

Is Bush Sudan Policy Becoming A Colonial Grab for Oil?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

There were many political figures throughout the Arab world, who nurtured the illusion, that a George W. Bush Presidency, might bring friendlier relations with Washington. Bush's prompt bombing of targets around Baghdad, followed by his warm welcome afforded to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Washington, have punctured holes in such illusions.

In Sudan, as well, some indulged in wishful thinking, that the "compassionate conservative" might be kinder to Africa. Indeed, the new administration has put on a smile. It has intimated, through one of its diplomats who visits Khartoum on a rotating basis from Nairobi, that Washington might be ready to engage in a reconciliation effort with Sudan (which is still on the State Department's list of states supporting terrorism, still officially categorized as a "rogue state"). The diplomat delivered the message to Khartoum, that Washington was ready to talk, after which Foreign Minister Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail announced, that Sudan would reopen its embassy in Washington.

But such diplomatic niceties, though certainly preferable to an outrightly hostile relationship, do not tell the whole story. The question is not, whether the Bush Administration will talk to Khartoum; the question is, what policy (if any) does it have for Sudan, Africa's largest country, and strategically, one of the most important?

Up to the present, Washington's policy has been that of Britain's notorious Baroness Caroline Cox, a Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, and leader of an intelligence front group, "Christian Solidarity International" (since split into factions). She has led the drive to impose sanctions on Sudan, on charges it supports terrorism, discriminates against Christians, and engages in slavery. From the 1993 listing of Sudan on the State Department's terrorist list, to the 1996 imposition of UN Security Council sanctions, to U.S. trade sanctions, including freezing assets, in 1997, it was Washington following London's lead. And, it was on the basis of intelligence provided by the British, and Israeli, services, that the Clinton Administration was organized to bomb a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum on Aug. 20, 1998, on charges it was producing chemical weapons.

Now, there is a new script being offered Washington, again through the courtesies of long-term, well-known British agents. And the script is literally a copy of the old British imperial policy, when Sudan was a colonial possession.

Enter CSIS

On Feb. 26, the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) issued a study entitled "U.S. Policy to End Sudan's War." The task force which drew up the report was "funded through a grant from the U.S. Institute of Peace," and launched in July 2000. The USIP has held seminars on Sudan over the past years in Washington, inviting exclusively leading figures of the southern insurgency at war against the government of Sudan, to discuss "peace." When the Sudanese ambassador to the United States attempted to speak at one such seminar, he was refused access to the plenary session, and was given 20 minutes to address some attendees, during the lunch break. When *EIR* repeatedly intervened to demand that the USIP, if it were interested in "peace," follow the format of Palestinian-Israeli talks, and at least invite government representatives to such fora, this was systematically denied.

This background is important to note, to understand what the CSIS-USIP initiative is. The report starts with the statement, that now is an "opportune and appropriate moment" for the United States to move to end the Sudanese war. The strategy proposed, is "based on diplomacy, heightened engagement with all parties, enhanced inducements and punitive measures, and concerted multilateral initiatives." The executive summary continues, to note that Sudan's oil production has enhanced its military advantage. It then states, that "it has become clear that competing regional peace initiatives hold no promise," an outright lie.

Then, the report proceeds to list steps the United States should take to split the country: work with the U.K., Norway and Sudan's neighbors, to establish a forum for peace; "Seek first to reach agreement on the creation of an interim arrangement—a 'One Sudan, Two Systems' formula—that preserves a single Sudan with two viable, self-governing democratic regions, north and south." Then: "catalyze the launch of a

high-level international plan for a viable self-governing south, including commitments of substantial bilateral and multilateral resources toward its eventual realization.” Finally, the report recommends the U.S. reestablish diplomatic relations, restaff the embassy in Khartoum, and nominate a high-level special envoy.

The gist of the report is evident even in the summary: sabotage ongoing peace efforts (which are anything but empty), hijack the process, and impose a modern version of the British colonial policy, of dividing the north from the south, into two distinct entities. A flow of international funds into the south, would establish political control over this region. The “leverage” which the United States is supposed to exert, is its ability to maintain punitive measures against Sudan, and exert pressure on its international partners in the oil sector.

The Urgency of Oil

Oil, in fact, is a primary factor in the CSIS considerations. In the body of the text, it reads: “Oil is fundamentally changing Sudan’s war. It is shifting the balance of military power in favor of Khartoum. It has prompted Khartoum to focus its military efforts, including forced mass displacements of civilians, on oil fields and the pipeline. Oil has become an integral element of Khartoum’s external partnerships with states and corporations. . . .” It details this picture, with facts and figures on Sudan’s oil reserves, saying, “Proven reserves, widely thought to exceed 1 billion barrels, could double or triple in the period of the Bush Administration. Under this scenario, Sudan will emerge as a new medium-scale oil exporter.”

This is, indeed, the point. As the *Washington Post* editorialized March 16, “The reason for the urgency is oil, which has been discovered in large quantities in the south of the country.” It continues: “The northern government has cut deals with Western and Asian firms to extract the oil. . . .” The partners involved in the “first round of oil development,” are Talisman Energy of Canada, Petronas of Malaysia and China National Petroleum. This cooperation has led to the construction of a pipeline to Port Sudan, and the recent Chinese construction of a huge oil refinery in Khartoum. Now, the *Post* continued, new, big finds have been announced. This refers to Lundin Oil of Sweden’s announcement March 5, of a “significant oil discovery on Block 5A, onshore Sudan.”

As the same *Washington Post* editorial demanded, “The first priority of the Bush Administration should be to slow or halt this oil development,” by pressuring the international partners, thus gaining “leverage” over the Sudanese government, to force it to accept the new blueprint for “peace.” In the CSIS report, it is simply stated, “Early consultations should take place with states whose oil corporations are engaged in Sudan,” without any reference to content.

As noted above, most of the oil finds in Sudan are in *the*

south. Thus, the insistence in the CSIS report, on establishing colonial control over that part of the “One Sudan, Two Systems” project. Specifically, the report identifies the type and dimensions of funds to be funnelled into the south. “At the outset of negotiations, the international coalition (to be set up by the U.S. and its selected partners) should initiate intensive international planning on the critical requirements for a self-governing south that explicitly identifies future sources of external support.” These include the World Bank, UN Development Program, European Union, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), whose funds should go into infrastructure building in the south. (The report even goes so far as to suggest that international conferences be convened “that draw on the Bosnia, Kosovo and West Bank/Gaza experiences”!)

Not surprisingly, on March 14, Sudan’s President Gen. Omar al-Bashir rejected the report, telling reporters after a meeting of the ruling National Congress, “We categorically refuse both content and implications of the paper.” He added only that “Sudan does not consider the paper an official U.S. policy statement because it has not yet been adopted by the American Administration.”

Powell’s New Policy

President Bashir did not have to wait very long. In fact, just days prior to his rejection of the report, Secretary of State Colin Powell was holding a “brainstorming session” at the State Department with “experts” on how to end Sudan’s war. As Powell told a Congressional panel, he had apparently suddenly discovered, “There is perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the Earth today than the tragedy that is unfolding in the Sudan.” He pledged that ending the war “will be a priority.” At the same time, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.) had introduced legislation “that would condemn Sudan for abuses, authorize U.S. resources to pursue peace, and require President Bush to report on oil revenues that finance the war,” according to an Associated Press release.

Powell’s statements were hailed in the press as heralding a new chapter in U.S.-Sudanese relations, a major policy shift, and so forth. In reality, what Powell was signalling, was that the CSIS approach was indeed becoming government policy.

Then, on March 21, in the name of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the erstwhile grouping of opposition parties, a statement was issued, to “urge the international community, especially Western countries, to forbid their firms from contributing to Sudan’s destruction through their investment in oil.”

The same day, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which was set up by Congress and runs on government funds, issued a series of recommendations, taken from the CSIS script: the government should appoint a prominent special envoy, and deliver food aid, bypassing the government of Sudan. The commission also recommended that

oil companies working in Sudan be banned from raising funds on U.S. capital markets.

What Happened To Peace?

The new American policy for Sudan, as signalled by the CSIS study, Powell, and the Commission, is clearly aimed at sabotaging Sudan's growing oil industry, blackmailing its international partners, and moving in to shore up the insurgent Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forces with massive financial support. Its "peace" effort involves creating an "international nucleus" to mediate negotiations. This is explicitly aimed at replacing two regional mechanisms, involved in seeking peace. One is the Inter-Government Agency on Development (IGAD), made up of Sudan's immediate neighbors, and the other is the 1999 initiative, launched by Egypt and Libya, to mediate reconciliation between the government and the northern opposition parties.

The CSIS report states: "Regional initiatives hold little promise for ending Sudan's war. Although the IGAD peace initiative has had certain achievements on which any future initiatives should build, IGAD cannot be relied on to persuade Sudan's warring principals to enter into serious negotiations. . . . A new, robust extra-regional mediation agency is required if a credible peace process is to begin in Sudan."

Clear enough. What the report neglects to mention, is that at each and every IGAD-sponsored negotiating session, the U.S., in its quality as a member of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), has intervened to "advise" the SPLA representatives present, or, to dissuade SPLA leader John Garang from attending any such session. The United States has also consistently thwarted the Egypt-Libya initiative, precisely because it has been making steady progress.

In point of fact, over the past year, also due to internal political changes inside Sudan, the government has come closer to making political agreements with the opposition. The Umma Party, led by Sadiq al Mahdi, and once the leading organization in the NDA, split from that alliance, and entered talks with the Khartoum government. Sadiq al Mahdi himself returned to the country, after years of self-imposed exile. Mohammed Osman al-Mirghani, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the other remaining political group of the NDA, has also come to terms with the Bashir government, and on March 1 signed a memo with the Umma Party, overcoming their differences. Their eight-point "Sudan Appeal" was welcomed by President Bashir. Sudanese Foreign Minister Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail met, on Feb. 28, with his Egyptian counterpart, Amr Moussa, to discuss plans for a national reconciliation conference to be held in Cairo, between the government and opposition. Moussa met as well with both Sadiq al Mahdi and al-Mirghani.

The question, then, is: Why is the United States not throwing its weight behind this initiative, championed by a country, Egypt, which is supposed to be a key ally in the Arab world?

Macedonia Faces The 'Taliban of Europe'

by Umberto Pascali

On the night of March 21, the war of aggression waged against Macedonia reached the capital, Skopje. Two policemen were shot, one fatally, in the part of the city inhabited mostly by Macedonian Albanians. One policeman died immediately, the second was taken to the hospital in critical condition. The attempt took place at the end of a day of cease-fire declared by the government in the military confrontation between the Macedonian army and formations of well-armed and trained terrorists around the city of Tetovo in the northwest.

The government had issued a demand that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) gangs abandon their weapons and go back to Kosovo, or face attack by government forces. The KLA did not abandon their weapons or their positions, but simply communicated to press agencies that they are ready for a permanent cease-fire and to "negotiate." In other words, they want to obtain a status of "co-belligerent" that they expect to be recognized by the international community.

The small country of Macedonia, with its very limited military capabilities and small army and police, has been left by the "international community" to fight alone against an enemy that is armed with the most modern weapons including, according to reports, mortars and even tanks. Macedonia is under an escalating foreign military aggression that has as its base of operations, the province of Kosovo, controlled and governed by more than 40,000 military and non-military personnel under NATO and UN administration.

How Could NATO Not Know?

Still, the UN Security Council was not even able to recognize openly that the attack was coming from Kosovo, while many European and NATO governments are issuing contradictory or confused statements.

Macedonia Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski used very explicit language in an address to the nation on March 18. "I will now reveal a secret saying that Macedonia has been subjected to an aggression for more than one month. The aggression has been carried out in two sections, one very strong in the area from Tanusevci to the junction of Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia, and the second one, with similar intensity, over the mountain of Sara and directly on the city of Tetovo." Georgievski was describing the KLA strategy that had started with the armed takeover of the village of Tanusevci at the borders with Kosovo, northeast of Skopje, when NATO demanded that Macedonia not use force, but "political means"—and the following KLA penetrations into the north-