped its support to the Ugandan rebel group the Lord Resistance Army. More than once the support to one of the warring parties was more than just moral support. Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Libya have all been involved in providing military training, artillery or financial means to the NCP or SPLM. Currently, the same is happening in Darfur where the Chad government is supporting some Darfurian rebel groups with financial and military means (ISS, 2004; Young, 2002).

The deliberate moral and military support by some of the Sudan's neighbours has had a destabilising effect. Another destabilising factor has been the weak state control of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Uganda in their regions bordering the Sudan. In these regions rebel groups are active like the Lord Resistance Army and the Mbororo Nomads, there is a proliferation of arms, poaching activities, cross border insurgences with ethnic affiliations happen regularly, and there are uncontrolled movements of people and goods across the borders. For instance, the 1200 kilometre long border between the Central African Republic and the Sudan only has three official border posts. This has had a negative impact on the stability in the Sudan (Great Lakes Conflict Early Alert Report, 2007).

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<sup>27</sup> For an explanation of Libya's relations with the Sudan and its role in the Darfur crisis, see p 33-65 in: Flint, J. and De Waal, A. (2005) *Darfur, A Short History of a Long War*, London and New York, Zed Books Ltd.



Since the signing of the CPA in 2005, the neighbouring countries have not been pushing for implementation of the CPA. Only recently, some neighbouring countries start to realise that the implementation of the CPA is showing some gaps. In April 2007, several ministers of foreign affairs in East Africa called for an urgent IGAD summit on the implementation delays (Sudan Tribune, 14 April 2007) but this has not taken place yet. Lately, Kenya has appointed its former President Daniel Arap Moi as its Peace Envoy to the Sudan. He has the task to push the NCP and SPLM to fully implement the CPA (Sudan Tribune, 25 July 2007).

#### ***5.4.2. Challenges to the International Community***

At this moment in time it is crucial that international actors reengage themselves in the implementation of the CPA by pushing the unwilling NCP and weak SPLM to find solutions to blocked issues as Abyei, north-south demarcation and security. This implies first that the international actors find common ground among themselves and increase their thorough understanding of the situation in the Sudan. It also implies that more funding has to be freed to push the implementation process. With the upcoming elections, efforts should be undertaken to strengthen political parties in the Sudan. As discussed earlier in this chapter, all opposition parties have problems in funding, lack a vision or a party programme, and have been effectively undermined by divide-and-rule tactics of the NCP. Lastly, in order to make unity attractive increased funding has to become available to promote development in Southern Sudan.

#### **5.5. Conclusion**

In the Sudan, the political actors face enormous challenges during the transitional period as outlined in the CPA and INC. With President al-Bashir and the NCP as potentially the biggest spoilers, the success of the political transition is fully dependent on the SPLM. But the SPLM is facing several problems itself. It has to transform from a rebel movement to a political party and has to overcome its internal differences. Furthermore, opposition parties lack credibility. They are fragmented, lack financial resources, lack a political vision and have proved to be unable to cooperate. Immense work has to be done within the political parties that should critically reflect on themselves. For the upcoming elections it is important that they put their party interests aside, build a strong alliance with other opposition parties and develop a strategy to beat the NCP. But in case they win the elections, the parties are facing the challenge to



change their impotent nature. Among many other things, they have to work out a development strategy for the country and members of parliament have to learn to work for their constituencies. The role of civil society at this stage of the transitional period can be put into question. It is too weak to take up an advocacy role but should try to fill the enormous gap of development needs. For international actors it is important that they reengage themselves in the CPA implementation and assist political parties to strengthen their capacity and provide sufficient funding for development activities.



## **6. Conclusion: A Challenging Political Transition Process in the Sudan**

The objective of this paper is to give an answer to the following central question:

*To what extent has a process of political transition from authoritarian to democratic rule unfolded in the Sudan and what role are political actors playing in this?*

In the previous chapters the Sudan's history of dictatorships, short-lived democracies and civil wars, the power-sharing arrangements that brought the Second Civil war to an end, and the role of political actors have been discussed in detail. This is the necessary background to draw some conclusions in this chapter on the question to what extent the Sudan is experiencing a political transition. Paragraph 6.1 draws conclusions on three important issues: political transition, democracy and unity. Paragraph 6.2 identifies the main opportunities and challenges in the political transition process. Paragraph 6.3 raises some critical views on the transition paradigm.

### **6.1. Political Transition, Democracy and Unity in the Sudan?**

The first sub-paragraph assesses the character of the political transition in the Sudan and the role of political power-sharing in this transition. In the subsequent sub-paragraph the prospects of democracy in the Sudan are discussed. Lastly, the perspective and feasibility of a united Sudan comes up for discussion. Although this issue has not been the focus of this paper, it cannot be disregarded because of its importance for the future of the Sudan.

#### **6.1.1. Political Transition in the Sudan: Reality or Sham?**

With the political power-sharing arrangements a political transition process has unfolded. A transitional government has come into being wherein the NCP and SPLM share power. The question is how much has changed. For a majority of the Sudanese citizens nothing has changed and they continue to use 'the government' in their speeches when they refer to the NCP. This shows that political transition requires more than a change of the central government. It is a process that should go all the way to the local government level as a representative of a CSO emphasised (Khartoum, July 2007). A professor of Khartoum University (Khartoum, July 2007) asserted that "[...] it is very much the same as before but



with a different cover”. Another respondent of the British Embassy (Khartoum, July 2007) said that it is “[...] political transition without any transformation”.

The power-sharing arrangements are very much in favour of the NCP. It holds a majority of 52 per cent in the cabinet and national assembly and although the INC urges that decisions are taken by consensus it does only provide for minority veto over amendments to the constitution and not over bills. This contradicts an important principle of power-sharing as Lijphart envisages it. Furthermore, the NCP has directed a deadlock over the demarcation of the Abyei area and the exact north/south border. The Darfur crisis, arrests of journalists over dam protests, and the recent expulsion of western diplomats and the country director of an international humanitarian organisation<sup>28</sup> also illustrate that power remains to rest with the NCP. The influence and power of the SPLM on other than southern affairs is limited and it is doubtful to what extent the SPLM under its current leadership is dedicated to make an effort of a political transition at the national level. In order not to endanger the provisions of the CPA, the SPLM has not yet put a lot of pressure on the NCP, which is also difficult as there are no mechanisms to hold the NCP to account. This shows the weakness of power-sharing as was pointed out in paragraph 2.2. It discourages opposition and contestation which will hamper a consolidation of democracy in the long term.

The continued dominant role of the NCP justifies qualifying the political transition in the Sudan as a sham: nothing more than a cosmetic change. Political transition is only a reality for southern Sudanese whereas the exclusive character of the power-sharing arrangements has implied that the Sudanese in the east, north and west of the country are on the losing side. The CPA has failed to offer a solution to what is at the core of the social tensions in the Sudan: the marginalisation of the periphery by elite from the centre. It seems that the CPA has resulted in the opposite, namely, the consolidation of power of a specific group within the elite by giving it legitimacy to rule.

### **6.1.2. Doubts about a Democratic Sudan**

The CPA and INC both emphasise the goal to establish democratic governance in the Sudan. The freedom to establish and run political parties, the increased freedom of the press, and the

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<sup>28</sup> In August 2007, the charge d'affaires of the Canadian Embassy and the head of the European Commission's Delegation in the Sudan were accused of "interfering in Sudan's internal affairs" and were expelled. In the same week, the country director of CARE was expelled after being accused of "espionage activities" (Sudan Tribune, 28 August 2007).



growth of CSOs show that some liberalisation has taken place. In two years, national elections are expected to introduce a president, cabinet, national assembly, state authorities and local government with democratic legitimacy.

Doubts can be raised about the development of democratic governance in the Sudan, given the current political situation and the political history. This situation and history are not peculiar to the Sudan but experienced in many African countries and explain why some scholars have urged to abandon on the political transition paradigm. Firstly, there is no deeply rooted democratic culture and no well established democratic institutions in the Sudan. Political history since independence has shown that democratic periods have never been long-lived. Secondly, Sudanese political parties are weak in regard to their internal governance structures, party programmes, financial resources, and suffer from self-interested leadership. The SPLM is struggling to transform itself in a political party and is facing several internal problems. In contrast, the NCP is a well-organised and experienced party. Thirdly, an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust hampers political parties to cooperate and establish durable coalitions. Fourthly, a democratic Sudan will imply that the NCP loses its grip on power because of a lack of support among the population. As a result, the NCP is likely to prevent free and fair elections to take place and try its very best to win the elections through manipulation. In this case, elections will give the NCP democratic legitimacy.

Several respondents pointed out that speculating about democracy in the Sudan is premature. Instead, they argue that the chances for durable peace should be the point of concern. There is fear for a resumption of war. The Abyei area and other areas on the north/south border can become heavily contested areas. Besides, marginalised groups have seen with the signing of the CPA that violent insurrections can result in political and economic power-sharing deals.

### ***6.1.3. The Unity Project in a Divided Society***

The CPA emphasises that a united Sudan remains the priority of the NCP and SPLM. Two years on there are no signs that the parties are trying to make unity attractive. The NCP seems to believe that there is no chance that the south will vote for unity and is accusing the SPLM to work towards secession. In the meanwhile, the NCP tries to delay the implementation of the CPA and siphon as much wealth from the south as possible (Ahmed, 2007).



John Garang was known for his vision of a “New Sudan” whereby “[...] religion and state are constitutionally separated, and where freedoms, liberty, equality, and human rights are granted and respected—a democratic Sudan that belongs to all the Sudanese people” (in: Sudan Tribune, 7 December 2006). Therefore, Garang made himself and the SPLM very popular in other marginalised regions in the Sudan. The aspirations of the SPLM under the leadership of Salva Kiir are much less clear as the party’s attitude seems to be that the NCP is the only partner that should make unity attractive to the southerners. Officially, Salva Kiir has been in favour of a united Sudan but, as mentioned in the last chapter, he is blamed for focusing his attention too much on the GoSS and failing to challenge its NCP partner in the GoNU, which has led to the general conviction that Salva Kiir is aspiring the separation of Southern Sudan.

Critical observers agree that the unity project has very little chance. The north and south do not share a common identity; there is very little that united them. After years of fierce fighting in which both parties aimed to destroy the other, the NCP and SPLM have decided to cooperate together. But they remain strange bedfellows who do not reach out across their divisions and respond to cross-group issues. Instead, they continuously point out the failures of their partner. Ahmed (2007:16) asserts that “[...] in case the referendum takes place in time the vote for separation is a forgone conclusion”. Both parties are not committed to the idea of unity and the people in Southern Sudan will almost unanimously vote for secession if given the chance as was also shown by a survey conducted by the National Democratic Institute among 32 focus groups in Southern Sudan (National Democratic Institute, 2006). Opposition parties still seem to be convinced that they can keep the country together if they cooperate with the SPLM and win the elections in 2008 (Interviews with representative of the Umma Party and SCP, Omdurman, July 2007). Ahmed (2007:18) points out that this scenario requires “tremendous efforts” whereby the political parties have to “[...] start from the premises of acknowledging and positively addressing what divides the population of the country and promoting what unite them”. This requires political commitment and vision, something that has been lacking in Sudan’s political history.

In contrast to the unity goal, critical observers predict more political fragmentation. Al Hardallu argues that “the country is broken” (2006:7). There is the danger that the country splits into pieces instead of a Northern and Southern Sudan. In the north, marginalised populations as the Beja people, Darfurians, Nubians and the population in the Nuba Mountains will not accept a continuation of the old regime. Ethnic tensions are also likely to rise in the



south which will endanger a peaceful and united Southern Sudan (Interviews with representative of the Umma Party, Professor at Ahfad University, and representative of the British Embassy, Khartoum and Omdurman, July 2007).

## **6.2. Opportunities and Challenges for Political Transition in the Sudan**

This paper has made clear that a lot of challenges lie ahead to make the political transition process that has slowly unfolded successful. The opportunities are few, which underlines again how challenging a political transition is in the Sudan. To evaluate the main perils and possibilities for successful political transition and sustainable peace in the Sudan, the S.W.O.T analysis is applied in this paragraph. This tool highlights the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats given the current situation in the Sudan.



## S.W.O.T. Analysis of the Challenges in the Sudan's Political Transition

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ SPLM remained united after dead of John Garang</li><li>▪ Re-emergence of a vibrant civil society</li></ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Continued NCP dominance despite CPA</li><li>▪ Undeveloped opposition parties</li><li>▪ Self-interested leadership of political parties</li><li>▪ Strong ethnic and regional affiliations in Southern Sudan</li><li>▪ No cross-group cooperation</li><li>▪ Lack of trust between political actors</li><li>▪ Disagreement in the international community</li><li>▪ Weak civil society</li></ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Opposition cooperates in run up to elections</li><li>▪ Internal fighting in NCP</li><li>▪ Re-engagement of international actors</li><li>▪ Civil society focuses on service delivery</li><li>▪ Awareness-raising on CPA</li></ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Continued marginalisation &amp; underdevelopment</li><li>▪ Deadlock over Abyei &amp; border demarcation</li><li>▪ Delay in withdrawal of armed forces</li><li>▪ Elections impossible with Darfur conflict</li><li>▪ NCP expertise in divide-and-rule tactics</li><li>▪ Political figures to play the ethnic card</li><li>▪ Prevalence of arms in the region</li><li>▪ Neighbouring countries acting as spoilers</li><li>▪ Immense challenges: poverty, food insecurity, desertification, poor health services, reconstruction, refugees, internally displaced people, de-mining etc.</li></ul>



### 6.3. Conclusion

The Sudan has moved away from a dictatorial and one-party regime but still has a long way to go in the political transition process that has as ultimate goal to establish democratic governance. Two years since a transitional government has been installed, there are signs that in the best scenario the Sudan gets stuck somewhere in the “gray zone” or in the worst scenarios will fall back into an authoritarian regime or total chaos. The Sudan suffers from the two characteristics of countries that experience failed political transitions as identified by Carothers (cf. paragraph 2.3). Firstly, self-interested elite without a vision on the development of the Sudan continue to reproduce themselves in power. Secondly, an alternation of power is unlikely with the NCP as the only well-organised political party with experience and a clear goal, namely, to stay in power. This raises criticism on political transitions that are pushed through by international actors but once under way left without guidance by the same international actors. In the case of the Sudan, the externally engineered and driven political transition shows ignorance by international actors who lack an informed understanding of the political situation.



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