

Sudan's 'TVA': A Development Model for All of Africa

by Hussein Askary

Arrad Arrad, kabari wa sad!

April 17—You will hear this phrase chanted in Sudan whenever there is a political meeting about the targeting of Sudan and its leadership by the International Criminal Court (ICC), and whenever President Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir visits a city or town in Sudan. It means, “Our response [to the ICC] is bridges and a dam!” An excellent choice of weapons by a nation that has experienced more than 30 years of civil wars and foreign incursions on its territories, but managed to defeat all of them. And, it has achieved a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the southern Sudanese rebels, the SPLA, who are, today, an integral part of the Sudanese government and nation.

In the past two months, since the illegal “arrest warrant” was issued by the ICC against Bashir, the President has inaugurated several infrastructure projects, including the Merowe Dam and the Tuti Bridge in Khartoum. The latter connects, for the first time, Khartoum city to the island of Tuti, which is located at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile rivers at the capital.

I have written several times about the economic potential of Sudan, and specifically, the Merowe Dam hydropower and the water project in its vicinity (see, for example, “Defying Britain’s Genocide System: Sudan’s Great Project in Agriculture,” *EIR*, July 18, 2008), and their impact on the agricultural potential of Sudan as the “Breadbasket of Africa.” However, after visiting Sudan earlier this month, seeing the magnitude of the development projects, and talking with young Sudanese engineers at the Dam Implementation Unit (DIU), I realized that my view of the whole process has to be adjusted to match the reality.

This is not a single dam project. What is happening in Sudan today, in terms of economic development, is nothing less than what U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt established as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to lift the that region out of the Depression of the 1930s. This is correctly viewed by the Sudanese people

and leadership as one of the main reasons why their nation is targeted by the British Empire, which wants to keep Africa in poverty, recolonize its independent nations, and loot its natural resources. In addition to the water resources and soil, Sudan is known to have a great amount of oil, minerals, and uranium deposits. These are located in the contested areas between south and north Sudan and in the Darfur region!

The projects that were initiated in 2003, those that have been completed, and those still being constructed under the supervision of the DIU (the Sudanese TVA), are affecting an area to the north of the capital, Khartoum. Of course the electricity generated by the dam projects affects all of Sudan, but the area of construction and development extends hundreds of kilometers, in three states along the Nile, all the way to the border of Egypt.

The plans have included the building of three major dams, five major bridges, highways, water canals, new agricultural production centers, new villages and towns with modern health care and education, electricity, clean potable water and sewage systems, airports, railways, new food-processing and industrial projects, etc. The projects directly affect millions of Sudanese, and help ease the demographic pressure from Khartoum and Um Durman, where one quarter of the total population is concentrated.

Why Sudan Is Targeted

As Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly warned, the targeting of Sudan is not simply an attack on that nation by the forces of empire, but on the very concept of the independent sovereign nation-state anywhere. This means that every nation on the planet, including the the United States, is a target. However, the choice of Sudan was not a random one, especially in this time of global economic crisis. The Sudanese have “violated” several dictates of the Empire (the British, the EU, and especially, the U.S. Bush-Cheney Administration).

Since 1993, President Bashir’s government has



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The author, Hussein Askary, with the Merowe Dam behind him. The Dam will add 1,250 MW to the national grid by the end of 2010, when all 10 generators will be operational. This will double the power supply in Sudan, as well as providing freshwater for drinking and irrigation, in what is now desert.

and its allies, because these nations would wish to use their natural resources for their own development, instead of being looted by the imperial powers.

But, Sudan broke with the enforced backwardness, and with the environmental madness and brainwashing imposed on the populations of formerly industrialized nations by such British institutions as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) of Prince Philip. The WWF and other European and American environmental groups have launched many campaigns specifically against dam projects in Africa, and are continuing to do so. The fact that human beings and nations can transform nature through acquiring knowledge and science for their own benefit is another violation of the rules of empire.

taken the following steps:

- broke with the International Monetary Fund and its conditionalities, and decided to rely on Sudan's own resources, produce its own credit, and work with other nations to get low-interest, long-term credits for development;
- worked to become self-sufficient in food supply;
- insisted on a national development program, in spite of wars and sanctions;
- used its oil and other natural resources for its own development through a policy of oil for technology;
- started a nation-to-nation economic cooperation process which defies the system of free market and globalization. The cooperation Sudan established with China, India, and Malaysia is a model for all other nations in Africa;
- in the midst of an horrific food crisis, Sudan has threatened to become the "breadbasket of Africa."

Many of these policies challenge what was promoted as U.S. policy by then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in his 1974 National Security Study Memorandum 200 (NSSM 200), which viewed population growth and economic-technological development in "Third World" countries as a strategic threat to the U.S.

I was happy to see that the young people of Sudan had a healthy view of man's relationship to nature: that, as the religion of Islam instructs them, human beings are the heirs of God on Earth; that they should build it and improve it. It is called the principle of "*Istikhlaf*" in Islam. This is similar to the instructions in the first book of Genesis, that humans should be fruitful, and multiply, and subdue the earth.

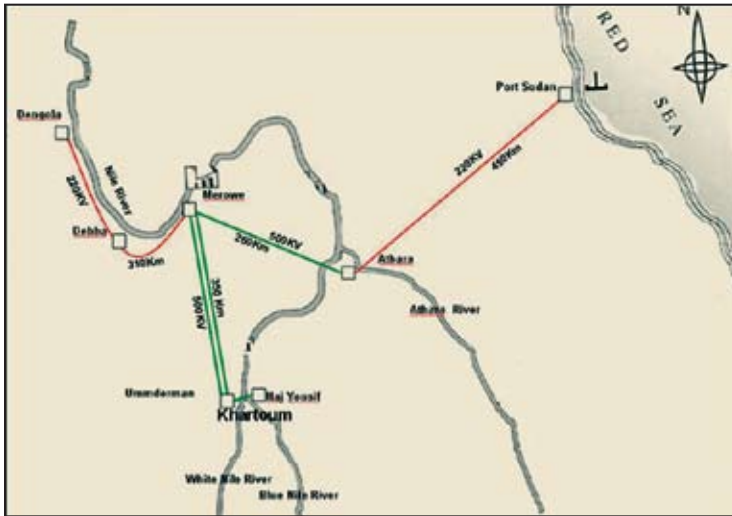
The DIU's Scope of Projects

The comprehensive development plan, which was assigned to the DIU by President Bashir, includes the following:

Dams: 1. Merowe Dam (construction completed); 2. Kajbar Dam (work starts this year); 3. Atbara Dam (work starts this year).

Bridges: (From Khartoum/Um Durman northwards) 1. Shendi-Al-Matamma 2. Atbara-Al-Damer (completed); 3. Merowe-Karima (completed); 4. Dongola-Al-Slaim.

Highways: 1,000 km of new paved highways. Main routes: 1. Northern Artery (Khartoum/Um Durman-Merowe: 350 km); 2. Merowe-Atbara (265 km); 3. Karima-Nawa (180 km); 4. Karima-Alslaim-Dongola (194 km).



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The Merowe Dam (upper left), and the connecting highway and canal system.

Airports: Merowe Airport, the largest airport in the whole of Sudan, with a landing field 3.8 km long and 60 meters wide. The total size of the airport is 18 sq. km, with modern arrival and departure buildings. It has the potential to become a connecting point among Europe, Africa, and the Gulf States, with refueling facilities for aircraft. It is capable of handling “jumbo” Airbus and other large aircraft.

Hospitals: Merowe specialized hospital. With 350 beds and state-of-the-art cancer diagnosis and treatment technologies, the Merowe hospital is unique, in the whole of Sudan. Modern health centers are built throughout the region of the Merowe Dam for the population which was relocated by the construction of the dam.

Agriculture: New agricultural areas: All relocated villages, Hamdab, Almanasir, and Amri, with a population of 70,000, were compensated with new agricultural land. The agricultural plots, already yielding harvests of wheat and potatoes, are fed by a large number of canals extending hundreds of kilometers, with modern pumps, powered by the electricity from the Merowe Dam, and water from the Nile.

There is almost no limit to how far the agricultural projects can extend. Enormous areas of fertile and flat land that are mere desert today, can become cultivated farms. The area we visited where the New Hamdab modern village was relocated is literally carved out of the desert. With water, electricity, and roads, the desert can be made to bloom. Modern machinery is already in use on a large scale.

Agriculture storage facilities: As in other African nations, much of the agricultural output is destroyed due to lack of adequate storage and transport facilities. In Merowe, a large cooled storage building has been constructed to protect the potato output in the area. On the other side of the river from Merowe, in the city of Karima, there is a large food and fruit preservation factory. With electricity from the dam, enhanced production, and nearby high-speed transportation, its production will increase enormously.

Railways: Railway development has not yet become a focus of the development program. The colonial system is so old and outdated, that it needs a totally new structure. The first 18 km of new rail were constructed to transport large machines and material to the Merowe Dam site. Many of the railway connections are located in the south of the country. But with more investments in

the railways, Sudan can speed up its development potential and become a bridge between Asia and Africa.

Two examples are sufficient to give a picture of how this new “Tennessee Valley Authority” in the heart of Africa is transforming a whole country at breathtaking speed. The area including Khartoum state, Nile State, and Northern State, encompassing a radius of more than 400 km is transformed into one economic unit, where movement of individuals, goods, and services is being reduced by degrees of magnitude.

- The Merowe Dam, located about 350 km north of Khartoum, will add more than 1 million acres of farm land, with modern canals, electrified pumping stations, fertilizers, modern machinery on the farms, health-care centers, and modern housing units for the 70,000 relocated farmers.

Farmers today can cultivate the land three times a year, compared to once a year earlier. The increase in productivity is surprising everyone, including the farmers themselves. There is a focus on growing wheat and potatoes, which did not exist before the recent food crisis. The traditional (British-induced) Sudanese focus was on producing cotton and corn.

In February, the DIU announced the successful operation of the first two turbines (125 mw each), and on Feb. 22, celebrated the linkage of the two turbines with the internal network of the Merowe Dam electricity station. Electricity started flowing from the Dam to Khartoum and other cities in early April.

Merowe Dam will add 1,250 mw to the national grid



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These Sudanese children, living in a displaced persons camp in Darfur, can look forward to a better future, as evidenced by the extensive infrastructure-building program the Bashir government is carrying out throughout the country. The bridge is one of many over the White Nile; north of Khartoum, the desert is being prepared for irrigation.



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by the end of 2010, when all 10 generators will be operational. This will mean a doubling of the power supply in the country. What it has done already is to revolutionize the agricultural process, not only in the regions near the dam, but also in outlying regions where power is lacking, to draw river water and ground water for agricultural use. Sudan has actually been using only 16% of its share (64 cubic km/year) of the water of the Nile, according to the Nile Waters Agreement among the Nile basin nations.

The dam's electricity reached Northern State on March 18, when the transmission stations at Dongola, Dabba, and Merowe were started up. On March 23, electricity from Merowe Dam reached River Nile State (central province) and the Atbara transmission station. By June, the electricity will reach Renk (south). In October, the electricity will reach El-Obeid

in Northern Kordofan (central-west) and in April 2010, the remaining two turbines of the dam will be in operation.

The Chinese-Sudanese companies which built the Merowe Dam have now acquired the scientific and technical capabilities to achieve such major projects faster and more effectively. Engineers at the Dam proudly informed visitors that some of the Sudanese engineers who worked on this dam have become recognized experts with world-class knowledge of such projects. As part of the contract with China, the Sudanese government demanded that 4,000 Sudanese engineers and technicians be part of the work force. In addition, the government demanded that special courses be arranged for the Sudanese engineers. So, the next dam will see more Sudanese working on its construction, and the one after that, maybe a majority of the work-

force will be Sudanese. This way, Sudan will acquire the know-how and skilled workforce to help other African nations in their development.

- The Atbara-Aldamer bridge, the Atbara-Merowe road, and the other roads going north to the border with Egypt, represent a second example of how the country is being transformed. This bridge in River Nile State crosses the Atbara River, for a length of 440 m, and connects to the finished Khartoum-Ed Damar highway. This project will save travelers and truckers 400 km going from the capital to Port Sudan! Earlier travelers had to go from Khartoum to Gadarif and Kassala in the south and southeast direction first, and then northward to Port Sudan, a journey that took more than twice the time it takes now. In the other direction, truckers say that it took them days to transport goods from Port Sudan to Merowe, Dongola, and Wad Madani in the North. Now the trip takes only 8-9 hours. The Northern Artery Road, which cuts the desert directly from Khartoum to Merowe in a south-north direction, takes 3-4 hours today, while previously, travel on the dirt road took two days.

So the speed of economic activity is being enhanced in the whole of the northern part of Sudan, with great saving of time, energy, less damage to goods, and more efficient transport.

Merowe's Contribution To Solving the Darfur Crisis

To say that there is no crisis in Darfur would not be true. There is a crisis in Darfur, but it is not genocide as the ICC and European and media and governments claim. The crisis is the result of manipulation by imperial forces of an internal economic and social problem. The drought of the recent two decades, and lack of development of water resources and infrastructure created severe living conditions for the mostly rural and nomadic population in the three states of Darfur. Darfur and the neighboring Kordufan region contain a great part of the grazing grounds for the second-largest cattle source in Africa. Lack of water forced large groups of nomads and ranchers to invade more wealthy areas. In 2002 and 2003, this was used by politically motivated groups, who get most of their support from Britain and France and their allies in Africa, to launch a military attack on the government in the region.

The governments of Sudan and Darfur realize that the solution to the crisis is more fresh water and infrastructure development, as well as a gradual phasing out of the

nomadic lifestyle which creates great problems all over the country.

The governor of North Darfur, Osman Yosuf Kibr, who briefed foreign guests on April 7, confirmed, in reply to question posed to him by this author, what I had reported in my previous articles and my speech at the World Conference for International Justice, in Khartoum April 5-7: that there is a massive groundwater lake under Darfur, in the Um Rawaba Basin, which is about 22,000 sq. km, and contains billions of cubic meters of freshwater. Kibr agreed with the assessment that electricity from the Merowe and other dams will be helpful in drawing on that reserve in the short term as an emergency solution for water scarcity, while waiting for pipelines or canals to bring water from the Nile, or from nuclear-powered desalination of Red Sea water. He stressed that the government of Sudan has launched massive development campaigns for infrastructure and water in all the three states in Darfur.

Flying over the desert from Darfur to Khartoum, makes it clear what the biggest problem is: Even in more developed areas like Khartoum or Merowe, as soon as you step a few kilometers from the Nile Valley, you immediately face sand dunes, that will overtake the roads and towns unless stopped.

Water and reforestation will shut the door on the expansion of the desert.

There is much more to be said about other developments, such as the oil industry, mining, auto industries, and so forth, but this report should suffice to give a sense of the transformation this country is creating.

The Sudanese people, 80% of whom are under 30 years of age, are full of optimism and pride for the great strides their government and their labor force have taken to utilize the oil and other resources for the development of the country. They also realize that this is the road to follow for any African nation that wants to rid itself of poverty and disease. And they realize that the Western powers do not wish to see Sudan develop and become a model for other nations. They are hopeful that the United States, with a new policy, that will also encourage Europe, will support a new, just world economic order.

As I told a gathering at the Sudanese Lawyers Association, the solution to the world crisis will not come from Sudan. It will only come if the United States forges an alliance with Russia, China, and India to spearhead such a new system. However, Sudan can serve as a great example to show the world what is possible to achieve all over Africa.