

Sudan Development Initiative Aims To Counter Destabilization Campaign

by Douglas DeGroot

Sudan President Omar al-Bashir made a decisive move against the international forces intent on destroying his nation, when he announced during an international video press conference from Khartoum on July 2, that his government has earmarked \$800 million for reconstruction of the Darfur region of Sudan. Darfur has been the site of an anti-government rebellion since 2003, and the rebel groups have deliberately destroyed infrastructure for education, health care, and water wells there. Destruction of the wells, a tactic that was also carried out early on in the conflict by forces allied to the government, has been compounded by conditions of drought.

Violence has lessened somewhat in Darfur recently, and the Sudan government is now moving to turn the tables on the rebels by rebuilding infrastructure that they have destroyed. One point of focus for the government will initially be on water. Bashir and Egyptian scientist Farouk El-Baz, director of the Center for Remote Sensing at Boston University, agreed during a June 20 meeting in Khartoum, on the “1,000 Wells for Darfur” initiative, according to SciDev.Net, on June 25. El-Baz had proposed the initiative to tackle the problem of water shortage in northwestern Sudan, which includes the Darfur region. The proposal is based on the discovery by the Boston University team, of an ancient enormous underground lake in northern Darfur.

This project can only be viewed, however, as a short-term palliative measure to temporarily eliminate a primary cause of the violence, since long-term, in-depth development cannot be dependent on fossil water. Only huge river diversion projects and nuclear power plants, for desalination and pumping, will provide a basis for effective, long-term development of the region.

The “1,000 Wells” initiative will be presented to the Sudan Government Council of Ministers at its upcoming meeting to work out the details, SciDev.Net reported. According to Bashir, the shortage of water resources was the “core” of the problem in Darfur. “This is a humanitarian effort in the first place, and we invite everyone to help us achieve the objective of providing water to the people that need it most. Stabilizing this important region of our country is a noble cause, which we fully stand behind,” Bashir said.

According to SciDev.Net, individuals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), countries, and international organizations will be invited to participate in the 1,000 Wells initiative.

This will put these organizations in the Western world, especially in the United States, who have been supporting the rebels and attacking the government, on the spot: Do they want to solve the problem in Darfur, or are they only interested in attacking the Sudan government?

Much more will have to be done. El-Baz emphasized that the project was only a beginning: “The Darfur initiative will bring hope to the people of northwestern Sudan; it will allow the migration of the labour force to locations where economic development is suitable. . . . This initiative can be a starting point for ameliorating the human suffering in the region and raising the quality of life and capacity of its people.”

What Is Behind the Darfur Crisis?

There has been conflict between groups in the Darfur region, off and on, since the 1950s. But there was a qualitative change in 2003, when Hasan al-Turabi, functioning, in effect, as a British agent within Sudan and the larger Muslim world, along with fellow radical Islamists, who had been thrown out of the Sudan government in December 1999, organized a rebellion in Darfur to destabilize and overthrow the Khartoum government. The rebellion erupted, with attacks on the larger towns and government garrisons in Darfur, killing hundreds of ill-equipped policemen. After the decimation of law enforcement in the region, a chaotic every-militia-for-itself situation ensued, an ideal environment for Turabi’s British-run rebellion. According to Alex De Waal, an expert on Darfur who is not pro-government, in a region where every community has armed itself for years, there are many militia groups, ranging from entire nomadic clans that have armed themselves to protect their herds, to brigades of trained fighters headed by Musa Hilal (leader of one of many militias referred to as Janjaweed), and some of his Chadian Arab comrades in arms.

Sudan is now being held solely responsible for the violent consequences of that rebellion: the extensive infrastructural damage, creation of refugees, dislocation and deaths of civilians, as well as for the consequences of their attempts to quell the destructive rebel activity. The governments of Great Britain, the United States, and France (since the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President), as well as numerous NGOs and other organizations, have been conti-



nously attacking the Sudan government, and this has only encouraged the rebels.

Throughout his career, from the time he returned to Sudan in 1964, after completing studies in London and Paris, Turabi has consistently worked to create a radical Islamist state. He took over and reorganized the Sudan branch of the British intelligence-created Muslim Brotherhood for this purpose, making it the core of his effort to promote hard-line Islamist ideology. In 1977, he became Justice Minister in the Jaafar Nimeiri government, and in September 1983, he got Nimeiri, who was in political trouble at the time, to establish *shari'a*, fundamentalist Islamic law. Under *shari'a* numerous punitive amputations were carried out, and, in 1985, 75-year-old Mahmoud Mohamed Taha was hung, after a brief trial in prison the day before.

Mahmoud Taha had been an anti-colonial activist, and had established the Republican Party in 1945. He had been imprisoned more than once for his activities, by the British administration. In favor of the right to association and expression, he launched a critical campaign against Turabi, in 1965. When Turabi became Justice Minister of the Nimeiri government, Mahmoud Taha continued his opposition to Turabi, who demonstrated his kind of justice, having him killed for alleged apostasy, a callous exploitation of Islam for a political purpose: Taha and his associates had distributed a leaflet which said that Nimeiri regime's *shari'a* law was an insult to Islam.

After the Nimeiri government fell, Turabi recast his net-

work, and it ultimately became the National Islamic Front (NIF). Many of the members were young, and joined mainly to advance their careers.

Just four days before the government that succeeded Nimeiri was going to sign an agreement with the southern Sudan rebel group of John Garang, the Southern People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), in July 1989, Turabi's NIF organized a coup d'état. Some in the military leadership were part of Turabi's Islamic network. The NIF was secretive about Turabi's role, to prevent an Egyptian intervention. 78,000 members of the army, police, and administration were purged to reshape the government after the coup.

Al-Turabi filled key positions with his fundamentalist cohorts, in government, administration, and the security sector, such as the militias. He sent fundamentalist militias into the South to fight the SPLM, attempting to forcefully convert Southerners (the South is not Islamic), thus presiding over what was called "the Islamic world's bloodiest *jihad*," in southern Sudan.

Ibrahim Khalil, a longtime associate and protégé of Turabi, who served as a state minister in Darfur in the early 1990s, before serving as a Cabinet-level advisor in southern Sudan, was a senior member of the Islamist movement's secret military wing. Khalil recruited several brigades of the Popular Defence Force (PDF) militia, and mujahideen, many of them from Darfur tribes, to be part of this offensive against rebels in southern Sudan. He was referred to as the emir of the mujahideen. Later, some of these same recruits became part of the anti-government rebel movement in Darfur.

War in Darfur To Regain Power in Khartoum

For the first decade after the 1989 coup, Turabi was the controlling influence behind the military rulers. During that time he wrote the constitution, was the head of the ruling National Congress Party, and was Speaker of the Parliament. In late 1999, he was about to become executive Prime Minister, which would have made the President a figurehead. At that point, Bashir declared a state of emergency, and stripped Turabi of his powers.

Over the next 15 months, Bashir gradually attained more independence from the Turabi networks. Turabi was jailed in February 2001. The student wing and regional Islamist cells followed Turabi into opposition. Two other sections of the Islamist movement that joined Turabi following the break were the financial cell and the military wing, which had continued to exist separately from the Sudanese armed forces (Turabi didn't trust the military), even after the 1989 coup which brought the Turabi and Bashir to power, and which had previously administered the PDF and jihad fighters. A rapprochement between Egypt and Sudan was the decisive turning point against Turabi. Following the split with Turabi, the Bashir government then had to disentangle itself from the remaining Turabi networks, in order to pursue a settlement with the SPLM in the South, and move to normal-



President Omar al-Bashir (front row, left) has announced a project to drill 1,000 water wells to alleviate drought conditions in the Darfur region of Sudan. Bashir also, after more than 30 years of war, made a peace agreement with the South in 2005, after former Speaker of Parliament Hasan al-Turabi (front right), who led a British-run rebellion against Bashir's government, was removed from office.

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ize Sudan's relations with the West, shedding its status as a rogue state.

In February 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the Sudan government and the southerners who were fighting for equal rights in a unified country. This agreement ended 39 years of fighting, in which approximately 2 million people had been killed since 1955, and another 4 million had been displaced. The settlement provides an opportunity for the entire country to develop economically, instead of wasting resources in war. The state of emergency imposed when Turabi was deposed, was not lifted until the peace agreement with the South was implemented.

At that stage, Sudan needed, in the words of Sudan's Ambassador to the U.S. John Ukek Lueth Ukek (published in *EIR*, June 15, 2007) a good economic relationship with the United States: "We hope we will gain from the American people, their experience, increase our productivity, because this is the world whereby there is a lot of capital-intensive, in addition to labor-intensive products that can help my country."

But Sudan didn't get that. Instead it got sanctions for a war created by Turabi, who was following a British intelligence-dictated script for crises throughout the Muslim world. If the British goal of dismantling Sudan is achieved by the international campaign, based on the pretext of the rebellion in Darfur, consequences could be disastrous for Egypt. The water agreement that Sudan made with Egypt in 1959 could be abrogated. This could be used to squeeze Egypt, which depends on that water from the Nile.

We did what we were asked to do, in terms of making the peace agreement, Ambassador Ukek said, but that wasn't

good enough. He added that the leadership in Sudan thinks "there is a hidden agenda," behind the Darfur rebellion, which necessitates attacks on the sovereignty of countries like Sudan.

Bush Anti-Sudan Policy

The economic sanctions of the Bush Administration against the Sudan government, and the constant, costly, and hypocritical media campaign by NGOs against the Sudan government, make no mention of the violent rebellion Turabi has unleashed in Darfur. These measures only serve to help Turabi in his fight to regain power.

Bashir asserted, in his July 2 press conference, that the Darfur crisis has been exacerbated by various foreign interventions (with a good slap to the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID). He charged that if it were not for external interference, championed by a certain Roger Winter, Darfur would have, in the last years, registered a fundamental transformation in terms of development. Winter, a longtime activist against the Sudan government, has been involved in various interventions on behalf of U.S. agencies, under several U.S. administrations, for the last 25 years. In 2005, he was named Special Representative for Sudan to advise Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on policy related to Darfur and to Sudan. He was formerly the mentor of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice; in 1998, *EIR* exposed Iran-Contra style capers in Africa by the duo.

Bashir said Sudan was sticking with the hybrid (UN-African Union) peacekeeping force, that the troops would

be African, and that participants from elsewhere would provide people such as engineers, whose expertise will map out and fine tune his country's development plans for Darfur.

Bashir dismissed the French initiative to threaten Sudan with a military intervention in the guise of establishing aid corridors from Chad into Darfur. The Sarkozy regime is intent on getting troops into Chad, using aid delivery to Darfur as a pretext. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner was asked in Chad, when he was organizing the Paris conference, if France would fund African peacekeepers, so the conflict could be dealt with. Kouchner rejected the idea, saying that he was only interested in getting troops into Chad, to establish "corridors" into Darfur. One of the key French demands is the establishment of a no-fly zone over Darfur, to keep Sudan from intervening against the rebels.

Julie Flint, a Darfur expert, who, like De Waal, has been critical of the government, attacked the no-fly idea in an op-ed in the *New York Times* on July 6. She reported on "a humanitarian effort that has kept more than two million displaced people alive," and that, "In the fifth year of the war, mortality levels among Darfurians reached by relief are marginally better than they were before the war and lower than in the capital, Khartoum. In South Sudan, where the conflict is stilled, children have higher death rates and lower school enrollment."

Flint points out that these successes will be lost if a no-fly zone, as many are calling for (including a number of Democratic Presidential candidates), is implemented, because most of this aid is delivered by air, and no aid operations will fly into Darfur if there is any danger of their flights being shot down by those enforcing a no-fly zone.

Flint wrote: "Today, as Khartoum's janjaweed militias turn against each other, rebel movements fragment and banditry rages, millions of Darfurians who depend on humanitarian assistance can be reached only by air. United Nations and African Union traffic accounts for 9 of every 10 flights in Darfur. Some agencies deliver as much as 90 percent of their supplies using aircraft. The collapse of the humanitarian apparatus would be a death sentence for Darfurians, especially those in camps who rely on aid agencies for food, clean water and shelter."

Countering the idea that a no-fly zone is necessary to protect the civilian population, Flint reported that, "The number of civilians killed by air attacks this year in Darfur is in the dozens." Most deaths resulted from ground battles "between Arab militias fighting one another over land." She added, counter to what some of the U.S. Presidential candidates have been saying, "Not once this year has there been aerial bombing 'before, during and after' these offensives." She advised, "The United States should step back from confrontational rhetoric and empty threats. Instead, it should support efforts to mend rebel divisions and encourage new peace talks that are not tied to artificial deadlines."