

Conflict, trade and the medium-term future of food security in Sudan

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Recent economic growth and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) have both been seen as grounds for optimism about the future of food security in Sudan. However, solving the North–South conflict (if indeed it is solved) does not resolve conflicts within either the North or the South and may even encourage a variety of conflicts. The classic neo-liberal prescription of peace, growth and foreign investment may deepen (and obscure) the needs and grievances of those who have historically been left behind in a dysfunctional development process. Historically, some of those marginalised by patterns of development in Sudan have chosen to rebel, while others have had their grievances diverted against those even more marginal than themselves. Dysfunctional and violent processes of development must be reversed. They cannot be adequately compensated for—but may be legitimised—by attempts to use food aid as a ‘safety net’. Meanwhile, those who benefited from war may have incentives to derail the peace.

Keywords: agriculture, conflict, food security, greed, grievance, oil, peace, Sudan, war

Introduction

This paper examines the future of food security in Sudan by reviewing, and extrapolating from, recent patterns of trade and conflict. The paper considers important (and ostensibly encouraging) economic data and analyses some of the underlying political and economic processes driving food insecurity in Sudan. This involves analysing key growth sectors in the Sudanese economy, the situation of those marginalised or displaced by existing patterns of development, and possible sources of future violence.

One way that future scenarios in Sudan have been analysed is by first assuming that the North–South peace takes hold and then assuming that it fails (USAID, 2003). There is a logic to this approach, and the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) will clearly make a huge difference if it holds. However, other issues are also vital. War in Sudan—and notably the second civil war which began in 1983—has not simply interrupted benign processes of development which can be resumed now that a North–South peace has been agreed. Instead, war has been in large part the result of a pernicious process of development which is in danger of being reinvented. This pernicious process in many ways proceeded (and even sometimes accelerated) under the cover of war, generating important benefits for a key political constituency. Examining war within the now-popular ‘greed and grievance’ framework leads to the conclusion that the grievances generated by this—often violent—process of development

have not gone away. We should expect neither that the greed which often flourished under conditions of war will simply evaporate nor that the political constituency benefiting from war will meekly melt away.

Some sources of optimism

Encouraging political developments clearly include the GOS-SPLM/A peace agreement and the positive developments in the South, which were part of what made this agreement possible, notably the coming together of formerly split factions of the SPLM/A in January 2002. Apparently helpful economic developments include sharply falling inflation, rising GDP and generally strong agricultural growth in many sectors.¹ The value of rain-fed crop production in traditional farming areas reportedly increased at the extraordinarily high average rate of 24.6 per cent between 1991–92 and 1999, and the area harvested using traditional farming methods also grew rapidly (including oil seed and melon seed). In the South there has already been some degree of economic recovery. In 2003 USAID reported that western Equatoria had been producing food surpluses for the previous four years (USAID, 2003). The South has also seen some degree of recovery of its important trading links with East Africa as well as with northern Sudan (USAID, 2003; USAID, 2005). The South has huge productive potential, being rich in oil, fish and livestock as well as fertile land with relatively high rainfall. Even before the second civil war less than two per cent of areas suitable for agriculture in the South were actually under cultivation (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003).

Sudan has seen a dramatic increase in oil revenues since 1998–89, when GOS military successes allowed production to resume in the South. By 2005 oil production was estimated at 312,000 barrels per day (bpd). One estimate predicts that it could increase in 2006 to as much as 650,000 bpd, a figure that would put Sudan behind only Nigeria in the hierarchy of oil producers in sub-Saharan Africa (WFP, 2006). Oil has helped to transform Sudan's balance of payments. The value of official exports rose from USD 531 million in 1982–85 to USD 1,698 million in 2001, while the value of imports only edged up from USD 1,139 million in 1982–85 to USD 1,395 million in 2001 (World Bank, 2003, vol. 2, p. 45). Given the recent boom in exports and the strong record of growth in agriculture, it is perhaps not surprising that the World Bank should observe that '... for Sudan, the prospect for food security to be achieved efficiently from domestic production and imports is considerable' (World Bank, 2003, vol. 1, p. 95).

Some grounds for caution

Oil

While rising oil production has been hailed as good news, three major problems for the future suggest themselves. First, the oil sector has powerfully fuelled violence in Sudan and it may continue to do so. Dramatic increases in oil production have been built on the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in the South and

the resentments arising from this process are not to be underestimated.² Oil has always been a key bone of contention in the war, and it was Nimeiri's attempts to divide the South and create a 'Unity' region that did most to precipitate the second civil war. From 1983 onwards, heavily indebted regimes in Khartoum have sponsored militia raids on the South, with a key motivation being the desire to secure access to the oil. For its part, the rebel SPLM/A fought a bitter war over two decades, in which a major aim was to secure the benefits of the oil in the South. Although agreement has now been reached on sharing the oil revenues, disputes remain—and they may well escalate. Conflict may yet derail rising oil exports.

A particular problem will arise if the South chooses full independence from the North in the planned referendum. In these circumstances, the large share of oil revenues currently going to the North would presumably dry up, although the state of Sudan (with the South removed) might still be able to charge an independent South Sudan for channelling oil through northern pipelines and through Port Sudan. Under the CPA, roughly half the oil revenue is to go to the North and half to the South (and two per cent to the producing areas) (WFP, 2006); but what will this mean in practice? Already, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) has delayed specifying which oil fields are to be regarded as being in the South, while an administratively weak SPLM/A has been denied access to key production data (ICG, 2006). One problem may be disputes about deals by rival oil companies, such as the dispute over 'Block B' between White Nile Petroleum (a British joint venture with the Government of South Sudan) and French oil giant Total (working with the GOS in Khartoum) (CIJ, 2006). More generally, it is not known whether oil will be used to remedy some of the regional disparities in development that have underpinned the various kinds of conflict, or to remedy some of the stark socioeconomic—or class—disparities. The lessons from other oil-rich countries such as Angola, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia are not encouraging.

While accounts of the potential for discovery and exploitation of oil resources in Darfur differ, the strong international interest in oil in Darfur, particularly from Japan and China, represents a potentially alarming development. 'Block 12' covers nearly all of northern and western Darfur, including the areas devastated by the GOS and the janjaweed militia.

The increasingly dominant role of Asian parastatal organisations in the oil sector makes it particularly difficult for Western governments to exert leverage on human rights issues. China has secured a large volume of Sudanese oil and is Sudan's largest arms supplier. Even in 2002 the development of oil regions sometimes involved expelling local inhabitants using Chinese-made helicopters (see e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2003). Meanwhile, China uses its position on the UN Security Council to impede vigorous international action over Darfur in western Sudan. At the same time, oil revenues have fuelled the purchase of Russian attack helicopter gunships (CIJ, 2006). Although the 2002 peace agreement is evidently a step forward, it is not clear how currently marginalised regions of Sudan will secure significant benefits from oil. The disruptive effects of continuing resentment have already been demonstrated by attacks on the oil pipeline in East Sudan.

A second set of worries centres on the dangers of 'Dutch disease'. High and rising oil revenues tend to boost a country's exchange rate, and an appreciating exchange rate will tend to undermine the competitiveness of domestically produced goods compared with imported alternatives. The effects on agriculture can be particularly severe—as has been seen in, for example, in Nigeria (Elbadawi, n.d.). In Sudan, appreciation of the currency was recorded at 17 per cent in real terms in the first eight months of 2005 (WFP, 2006). There are signs that food imports (made cheaper by the rising exchange rate) are increasing significantly—most notably wheat imports rose from an average of 956,000 tonnes in 2000–2004 to about 1.4 million tonnes in 2005 (WFP, 2006). Even before the recent oil boom the trend was already upwards, with wheat and wheat flour imports rising from some 233,000 tonnes in 1990 to 1,023,000 tonnes in 2000 (World Bank, 2003, vol. 2, table A4.6). The profitability of agricultural exports may also be hit by a rising exchange rate. WFP Sudan has noted that the agriculture sector 'is likely to see its competitive position decline with respect to imported commodities, although strong preferences for local varieties may offset this tendency' (WFP, 2006). However, agriculture will remain the pre-eminent employer—it currently employs more than two-thirds of the workforce, and the health of the agricultural sector will be critical to poverty reduction (FAO/WFP, 2002; World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003). One of the features of 'Dutch disease' seems to be a tendency for the state to rely on oil for the generation of revenues, perhaps at the expense of developing the productive and fiscal capacity of the broader economy.³ In Sudan rising oil exports have sharply reduced the proportion of overall exports constituted by livestock and agricultural products. This has significant implications for the priority that the GOS is likely to attach to rural production, and to the livestock sector in particular.

Other problems in the agricultural sector

Apart from the prospect of 'Dutch disease', there are other reasons to be cautious about the recent high levels of growth in Sudanese agriculture. First, the South has been excluded from production figures (except for the surroundings of some GOS garrison towns) and the South remains extremely prone to food insecurity. Displacement in southern Sudan and large-scale loss of assets during the war mean a major increase in people's vulnerability to shocks (USAID, 2003). As Amrita Rangasami has shown in her studies of famines more generally, asset-loss during a famine will create increased vulnerability to famine in the future. In Sudan one study in 2000 found that in the Aweil West district of Bahr el Ghazal only 40 per cent of households owned livestock (WFP/Save the Children, 2002). In 2003 USAID noted that, despite significant levels of international assistance, the previous four years had seen rising malnutrition rates in many parts of the South as well as in eastern and western Sudan (USAID, 2003). Clearly, the return of large numbers of people risks putting major strain on local food systems.⁴ Meanwhile, a wide range of problems—from mines to single-headed households—may impede reconstruction in the South.⁵

A second reason for caution about the high rates of agricultural growth is that structural problems in the sector remain extremely significant. According to the World Bank,

the rate of agricultural growth in the 1990s represented a rebound from the negative growth of the 1980s (which had been caused by drought and unhelpful policy interventions) rather than the result of a technological transformation of the sector (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003). Although rain-red crop production has been increasing, the rate of increase has declined in recent years (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003).

Traditional agriculture remains extremely vulnerable to droughts as well as pests and continuing conflict. Most media focus has been on the South, and more recently on Darfur, but areas with high food insecurity in late 2005 included North and South Kordofan states, Blue Nile state, Kassala, Red Sea state, Abeyi and White Nile state. Assessments of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) found an average of some 20 per cent in northern Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei and Upper Nile, with some results as high as 39 per cent. In Red Sea and Kassala rates were 19 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively. These figures compare with a GAM rate in Darfur—a major focus for emergency food aid—that fell from 21.8 per cent in September 2004 to 11.9 per cent one year later, although it has been rising again more recently (WFP, 2006). In general, the lack of good rural road or rail links are major constraints to agricultural production (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003). Another problem has been the continuing extreme neglect of extension and credit services to the traditional agricultural sector (de Wit, 2001; FAO/WFP, 2002). Current land tenure arrangements may limit access to credit for farmers unable to use land as collateral (UNDP, 2002). While growth in the livestock sector has been strong, livestock has often been a fairly oligopolistic enterprise in Sudan (Keen, 1994; World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003).

There are significant problems even in the relatively 'modern' sectors. In the semi-mechanised rain-fed sector the value of production fell throughout the 1980s and up to 1999—despite the fact that the Khartoum regime favoured an expansion of mechanised farms, not least as a means of rewarding key supporters. Yields were hit by falling fertility, which in turn reflected continuous cropping and the expansion of semi-mechanised farming into increasingly marginal areas.⁶ Sorghum production—mostly in the semi-mechanised sector—was fairly stagnant in the period 1994–2003, and wheat production fell. The value of agricultural imports increasingly outstripped the value of agricultural exports (Faki et al., 2006).

A third reason for caution about agricultural growth is that such growth does not necessarily lead to an efficient or equitable distribution of its benefits. Food surpluses in one area will not necessarily find their way to areas where food is scarce. Poor transport and information networks contribute to this situation and price differences between regions are often high (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003; FAO/WFP, 2002). Also important is sheer poverty: people who have low incomes or few assets may be unable to attract food through market mechanisms even when that food is abundant (Sen, 1981), and where poor people are living in hard-to-reach areas the problem is compounded. In Sudan the distribution of income is among the most highly skewed in the world (WFP, 2006). During severe famine in south-western Sudan in 1988 there were large-scale exports of sorghum from Sudan, much of which was used as animal feed in Europe (Keen, 1994). Most surpluses from the semi-mechanised sector are habitually

traded northwards, partly because of the better roads (WFP, 2006a). The problem of regional disparities also applies in the South. For example, cereal surpluses in west Equatoria and the Lakes region have not tended to reach deficit areas (FAO/WFP, 2002). In January 2001 sorghum prices were almost 20 times higher in Aweil South county, northern Bahr el Ghazal, than those in Rumbek county, Lakes (UNOCHA, 2004).⁷

Continuing conflict

One source of pessimism about future patterns of conflict is the historical status of South Sudan in relation to the North. A 2002 UN Development Programme (UNDP) report notes that 'The south has been marginal to the polity but available for economic exploitation throughout most of Sudanese history' (UNDP, 2002, p. 11). Is this now suddenly at an end? After Sudan's first civil war, the eventual collapse of a political settlement meant that the economic recovery in the South actually came to serve as a renewed incentive for raiding from the North. If the South eventually secures independence from the North, it may be that what was previously an intra-state conflict will reoccur—this time as an interstate conflict. Certainly, if northern Baggara pastoralists were to be barred from seasonal migrations into an autonomous or independent South this would add to the economic and ecological pressures that have already fuelled violence in which Baggara have been prominent participants.

Grievances in the South will remain substantial for some time. Gross National Income in the South is estimated to be less than USD 90 per capita per year—roughly one-tenth the national average. The region remains one of the poorest in the world (WFP, 2006b). The abating of North–South conflict has led to renewed trade in southern cattle to the North but the benefits accruing to northern traders and army officers from earlier South–North trading seem to have played a part in awakening military interest in boosting supplies of livestock through looting and markets distorted by force (Keen, 1994). Intra-South pressures will also be significant. Competition over grazing land and water between major ethnic groups in the South, for example, Dinka and Nuer, has been considerable, and contributed to major displacement in the 1990s. Deceased SPLM/A leader John Garang refrained from establishing any strong systems of governance that could challenge his authority, and the SPLM/A commitment to civil ethics remains weak (Young, 2005). There were strong criticisms of Garang from inside the SPLM/A leadership before his death and, in particular, he was accused of favouritism towards the Bor Dinka (Young, 2005). In Equatoria, returning refugees are laying claim to land that has been settled by hundreds of thousands of displaced Dinka. If the local government succeeds in giving land back to those returning, this will boost its authority and legitimacy; if not, it could sow the seeds for further outright conflict in the South.

The belated international attention on Darfur has distracted international attention from delays in implementing the North–South peace accords, including delays in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and in positioning UN peacekeepers (ICG, 2006). There is another major worry: just as solving the North–South conflict (if indeed it is solved) does not necessarily resolve conflicts within the South, so too

it does not resolve conflicts within the North. The case of Darfur shows the potential for such conflicts to get worse even as the North–South conflict moves towards resolution. One key problem is that the fault-lines of conflict in Sudan, never simple, are becoming increasingly complex. As historian Douglas Johnson notes in his 2003 study:

One thing which clearly distinguishes the current war from the civil war of the 1960s is that it has not been confined to the South: fighting has taken place in Darfur, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and, most recently, Qallaba, Kassala and Red Sea—all parts of the ‘Muslim’ North (Johnson, 2003, p. 127).

Historically, and up to the present, those in positions of power have come disproportionately from Northern state and River Nile state (see, for example, Cobham, 2005). Key grievances in much of northern Sudan include, first, years of neglect by the government and, second, the loss of access to land by both smallholders and pastoralists as a result of the expansion of Sudan’s large semi-mechanised farms (Johnson, 2003; Keen, 1994).⁸ A 2006 Coalition for International Justice (CIJ) report notes Sudan’s long history of damaging mechanised farming and observes that ‘In agriculture, as in other aspects of its policies, the National Islamic Front (NIF) has implemented policies that are, broadly speaking, similar to those of its predecessors, but more aggressive, more virulent and more hurtful to rural communities’ (CIJ, 2006). Key areas for the aggressive expansion of mechanised farming have been Upper Nile, Blue Nile and Southern Blue Nile. A longstanding pattern of rewarding political supporters with mechanised farming concessions has been continued. Peace, moreover, could actually facilitate the expansion of mechanised farming. Fertile parts of Darfur might also be a target, and the practice of preventing displaced people from returning to fertile West Darfur is particularly disturbing (CIJ, 2006).

A related problem is that the progress of North–South negotiations may *create* additional reasons for conflict along other axes, particularly in the North. Several factors can be discerned here. First, the international priority for achieving a North–South reconciliation (and more specifically an agreement between the GOS and the SPLM/A) made some international actors reluctant to ‘rock the boat’ by pressing the GOS too strongly in relation to abuses elsewhere—most notably in Darfur. Second, peace in the South released military resources that could then be deployed elsewhere—and have been in Darfur.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the success of the SPLA in using military rebellion to secure a share of political power, albeit after many years of suffering, seems to have offered a tempting precedent for some in the North who feel that their interests have been systematically neglected. This was a key cause of rebellion in Darfur. When the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) resorted to armed rebellion, they were apparently attempting to replicate the military/political strategy of the SPLA—and gained some help from the SPLA in the process. In the East hardliners in the opposition National Democratic Alliance seemed in 2002 to have reached the conclusion that military action was the best way to gain a presence at the Machakos GOS–SPLM/A peace talks (ICG, 2002). It is worth noting that former SPLA

leader John Garang claimed to be fighting on behalf of all the neglected and marginalised peoples of Sudan. Even though the SPLA has gained a share of power in Khartoum, many in the North still feel marginalised and excluded and some may resort increasingly to violence in order to gain their share of political power (e.g. Mans, 2004). Anger at exclusion from the fruits of peace has been expressed in Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and southern Blue Nile state, among other regions (Africa Confidential, 2003a).⁹

Violence in Sudan has served important political and economic functions for members of the elite and their various ethnic allies. For this reason alone, the implementation of a peace agreement can be expected to be highly problematic. Elections scheduled for 2009 under the CAP will probably oust the ruling NCP from power, and many NCP members also fear that the planned self-determination referendum in the South will lead to the loss of the South and its oil. Most political posts have now been divided up between the NCP and the SPLM/A, and the desire of excluded opposition groups to improve their position at the polls is likely to be matched by the NCP's interest in delaying or disrupting elections. The SPLM/A stance will also be interesting to observe. There are already signs that the government in Khartoum is trying to exploit discontent in the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF), which have no future role under the CPA (ICG, 2005). Maintaining an emergency in Darfur could also help to delay national elections and to protect the economic interests of the influential government security agencies, which are making money from oil, construction and the service sector (see e.g. de Waal, 2004).

The CPA is not the first time that a military government in Sudan has made peace in the South and entered into a political alliance with former rebels at the expense of rival political forces in the North. General Nimeiri pursued this tactic through the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement, and part of the reason that this peace agreement did not last was that it effectively excluded major political forces, including the Baggara, in the North—forces whose discontent was eventually turned against the South by Nimeiri himself. Among the discontented and excluded groups was Hassan el Turabi's Muslim Brotherhood, which initiated the move in parliament to redraw the South's boundaries and transfer key oilfields to the North. The bilateral nature of the Addis Ababa deal also seems to have encouraged Nimeiri to abrogate what he saw as a personal agreement with southern leaders (Africa Confidential, 2003a).

Key grievances in the North

A key grievance in many parts of the North has been simple neglect. This has an important regional dimension. Historically, state resources have been concentrated in the central Nile areas, reflecting the longstanding political dominance of groups from this area. Survey data from 1999–2000 shows stark regional disparities. For example, infant mortality per thousand live births was 116 in Red Sea, 101 in Kassala, and 101 in Blue Nile, compared to 57 in Nile state. All these levels (apart from Nile state) were significantly higher even than those in the notoriously conflict-affected area of southern Sudan, as well as being significantly higher than in Darfur, which was soon to erupt into conflict (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003, vol. 2, table A1.4, p. 3).

A second key grievance in the North has been land use. The damage done by mechanical agriculture is worth revisiting here. The area of land taken up by rain-fed semi-mechanised agriculture increased from around 2 million feddans at the beginning of the 1970s to some 14 million feddans by 2003—covering the states of El Gedaref, Blue Nile, Upper Nile, White Nile, Sinnar and Southern Kordofan (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003). A vital factor here was the passage of laws undermining the control that local authorities and local people were able to exert over land (Johnson, 2003). The abolition of Native Administration in the northern provinces saw power transferred to provincial councils that were usually dominated by merchants and officials and by those with strong ties to the central Nile region. The 1970 Unregistered Land Act abolished customary rights of land use, setting the scene for the leasing of land to large farms by the state (Johnson, 2003). Paul de Wit describes this legislation as ‘a government tool to facilitate the acquisition of large tracts of land for agricultural schemes, at the expense of rural dwellers and especially pastoralists’ (de Wit, 2001, p. 8). The 1974 Law of Criminal Trespass bolstered the ability of leaseholders to protect their leases from incursions by nomads and small farmers. Under the NIF in 1991, the Civil Transactions Act was amended to prohibit the recognition of customary land rights in the courts. According to Douglas Johnson ‘The cumulative effect of these legal and administrative reforms was that not only did political power continue to be concentrated in the central government, but control of the very land on which people lived and depended was transferred to those with access to that power’ (Johnson, 2003). First under Nimeiri in the 1970s and 1980s, and then under Sadiq el-Mahdi land was increasingly given over to heavily capitalised agriculture, much of it for export, and, as is noted above, this accelerated under the NIF military regime from 1989.¹⁰

From the 1970s onwards, what was essentially a ‘growth’ model of economic development was adopted, which gave little or no consideration to those who were displaced by such expansion. However, many of these unfortunate people did not simply swallow their grievances. Some were attracted to the rebel SPLA, as in the case of many Nuba farmers displaced by semi-mechanised farms in South Kordofan. While some politicians from pastoralist groups benefited greatly from their access to leases on the semi-mechanised schemes, many ordinary pastoralists found that their livelihoods were being disrupted. The result was an intensification of the grievances of many Baggara pastoralist groups in the North. The Baggara have proved their ability to threaten the government in Khartoum historically, for example at the time of the Mahdist uprising in the 1880s and again under Nimeri in 1976. To a significant extent the second civil war from 1983 represented an attempt to divert the grievances of the Baggara away from Khartoum by encouraging them to attack southern Sudanese, benefiting from access to grazing land and cattle and from the hyper-exploitation of southern Sudanese labour (Keen, 1994).

In the Nuba Mountains area expanding semi-mechanised farms encroached on existing land use by Nuba smallholders and by pastoralists. When Baggara cattle herders re-routed herds through Nuba land, the absence of the old Native Administration meant arbitration rested in the hands of government courts, which generally decided in favour of the Baggara rather than the Nuba. Farmers displaced by these trends often

worked as labourers on the semi-mechanised schemes or in the main cities, just as Dinka displaced from the South also worked as cheap or free labour in the North. These processes have been called 'development' and it was not uncommon for senior aid agency staff to register some degree of approval for the growth of semi-mechanised agricultural production in the North (Johnson, 2003; Keen, 1994). Rations were sometimes cut on the rationale of reducing 'dependency' and encouraging absorption into a northern agricultural economy that was more exploitative than was usually acknowledged (Duffield, 2002). Low educational opportunities among the Nuba were a major problem. Many became sympathetic to the SPLA, which at that time did not have a separatist agenda. The SPLA had only a small presence in the Nuba Mountains at first, but that did not prevent the government from backing Baggara militias to attack Nuba villages on a large scale, something that generated additional support for the SPLA (Johnson, 2003). This pattern of generating hostility through largely indiscriminate attacks was replicated in Bahr el Ghazal in the South, where government-backed raids had important economic and political motivations—not least as an outlet for Baggara grievances—and helped to generate the political and military opposition that, in turn, was cited as justification for these attacks (Keen, 1994). Many Nuba were Muslims, but the devastating attacks on them were nevertheless justified in terms of holy war. In practice, insurgency was often equated with having turned against the Islamic faith (Johnson, 2003; African Rights, 1995). An important political strategy in the 1990s was the sale by the government of land in the Nuba Mountains to supporters of the regime.

In the East the Beja peoples of the Red Sea and Kassala areas (Muslim but non-Arab in origin) also saw grazing areas and small-stock rearing areas given over to cotton plantation schemes and semi-mechanized farming. These were concentrated in the southern part of the region. Grievances were compounded by conscription of the Beja into the government's Popular Defence Forces (Johnson, 2003). In January 2004 Darfur's Sudan Liberation Army and the Beja Congress announced a merger of their operations and their struggle against marginalisation (Mans, 2004). The pattern of alienation of land to semi-mechanised farming was replicated in the southern Blue Nile state (Johnson, 2003).

Conflicts over land have also been important in Darfur, exacerbated by drought and relief failures. One key axis of conflict is between northern Abbala ('camel-men') clans, who historically lack their own territorial jurisdiction, and the more sedentary groups, notably the Fur (de Waal, 2005). Neglected camel clans have faced severe ecological pressure and have been recruited into counterinsurgency against groups defined as non-Arab¹¹—in a manner similar to the recruitment of neglected Baggara into counterinsurgency against southern Sudanese and Nuba (CIJ, 2006; Keen, 1994). A related source of conflict in Darfur—one which fuels the rebel Justice and Equality Movement—has been the disillusionment of Muslims with what they took as a promise from the National Islamic Front that they would be incorporated as full citizens of an Islamic state (de Waal, 2005; Johnson, 2003). A third has been the role of Libya in fostering an Arab supremacist ideology (de Waal, 2005).

Changes in rights to, and the use of, land represent fundamental transformations in Sudanese society—and their effects will not be removed by the signing of the SPLM/A-GOS peace accords. Grievances are always more combustible when weaponry is abundant, and the use of militias has led to a proliferation of arms throughout the West and South (e.g. UNDP, 2002; de Waal, 2005; Johnson, 2003). The proliferation of arms has helped to undermine traditional authority at the local level (Lavergne and Weissman, 2003; Hutchinson, 1996).¹²

Meanwhile, the exclusionary nature of economic expansion has helped to reinforce a kind of political and cultural exclusion. According to Douglas Johnson ‘As the main parties (now joined by the NIF) increasingly failed to come up with national policies which satisfied regional grievances, so they relied more on linking Arab nationalism with religion to mobilize support. This only sharpened internal divides and hastened disillusionment among non-Arab Muslims’ (Johnson, 2003, p. 131). Socioeconomic disparities in Khartoum are another source of conflict.

The benefits of war and of peace

If grievance is of continuing importance, so too is ‘greed’. Various groups have been doing well out of war and out of the perverse development processes that fed into—and were fed by—war. It is unlikely that these groups will vanish meekly with the advent of a peace. The precedent of the 1989 coup, which derailed a peace agreement seen by many as threatening, is not a happy one (Keen, 1994). USAID mentions the possibility of ‘spoilers’ who have done well out of the war economy (USAID, 2003). If one pay-off for Khartoum’s key political supporters has been access to semi-mechanised farming leases (e.g. African Rights, 1995), another has been the transfer of state enterprises into the hands of those close to the Khartoum regime (Africa Confidential, 2003a). As is noted above, democracy may be a threat to these interests. During the war in the South and the transitional zone, exploitative trading and the manipulation of humanitarian relief became commonplace. Army officers and northern merchants sometimes worked together to take advantage of artificially high grain prices as well as artificially low livestock and labour prices. At the same time, some of these officers and some northern merchants were backing the Baggara militias that were creating these ‘desperation’ prices by their raids on the southern Sudanese (Keen, 1994). Those displaced by war became an important source of cheap agricultural labour in parts of the North, including on semi-mechanised farms (Macrae et al., 1997). A large-scale return to the South will presumably impose some major strains on these farms.¹³ Aid operations were also an important source of profits. Economic benefits from the current conflict in Darfur may include access to grazing land and livestock (CIJ, 2006). Certainly, looting for livestock seems to have been well organised and even premeditated in Darfur—often with military involvement (Human Rights Watch, 2005). The local purchase of grain for relief has also been profitable for Nile Valley merchants and large-scale grain farmers, and both of these groups are key constituents of the Khartoum regime (CIJ, 2006).

Concluding remarks: implications for WFP

There is a grave risk that the current emphasis, first, on going for growth (whether in oil or agriculture) and, second, on 'the advent of peace' will obscure the needs and grievances of those left behind in a development process that has long been dysfunctional. There are obvious dangers, in other words, in reinventing a wheel that has already fallen off. An influx of foreign capital accompanying relative peace is likely to bring many of the problems that foreign capital brought in the past (e.g. CIJ, 2006). History tells us that some of those marginalised by patterns of development in Sudan have chosen to rebel, while others have had their grievances diverted—in the counterinsurgency—against those even more marginal than themselves. Dysfunctional and violent processes of development must be reversed. They cannot be adequately compensated, but may be legitimised, by attempts to use food aid as a relief or developmental 'safety net' for what is implicitly imagined to be a relatively small group of people. In reality, even in northern Sudan the marginalised constitute a majority of the population. Emergency food aid can sometimes reinforce dysfunctional dynamics, notably by encouraging depopulation of particular areas and by prioritising the 'locking in' of those forcibly displaced—a problem in Darfur today just as it has been in the South and the transitional zone since the beginning of the second civil war (e.g. Keen, 1994). Meanwhile, those who benefited from war may yet, as in 1989, yet derail the peace. It is important to understand the incentives they may have for doing so and to consider ways of persuading them to do otherwise.

WFP should consider the extent to which past relief and developmental interventions have provided compensation and/or legitimacy for violent and exclusionary processes of development that fed into—and flourished during—war. The idea that 'development' can be pursued in the middle of a devastating war is questionable. It also potentially disguises underlying processes of violent exploitation (see particularly Duffield, 2001 and 2002; see also Keen, 1994, 2005). In general, the record of demonstrable developmental benefits from food aid is rather weak (Clay, 2003), and under conditions of war the difficulties are particularly great. Disaster prevention (a key WFP goal) is unlikely to be effective without systematically monitoring—and campaigning against—the processes of violent and exploitative exclusion that have fed war and suffering in Sudan. This has not traditionally been seen as WFP's role and the obstacles to frank talking by UN agencies are not to be underestimated—particularly when it concerns host governments which are, of course, members of the UN. However, so long as WFP and other leading agencies remain stuck in a largely apolitical discourse, it is difficult to see how they can engage effectively with prevention and with processes at the root of violence in Sudan, while elsewhere in the UN system the Security Council has failed to take a strong lead on either general or targeted sanctions in relation to Sudan. UN agencies run the risk of legitimising this inaction through their 'humanitarian' activities. Meanwhile, it may suit the GOS to maintain a continuous emergency in Darfur.

WFP should improve its understanding—and articulation—of what is driving violence in Sudan, including the grievances of the marginalised and the benefits accruing from violence. It should develop a critique of the patterns of development that have

been and are being pursued, avoiding the assumption that a WFP-assisted 'safety net' can support or mollify the numerous victims of an exclusionary model of development. Because WFP has often had a lot of food at its disposal, there may be a natural tendency to claim that food can solve a wide array of problems. It is important not to exaggerate the problems that this food aid can solve or to legitimise dysfunctional processes with such exaggerations.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Under the National Islamic Front military government from 1989, policy reforms affecting agriculture included eliminating a fixed and overvalued exchange rate, something that had imposed implicit taxes on agricultural exports; reforms also curbed the power of commodity boards which had imposed price and marketing controls as well as high marketing charges. Agricultural taxes at state level were removed in 2001 (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003).
- ² Some displacement from oil areas in the South—albeit less violent—is still continuing (ICG, 2006).
- ³ The Sudanese state faces a continuing problem of low revenue which does not seem to have been helped by the policy of trade liberalisation adopted in 1992. Government spending has been correspondingly low (and has been tending to decline). This has negatively affected productive sectors (Suliman, 2005, p. 430).
- ⁴ In assisted returns, the aim is now to assist communities rather than specific groups of IDPs, refugees, etc. (WFP, 2006b). Equitable access to goods and services is seen as a tool for reconciliation (JAM Preparatory Mission). This will tend to increase food aid needs.
- ⁵ Mines are an impediment to resettlement (Grunewald, n.d.). Not all returnees remember their old skills (USAID, 2003). Household structures have been profoundly affected by the war: women head the majority of households in some areas of the South (USAID, 2003). HIV is a major concern and can be expected to impact negatively on food security (e.g. de Waal and Whiteside); an HIV prevalence rate of 7.2 per cent was recorded in Yambio, western Equatoria, in 2000 (UNOCHA, 2004). A complicating factor when it comes to reviving markets is that market centres may provide a nexus for the spread of HIV/AIDS (e.g. de Waal, 2005). Tribal chiefs have been given the key role in reallocating land, and this could easily solidify the ethnic distinctions that have proved so damaging and so prone to manipulation by Khartoum and by the British when Sudan was under colonial rule. The democratic credentials of the tribal chiefs are also doubtful (Branch and Mampilly, 2005). Most CANS (Civil Authority of New Sudan) officials are ex-SPLA soldiers, giving the military a great deal of influence in civil affairs (Branch and Mampilly, 2005). According to Branch and Mampilly 'Considering that Southern rebellions have identified economic and social marginalisation as one of their chief grievances against the Khartoum government, further economic and social marginalisation by CANS administrators at local levels would be met with serious protest' (Branch and Mampilly, 2005, p. 16). There are dangers for southerners in looking to international assistance rather than creating institutions that draw support from a popular constituency (Branch and Mampilly, 2005; Tvedt, 1998).
- ⁶ The rate of decline has been slowing (World Bank, 2003).
- ⁷ A proliferation of currencies in the South further complicates trading (FAO/WFP, 2002). When transport links are weak and the ability to store crops is reduced, seasonal fluctuations in crop prices will

usually be high, and these may adversely affect security when a family is forced to sell produce cheaply after the harvest (Goodbody, n.d.).

- ⁸ Gross primary school enrollment was only 34.1% in Blue Nile, 34.6% in South Kordofan and 39.9% in South Darfur, 21.5% in West Darfur, 44.9% in Red Sea and 37.5% in Kassala; this compares with 88% in Northern, 78.9% in Nile, 82.8% in Khartoum and 81.7% in el-Gezira (table A2.2, World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003; vol. 2, p. 17). The ratio of doctors to population ranges from 1 per 5,000 in the el-Gezira to 1 per 700,000 in West Darfur (GOS/EC, n.d.). Clearly, population size will make a difference, but development spending in different states in 2000 showed some striking regional disparities: SD 5,741 million in Khartoum state; SD 660 million in Nile state; only SD 30.8 million in Blue Nile; and just SD 12.1 million in Kassala (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003; vol. 2, pp. 71–72). The population growth rate for 1998–2003 has been given as 3.2% in North Darfur, 2.4% in West Darfur and 3.5% in South Darfur, compared with a rate of 2.6% in Sudan as a whole (World Bank/Government of Sudan, 2003, vol. 2, p. 1). Since at least some of the conflict in Darfur arises from disputes over scarce resources such as fertile land, this relatively high rate of population increase could be a worry.
- ⁹ A 2002 UN study notes the widespread fear in the Nuba Mountains and that ‘... the cease-fire risks exacerbating latent conflict by enabling pastoral groups to resume migration routes that had been long cut-off, providing the security for mechanised farming schemes to seek new opportunities for expansion, and even triggering communal tensions over land as returnees start returning home in large numbers’ (Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, 2002). Abyei (granted a referendum on its own status) remains a huge bone of contention, not least because of Messiriya (Baggara) fears about access to grazing and GOS fears about access to oil (ICG, 2006).
- ¹⁰ The 1998 Local Government Act conferred important responsibilities on the province and localities in resolving land disputes, but a strong level of central control remains (de Wit, 2001).
- ¹¹ To some extent ethnicity has been a malleable concept and a product of language, culture and ancestry. The temptation to identify oneself as ‘Arab’—and avoid *janjaweed* militia attacks—has been considerable (Patrick, 2005).
- ¹² While space does not allow detailed consideration of the wider strategic context, shifts here could also turn grievances in Sudan into open conflict. For example, the East might be further destabilised by conflict in Ethiopia/Eritrea.
- ¹³ According to Young, the leading elements of the ruling National Congress Party have ‘long since been displaced by security operatives for who Islam was only a slogan’ (Young, 2005, p. 535). The security services have strong links with the CIA, illustrated by the special treatment given to Salah Gosh, the head of the National Security Agency (Young, 2005). Young comments ‘The security cabal that controls the NCP does not support the peace agreement and its very existence would be threatened by a democratic transformation’ (Young, 2005, p. 546).

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