# In the War against Terrorism, Where Goes Sudan?

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**Brief Analysis**

With attention focused on the bombings against Afghanistan, the most radical change in U.S. policy toward any other Muslim state since September 11 has been the accelerated rapprochement between the United States and Sudan, a country that hosted Osama bin Laden between 1991 and 1996. The quickly warming relations between Washington and Khartoum raise the question of "what price coalition?"

Sanctions and Terrorism

The State Department has categorized Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism since August 1993. The reasons are many. Sudan has provided a safe haven for the Abu Nidal organization, Lebanese Hizballah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Hamas, al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, and the Islamic Salvation Front of Algeria. In April 1996, the State Department expelled a diplomat from Sudan's United Nations Mission because of links to conspirators who plotted to blow up the United Nations building and New York's tunnels in 1993. The UN sanctions on Sudan -- adopted in 1996 in Security Council Resolutions 1044, 1054, and 1070 -- date to Khartoum's refusal to extradite the gunmen who tried to assassinate Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in June 1995. The sanctions called for the reduction in numbers and travel freedom of Sudanese diplomats, as well as on overflight and landing permission for Sudan Airways and its subsidiaries. After the United States agreed to abstain, the UN Security Council lifted the sanctions on September 28, 2001.

Jihad, Blood, and Oil

Sudan, a member of the Arab League since 1956, is perhaps the most ethnically and religiously fractured of Arab states. While the northern portion of the nation is predominantly Arab and Muslim, the southern half of the country is predominantly tribal (Dinka and Nuar), and either Christian or animist. While an autonomy agreement for southern Sudan ended the 1962-1972 civil war, war erupted again in 1983, after President Ja'far Muhammad Numayri imposed Islamic law in the north and weakened the south's autonomy. John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) then began a campaign to overthrow the Sudanese government and create a "new Sudan." (In recent years, Garang's movement has been beset by internal division between those who prefer a war aim of separation of southern Sudan and those who want to create a new, united Sudan). The war became particularly brutal after 1991, when the Revolutionary Command Council announced the imposition of Islamic law throughout the country and declared a jihad against non-Muslims in Sudan. On October 4, the Sudanese vice president, 'Ali Uthman Taha, declared to fighters departing to the southern war zone, "The jihad is our way and we will not abandon it and will keep its banner high." While estimates vary, most place casualties in the civil war and ensuing famines above one million.

Increasingly, human-rights and religious-freedom activists in the United States have sought to focus attention on the issue of slavery in Sudan, and the forced conversion of those seized in slave raids to Islam. While controversy rages in the international aid community as to how best to eradicate slavery in Sudan, few deny its existence. (Many of the freed slaves I met during my trip to Sudan two weeks ago bore signs of systematic torture by burning, stabbing, and amputation, and 80 percent reported forced conversion to Islam). County commissioners in the opposition-

controlled portions of southern Sudan estimated that 200,000 non-Muslim blacks remain in slavery; the UN argues that the figures are much lower, but relies on information provided by the regime in Khartoum. While sometimes dismissed as a mere outgrowth of tribalism, most of the slave raiding occurs in the winter dry season and is conducted by Sudanese government militias hired to protect the supply train transiting through the countryside to the government-controlled garrison towns in southern Sudan. A former executive director of the governor's office in a prominent government garrison town recounted how he saw slave trains passing through town, guarded by the government's Popular Democratic Forces.

Reaction to Sudan's human-rights record is complicated both by mutual accusations between the government in Khartoum and the SPLA, and by the government's 1999 start of oil production (now at 225,000 barrels per day) in the areas most affected by the civil war. In June 2001, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelming (422 to 2) passed the Sudan Peace Act, which called for blocking oil companies (like Canada's Talisman) operating in Sudan from access to American capital markets. Weeks before September 11, the Bush administration made clear its opposition to the sanctions included in the bill out of fears that they set a dangerous precedent for political interference in U.S. capital markets. On September 19, as part of its effort to bring Sudan into the coalition, the administration succeeded in killing the bill in committee, upsetting many human-rights and religious-freedom activists, who argue that Sudan has not substantially changed its behavior.

Has Sudan changed its behavior since September 11? According to press reports (many of which cite a single unnamed senior administration or State Department official), Khartoum began working with American antiterrorism officials in March 2000. The State Department has said that since September 11, Khartoum has arrested some thirty suspected terrorists (a claim denied on September 30 by Ibrahim Ahmad Umar, secretary general of the ruling party).

Meanwhile, Khartoum's behavior in its self-declared jihad appears not to have altered. On September 23, the Sudanese army bombed the civilian village of Kargoc, narrowly missing several homes and a church. In interviews, several Sudanese -- both ethnic Arab northerners and ethnic Dinka southerners -- talked of terror training camps still operating as close as five kilometers from the center of Khartoum (and training Iranians, among other nationalities), as well as in the Red Sea port of Tokar and the Nile river town of Renk. Several Arab Sudanese separately spoke of operatives from the training camps relocating southward into government garrison towns, where they would be farther removed from the eyes of foreign diplomats and journalists. Former members of the Sudanese armed forces describe a chemical weapons stockpile at the Juba airport. The U.S. embassy in Khartoum acknowledges ongoing problems with security in Sudan. On October 6, the State Department issued a travel warning for Sudan, noting that the Sudanese government may not control all segments of its military and that the U.S. is unable to maintain a permanent diplomatic presence in Khartoum.

Conclusion

As home to Osama bin Laden between 1991 and 1996, Khartoum may be an important source of intelligence on some Al Qaeda members. However, if Khartoum is truly committed to the war against terrorism, then it should immediately close all terrorist camps and open to inspection all "madrasas" -- Islamic campuses which Sudanese say double as recruitment and training centers for militants. Furthermore, the Sudanese government should adhere immediately to the May 20, 1994, declaration of principles between the Sudanese government, SPLA, and neighboring states, known as the Declaration of Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development. This agreement mandated that there should be complete political and social equity of all Sudanese people, regardless of religion, and that the future of Sudan is as a secular state in which religion and government are firmly separate. Too quick an embrace of Khartoum (e.g., the lifting of unilateral U.S. sanctions imposed in a 1997 Clinton executive order) may have the boomerang effect of increasing state sponsorship of terrorism by prematurely rewarding a

rogue regime for effervescent reform of positions they never should have taken in the first place. Only a demonstrable pattern of sustained behavioral change should merit rehabilitation of a government that has been so deeply involved with terror for so many years.

Michael Rubin is a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute.

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