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What Is Behind The Sudan Peace Reversal?

by Uwe Friesecke and Lawrence Freeman

In a sudden and dangerous turn of events, the Sudanese peace process that was so highly praised in July, has collapsed. Not only that, but now the very existence of the government in Khartoum is threatened. Only six weeks after the government of Sudan and the southern rebels of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) had reached an agreement, in the Kenyan city of Machakos, on how to end the civil war that has wracked the country since 1983, the follow-up talks collapsed in the first week of September. This came as the rebels captured Torit in southern Sudan on Sept. 1, and repulsed 4,000 government troops. The government delegation announced it was breaking off talks, and returned to Khartoum.

It is common knowledge in Washington and Khartoum that the United States had applied heavy pressure to both sides to broker the peace deal, with former Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) making several trips to the region as special negotiator for President Bush. The most likely reason for the pressure to end the war, was to create the basis for U.S. oil companies to get a piece of the growing production of Sudanese oil. The strategy of the Utopian faction in this Administration is to secure Africa as a new oil reserve, in preparation for initiating a war against Iraq—a war that will spark a Clash of Civilizations confrontation with the Arab and Islamic nations.

Southern Capital Threatened

Sudanese President Gen. Omar al-Bashir called for an immediate mobilization of the armed forces, with the aim of retaking Torit, through massive reinforcements in the south, made possible by airlifts. It has become clear to the government, that behind the façade of peace negotiations, SPLA leader John Garang had been planning a major offensive, whose objective is to conquer the most strategically important city in the south, Juba, which lies only 150 kilometers from Torit. One SPLA spokesman told BBC on Sept. 10, "We are actually moving to Juba . . . from multiple directions."

According to reports, the SPLA deployed over 9,000 troops to take Torit—a massive force. The logistical requirements alone, mean that it was aided by Uganda, as well as by Garang's Western backers, the United Kingdom and the United States. Torit is only 100 kilometers from the Ugandan border. Thus, the strategic planning of the SPLA and its backers, is that if they succeed in capturing Juba, the division of the country into north and south will be complete. Juba is considered the capital of the south, both technically and symbolically, because the entire south is administered from there. If Garang can march into Juba, he will have established irreversible facts on the ground for future negotations.

These dramatic military advances have confirmed warnings, particularly from the Egyptian government, that the "peace" agreement signed in July was a step in the direction of partitioning the country, which Egypt has consistently rejected. But it has also confirmed the fears of the skeptics in Khartoum, now that it has become obvious that the Machakos agreement was signed only as the result of massive pressure from Washington and London.

The Machakos protocol would allow autonomy for southern Sudan for six years; thereafter, a referendum would be held for the south to choose whether it wanted to separate itself from Sudan. An included provision was that Islamic legal code, *Shari'a*, would only apply to the north. This agreement was almost identical to the government's 1997 peace offer, but at that time the Anglo-American financial elites did not have such an immediate interest as they do today, in getting their hands on oil from West Africa, Angola, the Congo, and Sudan.

Riek Machar, Garang's deputy, told a Nairobi newspaper on Aug. 29, that "U.S. pressure on the Sudanese government

was behind its acceptance of the option of negotiations with the SPLM and of the recognition of the right of Sudan's southerners to determine their future." President Bashir and his government are faced with the evidence, that protestations of peace for Africa coming from the United Kingdom and United States are not to be trusted. In fact, the United States said it was "deeply disappointed" by the government's having pulled out of the talks. And the SPLA representative in Nairobi, Samson Kwaje, stated that his movement had not come under any "international" pressure to withdraw from Torit.

After violating the agreement by seizing Tobit, the SPLM/A has also reneged on the main features of the Kenya agreement, and is now intent on taking as much territory as possible during the rainy season before the land hardens, and conditions will be more propitious for government troops.

What Does the New Offensive Mask?

Simultaneous with the breaking of the peace agreement, the U.S. Congress has rewritten the misnamed "Sudan Peace Act" to remove the controversial provision concerning security sales on U.S. markets, and added provisions that allow President Bush to impose harsh sanctions, block financial aid to the Khartoum government, and provide the south with $100 million, if peace is not secured within six months.

Sudan has also became the target of an inflammatory propaganda campaign to try to link it to President Bush's war against al-Qaeda, by alleging that al-Qaeda and the Taliban hide their funds in gold kept in Sudan.

Even as pressure was being applied to force an agreement in Sudan, and Sudan was being complimented for supporting Bush's anti-terrorism crusade, the Bush Administration never ceased its attacks on Sudan for alleged human rights violations and so-called slavery.

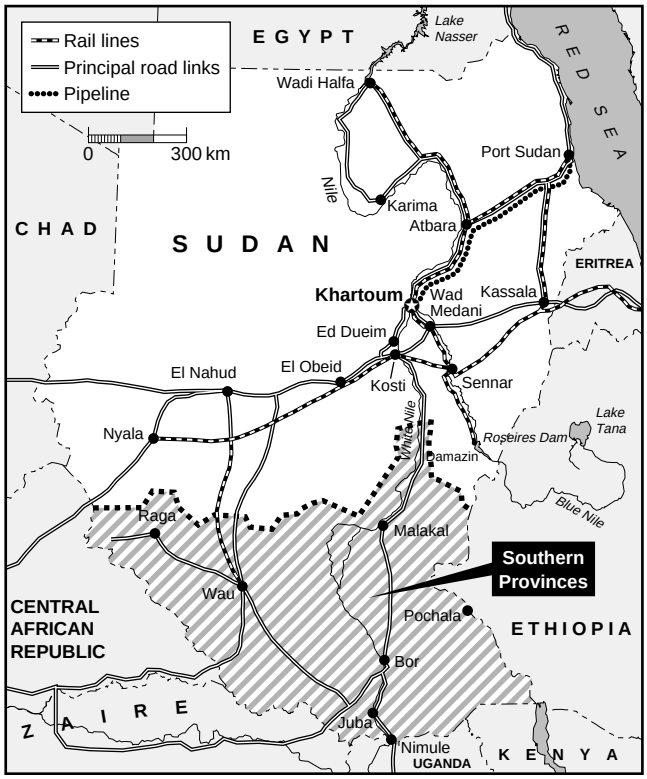
The movement of such a large military force would most likely not have gone unnoticed, if the government had not been coaxed by the United States into believing that Garang was, at long last, "sincerely" for peace. This raises the question of U.S. culpability, inasmuch as the United States was recognized, with the British, as being the primary broker of the peace deal.

The Bush Administration is not only interested in Sudan's oil, but also wants to force China—which has developed Sudan's oil sector—out of the picture. This explains why the Bush Administration, right after coming to power in January 2001, discovered an interest in solving the Sudanese conflict, and named former Senator Danforth as a special envoy for the region. The agreement signed in July, was not the result of a genuine Sudanese negotiating process, but a deal imposed by Washington, without any perspectives for effective peace.

One might ask why Anglo-American financial elite would sabotage their own deal to get in on Sudan's oil. To answer that, one must examine the postwar Anglo-American policy for Africa, put forth in Henry Kissinger's 1974 National Security Study Memorandum 200, which stated the Anglo-Americans' intent to reduce the population of Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, and loot their valuable natural resources. Garang, who has been supported in his destructive 19-year war by British-American interests, may be more valuable as an instrument to force a partitioning of Sudan, in expectation of controlling the oil which is located in the country's south.

FIGURE 1

The Line of British-Created Apartheid in Sudan



Apparent oil-grab manipulations and "war on terror" pressures from the United States and Britain, first pushed Sudan towards a seeming "peace agreement" in July; and then into a sudden reversal, to civil war in September. The war has threatened to split the country on lines which go back to British 19th-Century colonial policy.

Like the warhawk faction's lunatic plans to attack Iraq, this policy would have horrendous consequences—it could lead to "ethnic" and "religious" wars sparking a conflagration throughout Africa. It has also, already, increased the Egyptian government's anger at U.S. policy in general.

That Washington and London should be playing with a stacked deck in Africa—in this and other recent and ongoing "peace deals" (see "Raw Materials Looting Behind African 'Peace,' " *EIR,* Aug. 16)—should come as no surprise. What is tragic, is that African governments fall into the trap, even at the expense of the continent's real interest in peace and development.