RISKS OF CONSOCIATIONALISM IN SUDAN

Jeffrey Saltzman

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Approved by
Advisor: Andrew Reynolds
Reader: Jonathan Hartlyn
Reader: Bereket Selassie
ABSTRACT

JEFFREY SALTZMAN: Risks of Consociationalism in Sudan
(Under the direction of Andrew Reynolds)

Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is flawed and representative of many weaknesses of consociationalism. The CPA misunderstands the root causes of conflict in Sudan, oversimplifying Sudanese history to a conflict between particular groups in its Arab north and African south. In the CPA’s efforts to mitigate the grounds for future conflict between the north and south, it divides the new Sudanese state largely between those groups. However, Sudan is much more complicated than the CPA suggests. The country is much better conceived as a scattering of peripheral regions, groups from which have recurrently battled the central state for fairer shares of public resources. These grievances motivate ongoing violence in western and eastern Sudan, where armed groups rebel against their marginalization from the CPA’s state institutions; those grievances can be observed today within parts of the north and south, too. I conclude with recommendations for how the CPA should be amended.
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Introduction

The design of democratic institutions is easily taken for granted – except when that design is deeply flawed. Political institutions – no matter the society in which they exist – help set the political tone by crafting incentives for political behavior and by imparting different spins on political campaigning; they outline the parameters of power within society; and they frame procedural governance, involving executive, judicial, and legislative functions and interrelationships, electoral rules, and modes of vertical and horizontal accountability.¹ For these reasons, the study of political institutions remains a major preoccupation of political scientists, who may debate the extent to which institutions matter to politics, but rarely dispute outright that institutions do, in fact, matter.

Still, despite something of a consensus about the importance of institutions among academics, policymakers do not always seem to be of the same mindset. The disconnect between, on the one hand, the lessons learned by academics about the real and considerable consequences of political institutions, and, on the other, the decisions rendered by policymakers when they are tasked with helping to appropriate new political institutions for societies in need of political reform, is worrisome indeed. This is so because, firstly, it speaks to a broader antagonism between the academic and policymaking communities, in which each at times may view the other with a stubborn condescension – i.e., when academics condescend about policymakers for ignoring academic conclusions, and when policymakers condescend about academics for forming those academic conclusions in isolation of ‘realities on the ground.’ In such an environment, of course, both parties are responsible for impeding a collaboration that could yield needed and lasting results.

And secondly – and indeed vitally – when institutions are appropriated for a society that do not dovetail with the true needs and realities of that society, potentially grave consequences may ensue. This statement is less melodramatic than it may appear. In Angola in 1992 for instance, after a long and brutal civil war, policymakers attempted to graft a set of political institutions onto the southern African country that, even without the benefit of hindsight, were very unlikely to help keep the peace there. Sure enough, not long after transitional elections were held, the country spiraled back into conflict, propelled by a range of factors that unambiguously included a collection of inappropriate political institutions – in that case a presidential ‘winner-take-all’ system that failed to provide the election’s losers with any incentive to play the role of loyal, peaceful

¹ See, for example, Larry Diamond, Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
opposition. Even in Iraq today, similarly, we hear frequent warnings that without a fundamental revision of the constitution – an effort particularly directed at reshaping federalist relations – hostilities between Iraqi Sunni, Kurd, and Shiite groups threaten to spill over into a newer and more violent phase of conflict.

In fact, these Angolan and Iraqi examples point to a subject matter warranting considerably greater collaboration between the academic and policymaking communities – and to a matter that constitutes the overarching focus of this paper. That matter is the issue of designing democracy in highly divided societies. Over the past two decades especially, this matter has been the recipient of substantial attention, as academics and policymakers alike have struggled to design institutions that might help induce former group rivals to settle differences peacefully in democratic fora. It is a matter that underwrote noteworthy transitions of recent yesterday (e.g., in Bosnia and South Africa), is a matter at the heart of transitions today (e.g., in Afghanistan and Iraq), and is a matter that promises to be central to the transitions of tomorrow (e.g., in Burma, and in much of the Middle East).

Drawing upon a body of case examples derived from the past few decades, a theoretical tradition has emerged that attempts to explain which institutions most reliably aid divided societies as they strive, under democratic rules, to overcome the group conflicts of their past. Given the sheer diversity of these cases however – not to mention the diversity of the results of their democratic experiments – it is more than a bit surprising that this theoretical tradition essentially is monopolized by a single view. That view – the consociational view most commonly associated with Arend Lijphart – provides further focus to this paper. Consociationalism, or at least some forms of power-sharing democracy very clearly inspired by it, has become the institutional design of choice in divided societies experimenting with democracy. Yet while there is much appealing about consociationalism in theory, in practice sometimes it leaves much to be desired, not only for helping to aid democracy, but also for helping to keep the peace. Explaining why this can be so constitutes my main task here.

To do this, I will examine in detail a recent high-profile consociational design: that at the core of Sudan’s 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Why do I choose the CPA in particular? Chiefly, because the experience Sudan is presently undergoing can teach us much about the ability of institutional design

\[2\] I use ‘highly divided societies’ here to refer to those societies in which ascriptive identities are particularly salient, and in which levels of hostility between ascriptive groups are substantial. Such societies’ ‘groups,’ in other words, are divided along national, ethnic, racial, or religious lines.
either to help or hinder divided societies’ transitions from conflict to peace and democracy. After all, Sudan has been horribly and consistently ravaged by group conflict for most of the past fifty years – the cessation of hostilities between rival groups in its north and south, in fact, brought to an end Africa’s longest-running civil war in one of its most underdeveloped and repressive states. As a result, we need to draw as many conclusions from this case as we can, for if we can pinpoint the effect of institutions on Sudan’s remarkable transition, we ought to have a much easier time understanding which institutions are needed in other corners of the world still plagued by conflict and/or undemocratic rule.

Moreover, Sudan’s CPA bears many of the hallmarks of consociational democratic design. As I shall illustrate later in this paper, the core logic of consociationalism informs almost all aspects of the architecture of the new Sudanese state, from the executive branch and legislature, to the civil service, to the allocation of power and resources between central and sub-central levels of government. On account of its consociational influences, then, the CPA can teach us much about the theory of consociationalism itself. We can learn, in other words, about those features of consociationalism – in both theory and practice – that seem most amenable to Sudan’s institutional needs, and also about those that do not. We can also learn more generally about some of the key strengths and weaknesses of consociationalism as a conflict-reducing and democracy-aiding tool.

Is consociationalism, as it is enshrined in the CPA, the best institutional design for Sudan, today and over the longer term? On the one hand, yes, it is undoubtedly a positive starting point for Sudan’s transition. The fact that the north and south are now at peace with one another is a significant and welcome accomplishment – one that might have continued to be elusive if the CPA did not contain what it does. That these parties also agreed, on paper at least, that the surest basis for peace is democracy, furthermore, is very encouraging.

However, as I shall argue throughout this paper, the CPA, at least in its present construction, is flawed and representative of many of the weaknesses of consociational theory in general; and without amendment to the institutions it appropriates for the new Sudanese state, the peace and democracy for which the CPA is intended might be jeopardized over the longer term.

In particular, I take issue with the CPA because I believe it to fundamentally misunderstand the root causes of conflict in Sudan in the first place. As I shall make clear, the CPA essentially reduces Sudanese history to a conflict between the north and south; in turn, in its efforts to mitigate the grounds for future conflict
between the north and south, it divides the new Sudanese state largely between them. However, Sudan is much more complicated than the CPA’s simple north-south construction suggests. In fact, Sudan is much better conceived of as a scattering of peripheral regions, all of which have recurrently battled the central state for their fair share of public resources.

The CPA, nonetheless, is largely indifferent to this history. Though I also believe there to be other key flaws in the CPA’s design – which I also shall describe, linking them in addition to some of the key flaws of consociational theory more broadly – I stress the CPA’s indifference to legitimate regional concerns in the west and east. The essential point is that consociational agreements like the CPA, when they pre-define which groups in society are entitled to which allocations of state power and resources, at the expense of allowing all groups to compete democratically for those resources, is an inherently unstable construction. The great risk – as manifest already in Sudan – is that those groups not pre-defined as entitled to state power and resources might mobilize violently, because they believe their concerns cannot be expressed democratically. In such a context, not only do the cleavages that have long divided a society not wither away, but both peace and democracy are rendered much more difficult to attain.

Organization of Paper

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section I overviews and critiques the theory of consociationalism. Consociationalism, in appropriate contexts, can be a powerful tool for easing conflict and underwriting democracy in divided societies, particularly when the elites atop a society’s respective groups enjoy wide political backing for inter-group compromise. However, in its efforts to guarantee shares of power to some groups, consociationalism can at the same time reify the group divisions that stoked conflict in the past, and in the worst cases can motivate those groups not specifically guaranteed a share of power to resort to violence. At the least, I suggest, consociationalism must be sensitive to the causes of violence in the societies onto which its correspondent institutions are grafted.

Section II briefly traces recent Sudanese political history. I argue that this history, typically portrayed as a battle for control over the Sudanese state between long-privileged Arabs in the north and long-repressed Africans in the south, is better conceived of as a battle for more equitable distributions of state resources between the central government and a collection of regions in the Sudanese periphery. I subsequently maintain
that the consociational 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) - which I will present and analyze in detail in Section III - very clearly adopts the ‘north vs. south’ version of Sudanese history. Lacking an appreciation of the ‘center vs. periphery’ dynamics underpinning Sudan, in other words, the CPA misdiagnoses the core of Sudan’s afflictions, and as a result may not be the surest institutional means of nursing Sudan to peaceful and democratic health.

While I applaud the CPA for encouraging peace between the north and south, I nevertheless argue in Sections IV and V that the agreement’s key weaknesses mirror many of the central arguments against consociationalism. Section IV presents evidence that raises doubts about the ability of the main political parties in the north and south to fulfill all of the new responsibilities allocated to them by the CPA. In so doing, Section IV focuses attention more broadly on the danger of consociational institutions that are unable to evolve alongside shifting political dynamics on the ground. Section V refers to conflicts in Sudan’s west and east that can potentially undermine the CPA’s implementation. Both of these conflicts, though motivated by historic grievances concerning the overly-centralized Sudanese state, have intensified recently because western and eastern groups feel marginalized by the new CPA-appropriated state architecture. Drawing upon personal interviews conducted with prominent eastern leaders keeping offices in Egypt and Eritrea, I highlight the effect of the CPA on new violence in Sudan’s periphery. In this way, Section V invokes more general critiques of consociationalism that warn about the destabilizing ‘spillover effects’ that may ensue when some groups in society are directly empowered by consociationalism while others are not.

Section VI compares the CPA with Sudan’s only past experiment with power sharing: the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement. I maintain that this formula for sharing power between the north and south, whose unraveling gave way to almost two decades of uninterrupted civil war, was a failure for many of the same reasons that make the CPA look so fragile. If Sudan wishes to turn the corner away from its conflict-ridden, undemocratic past, therefore, the CPA will merit some modification. I present a few institutional suggestions that might buttress the agreement in Section VII.

Section I: Consociationalism in Theory and Practice

Almost unanimously, scholars treat democracy as a goal worth pursuing. How to achieve it in the context of divided societies in conflict, however, motivates considerable discord, not only in academia, but in
policy circles too – one need only witness the acrimony over democratic institutional design in Iraq for proof of the issue’s contemporary salience. Central to this debate are notoriously challenging questions - What motivates historic rivals to compromise in the democratic game? What political institutions best facilitate those compromises? And upon whose shoulders should those compromises rest - National and regional power-brokering elites? The publics who bore the brunt of so many years of conflict? Popular movements who command legitimacy but not necessarily arms and men?

Although not without its critics, the dominant model addressing these questions is the consociational model championed by Arend Lijphart. Consociationalism seeks to alleviate the destabilizing byproducts of winner-take-all majoritarian democracy by guaranteeing the leaders of all significant groups in society a direct stake in political decision-making. Believing that most conflicts in divided societies can be ameliorated with basic tools of democratic political engineering, rather than by means of authoritarian control, or through an exhaustive process of partition to create new homogeneous micro-states, consociationalism prioritizes the cooperation and sharing of power between political elites. That is, when group leaders are deliberately empowered to make decisions consensually, the exclusivist group loyalties that formerly stoked violent conflict start breaking down; in fact, they are replaced by more peaceful democratic disputes over the allocation of state resources. Consociationalism’s end goal, then, is stable democracy based on post-election inter-group compromise.

Lijphart advances four institutional tools for this purpose: the “primary” institutions of executive power-sharing and group autonomy, and the “secondary” institutions of proportionality and mutual veto. Executive power-sharing refers to a “grand coalition” government in the executive, typically parliamentary, whereby the leaders of all major groups are ensured representation in the cabinet. Group autonomy, suggesting federalism, devolves decision-making authority over issues of central concern to a society’s respective groups, like cultural affairs, language and education. Proportionality allocates equitably public resources like


government seats, civil service positions, and public funds, generally according to share of the vote under a list-PR electoral system. The mutual veto allows each group to protect its vital interests by investing each of them with the means to reject prejudicial political decisions.

For some, consociationalism is dangerous because it so explicitly recognizes ascriptive identity. The worry is that by organizing political representation around membership in particular ethnic, racial, caste, religious, or language groups, a society’s divisions are reified, potentially motivating further violence and stunting democratic progress – or at very least precluding the withering of such polarized group blocs. If the entire state architecture is organized around group identities, in other words, members of society will never develop the over-arching ‘national’ identity needed to help prevent future inter-group conflict and foster democratic compromise. Instead, they will continue to define themselves in opposition to other sub-national groups and render politics as ‘zero-sum,’ not seeing themselves as Sudanese, for instance, but instead as northerners, southerners, or African westerners engaged in a constant battle for scarce state assets.

As evidence of the danger that consociationalism will reify ascriptive identity to the detriment of democratization, critics very often cite consociational-style democratic designs in Lebanon and Bosnia. In the former case, the 1989 Ta’if Accords divided the presidential cabinet equally between Muslims and Christians; they also divided the legislature equally between both groups and among each of their ‘confessional’ sub-groups.6 In Bosnia, similarly, the 1994 Dayton Accords divided state power almost exclusively along ethnic lines, with specific resource allocations for Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats at all levels of government.7 But while each settlement has been effective in terms of maintaining an uneasy peace, democratization in both cases has been fitful and uneven. In Bosnia especially, elections are mere ethnic censuses, with multi-ethnic political parties that cross-cut traditional group cleavages failing to emerge.

Consociationalism’s response to such criticism is that it is merely being realistic about the nature of identity in the most divided societies. Rather than overlooking the salience of ascriptive cleavages or trying to wish them away, in other words, consociationalism defers to them, using them as the starting point for facilitating inter-group accommodation. The fact is that, in some societies, Hutu or Tutsi, Irish or Catholic, is


how individuals see themselves and organize their lives. Better to acknowledge these identities and seek moderation from there than to deny them and risk their future mobilization by extremist group entrepreneurs, the consociational argument goes.

Less controversially, consociationalism is celebrated for its inclusiveness. Acknowledging that conflict often is fueled by one group ruling to the detriment of another,\(^8\) consociationalism enables all groups instead to share among them decision-making authority. This sharing, moreover, is highly visible, encouraging the mass public to moderate its views of other groups because their leaders are seen to be doing the same. Consociationalism likewise is lauded for its practicality: often, a power-sharing model is the surest means of convincing groups that democracy is preferable to protracted conflict. Especially in cases of a negotiated transition, in which the outgoing regime expects to be a minority party under democratic rules, power-sharing is a rational instrument for enlisting their peaceful cooperation in the future – they prefer the guarantee of some power to the risk of none.

Consociationalism, though the object of frequent attacks, a few quite vitriolic,\(^9\) remains the primary model of institutionalizing democracy in divided societies. In fact, few other models have been attempted seriously. Consociationalism also has been faulted methodologically for its imprecise definitions and measurements,\(^10\) though these critiques often are undermined by their failure to propose alternative theories.

However, more tractable criticisms of consociationalism, many leveled most famously by Donald Horowitz,\(^11\) deserve consideration. One such critique concerns consociationalism’s elite dominance. Lijphart attributes the success of consociationalism to “cooperation by the leaders of different groups which transcends

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\(^10\) Lustick 1997.

the segmental and subcultural cleavages" of their societies. But he is less clear about how cooperation at the top (frequently in the executive cabinet) translates into cooperation below (among antagonistic groups living side-by-side in society). The irony of consociationalism is that the democracy for which it is intended often comes at the expense of mass involvement in its institutions. So-called “elite cartels” often risk a shortage of popular legitimacy, frequently alienating the publics upon whose support they largely depend. As Sisk reminds us in his discussion of the shortcomings of consociationalism in Northern Ireland, “even though political elites may agree on a formula for accommodation, peace cannot endure without grassroots backing.”

But issues of democratic legitimacy are not the only dangers to which consociational leaders must be sensitive. They must be wary of their flanks as well. Divided societies are known both for the moderate and hardliner factions within their respective groups. As moderates forge inter-group compromises, hardliners – typically from the security apparatus or otherwise chauvinistic conservative factions within the group - tend to brand them “sell-outs.” This phenomenon is true whether in consociational societies or otherwise. However hardliners can play roles relatively more destabilizing under consociationalism precisely because the power-sharing and compromises there are so visible.

Rwanda in 1993-4 provides damning evidence of this point exactly. The Arusha Accords there, creating a power sharing regime split evenly between ethnic Hutus and Tutsis, was attacked by the extreme Hutu nationalist Committee for the Defense of the Republic (CDR) as an abandonment of Hutu power. Thereafter, the more moderate Hutu political leadership struggled to keep the Hutu camp in line as the same time as it compromised with the Tutsis. By 1994, the agreement collapsed when President Habyarimana, already politically weakened on account of right-wing Hutu dissension, was assassinated by these Hutu forces.

In short, the very presence of a group leader in a multi-group coalition provides an easy platform for counter-leaders’ attacks – attacks most often political in nature, granted, but in extreme cases like the Rwandan

12 Lijphart 1977, p.571.


15 An ‘abandonment’ particularly because the representation guaranteed to Hutus in the new power-sharing government was less than their share of the total Rwandan population, and because the proportion of Tutsis in the Rwandan military’s high-command would be equal to the Hutu proportion for the first time in history.
one, potentially much more severe in nature. In any case, in most consociational scenarios, moderate leaders are forced to expend considerable political energy shoring up their groups’ support. And in the process, consociational (i.e., inter-group) compromises are rendered quite difficult to achieve, casting doubt on Lijphart’s assertion that in consociational democracy “political elites enjoy a high degree of freedom of choice, and that they may resort to consociational methods of decision-making as a result of the rational recognition of the centrifugal tendencies inherent in plural societies and a deliberate effort to counteract these dangers.”

In fact, the “rationality” supposedly informing consociational leaders may be overstated, even naive. Consociationalism’s proponents may misunderstand the motivation of group leaders to compromise. For instance, as in the case of Somalia in 1991, power sharing was seen by clan leaders not as a means of ending conflict and spurring democratization, but as a means of temporarily re-grouping before mounting new attacks. According to Spears, “clan leaders in post-Siad Barre Somalia were willing to share a nominal portion of power for the purposes of achieving a more favorable balance which would help them overcome their opponents … indeed, Somalia was as much an exercise in building cross-clan coalitions as it was a military confrontation.”

Often, the desire to avoid future loss on the battlefield or in the macro-economy is a strong motivation for group leaders to negotiate peace and enter into a consociational arrangement. But this motivation is not equally as strong in all cases, especially in bipolar states. Though the motivation for consociationalism can be expected from weak minorities, it may be less likely when a majority group is credibly unchallenged for control over the state, or when one group owns the bulk of state economic resources while another is comparatively impoverished. Consociationalism, in other words, encounters difficulty explaining why stronger groups might cede some of their power to share with another. “A spirit of moderation and compromise,” Lijphart’s rationale, may not always be enough, and relying on leaders’ inherent statesmanship may be too wishful.

Moreover, consociationalism, though rooted in the concept of sharing, does not necessarily guarantee power to all key groups in a society. In such cases, those groups that feel excluded from the consociational arrangements can be particularly troublesome. Indeed, a major risk of consociationalism is that its rules for

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16 Lijphart 1977, p.573 (emphasis added).


19 Lijphart 1977, p. 66.
power-sharing at the top tend to be formalized in a way that can become divorced from fluidity and shifting political loyalties at the grassroots.

On the one hand, especially when several smaller groups aim to convince a single group in control of the state to share its power, those smaller groups tend to leverage their negotiating power by consolidating temporarily under the leadership of the strongest opposition movement - strength in numbers, in other words, sometimes even irrespective of group, ideological, or related political differences. But once consociationalism is agreed upon and the day-to-day process of democratic governance unfolds, those opposition groups do not always coexist as easily with their former spokesperson and leader. In turn, the previous need for power-sharing at the center between one group and its opposition is supplanted by the need for power-sharing within that opposition; and if that power-sharing does not occur, democracy can be jeopardized. This was the case in Ethiopia in 1991, when some 31 parties and organizations agreed to share power under the over-arching leadership of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Over the span of just a year, however, those smaller parties and organizations felt marginalized by EPRDF rule, ultimately withdrawing from the power-sharing arrangement, and giving way to a long period of one-party rule in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, for various reasons, some significant groups often opt not to participate in - or are barred from participating in - the negotiations leading up to consociationalism, or in its first elections. This is very dangerous for the prospects for democracy in those places for two key reasons.

First, if power-sharing rules are formalized constitutionally and exclude groups’ political representation a priori, these groups might feel alienated ever from joining the democratic game in the future. This is a recipe for destabilization, like insurgency and terrorism, or, as in the Rwandan worst-case when the extremist CDR was excluded from participating in the Arusha negotiations, the beginnings of genocide. At the least, seeing some groups in power may motivate other groups – and especially entrepreneurial leaders - to declare that they, too, deserve a seat at the table. The resulting regimes are often unwieldy and prone to deadlocked government. In the extreme, a multiplying number of insurgencies, all in some way motivated by their exclusion from power sharing, can plunge entire countries back into chaos. Congo after the Lusaka Accords in 1998, which enshrined a power sharing transitional administration led by the Congolese Union for Democracy (RCD), aptly illustrates this point. As Tull and Mehler write, “as soon as the political terms of

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20 Spears 2000, p.106.
Lusaka had been established, the defections from the RDC and the proliferation of smaller insurgencies started in earnest, including the RDC-National and the RCD-ML which progressively fragmented even further into factions led by the Wamba, Tibasima, Nyamwisi, and Lubanga.”

And second, the institutions selected for consociationalism in the period immediately following conflict often are unsuited for the long-term democratic needs of divided societies. Consociationalism can be instrumental for negotiating peace but obstructive for facilitating democratic stability - the institutions needed for mitigating conflict, after all, are not always the same as those needed for stable and long-term democracy. This point is Maphai’s exactly, when he reminds us in his argument for amending South African consociationalism that “the essence of democratization is change.” As democracy becomes normalized, of course, ascriptive loyalties may shift to, or overlap with, ties to region, class, or ideology. Moreover, as power-sharing institutions start inculcating the inter-group compromises that stable democracy requires, the need often arises for new or reformed institutions to carry the process further. Consociationalism’s advocates have been remarkably resistant to recognizing the dynamism unleashed by the institutions they prescribe. And one need only look as far as Bosnia for proof that consociational structures can ease hostilities at the same time as they breed democratic stagnation.

Finally, consociationalism – like any institutional design – needs to be very sensitive to the peculiar and significant historical realities of the societies over which it will be grafted. If the design is to be effective for helping to aid peace and democracy, it must appreciate the causes for conflict and non-democracy in the first place. As I shall illustrate in the next section nevertheless, the CPA is rooted in a flawed understanding of the causes of Sudan’s troubled history. In particular, its failure to grapple with all of Sudan’s regions’ feelings of marginalization from the central state explains why violence is still such a threat in Sudan, even after the CPA’s signing.


Section II: Understanding Violence in Sudan

Important to understanding Sudan today is to reorient, firstly, the over-simplified way in which its longest-running conflict has been framed. The bulk of the violence that has crippled Sudan almost uninterruptedly since its independence from Britain in 1956 is often depicted as a primarily ethno-religious clash in which the majority Arab population, concentrated in the north, has imposed conservative Muslim customs and institutions on the remaining African-Christian and animist populations of the south. That is, an aggressive, Islamic fundamentalist regime seated in Khartoum has brutalized African southern populations, fueling north-south clashes for much of the past five decades.

Accounts of Sudan that stress these themes, certainly, are useful starting points. They are perpetuated by famed scholarly accounts like Holt’s history of Sudan, now in its fifth edition, which continues to refer to “the traditional structure [of Sudanese politics] which, though weakened, still prevails … [characterized by] Arab, African, northerner, southerner, Muslim and non-Muslim;”26 another popular version, Wai’s The African-Arab Conflict in Sudan, beginning with its title, further entrenches the pared-down stereotype.27 But if we are to conceptualize how Sudan arrived at this point today – chiefly, if we may assess how the regime in Khartoum and southern rebels agreed to the historic CPA, and if in turn we might assess the prospects for the CPA’s success – we must move beyond over-simplified renderings that reduce Sudan to the Arab Muslim north vs. the African non-Muslim south.

Thus, some deconstruction of the primary misperceptions of Sudan is needed. First, blame for long-running civil war must not be targeted squarely at Khartoum. Scholarship on Sudan scarcely conceals its sympathy for the southern rebels; the regime in power is consistently portrayed as the enemy in this conflict, and as the primary barrier to peace.28 But while Khartoum’s recalcitrance and brutal divide-and-rule tactics have been instrumental drivers of violence, distasteful political and military practices also characterize the south. In fact, the leadership in Khartoum and of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), the key southern actor, both are well-known for their autocratic ways. At various times, both have been obstacles to peace. And it’s clear that either side has the capacity to jeopardize the hope for a democratic Sudan embodied by the CPA.

Secondly, the over two million conflict-related casualties Sudan has suffered since its independence are not the result of a straightforward north-south civil war between religious adversaries. To be sure, religion is a key underwriter of conflict in Sudan, but religion, by itself, does not fully represent the range of motivations for violence there. For example, the majority of Sudan’s Muslims do not practice fundamentalist Islam: the ethnic Beja, for instance, Muslims concentrated in Sudan’s east, have rebelled against the government in part for its strict application of sharia and forced ‘Islamization’; so too have, at times, the Nuba of central Sudan, and the Fur in the west.

Third, several complicated and often interrelated civil conflicts have preoccupied Sudan for decades, only some of which have involved the SPLM, and many of which have assumed a strongly ethnic dimension. When we document opposition to Khartoum from the northeast, east, south, and west, a picture starts to form of Sudan as a wheel with fractured spokes between its center and periphery.

In fact, the single most important motivator of violence in Sudan has been the perception by numerous, diverse groups of political, economic, religious and/or cultural marginalization by Khartoum. Whether their grievances concern oil, land, water, political representation or religious rights, deep-seated group-based differences over the issue of oppressive centralized political administration, and the sectarian, racial, and regional imbalances that it conduces, unite the diversity of conflicts that have devastated Sudan for the past half-century. The ambition for some form of self-rule independent of Khartoum’s heavy-handedness, and Khartoum’s direct and proxy attempts to counteract those ambitions by governing over all of Sudan uniformly, frames contemporary Sudanese political history.

Sudan, Africa’s largest country, is the home to about 35 million people, approximately 35% of whom reside in the south. Some 400 languages are spoken there, with Arabic, English, and Nubian most commonly understood. By some estimates, 50 ethnic groups reside in Sudan, further subdivided into 570 smaller populations.29 Since achieving independence from colonial rule, Sudan has failed to manage peacefully this incredible ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity: centralized rule has been imposed over groups and regions with long traditions of independence and autonomy.

At least in part, this failure to manage diversity peacefully owes to the artificiality of the state itself. Many of the tensions that have made Sudan home to civil war for almost all of its post-independence history

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can be traced to the exigencies of colonial administration. The British, harnessing control over the strategic Nile River valley, assembled contemporary Sudan’s borders with little regard for the ethnic, cultural, and religious relationships that their cartographers’ borders might be disrupting. A multitude of independent tribal kingdoms were hastily consolidated under a central colonial administration to which they felt no natural connection.

For logistical convenience, additionally, the British administered southern Sudan as autonomous from the north – because the bulk of Sudan’s resources, mainly agricultural and water-based, were located in the north, the colonial regime focused its attention there, excluding southern voices from consultative processes.\(^{30}\) These colonial decisions, of course, had far-reaching consequences, no doubt feeding into the civil war that began when the southern Anyanya movement rose in protest to post-independence pro-north government policies, in addition to militating against the emergence of anything resembling a truly Sudanese national identity.

The National Congress Party (NCP) has ruled Sudan since Omar al-Bashir took power in a military coup in 1989. If its means of accession to power was not uncommon, the length of its rule certainly has been. Sudan’s post-colonial political history has been a tumultuous mix of successive military coups and short-lived parliamentary rule, all under the control of a small clique of northern and central Nile Valley Arabs. The first coup occurred in 1958, installing a military government that was forced to relinquish power in 1964. After five years of civilian rule, the military again ascended, led by Numayri, who deftly clung to power until he was deposed in 1985; the succeeding coalition, led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, was itself overthrown by Bashir in the late 1980s.

Amid the political turmoil in Khartoum, Sudan has been at civil war almost continuously since independence, with the exception of a lull during Numayri’s reign in the 1970s. The pursuit of greater autonomy from riverine-Arab-dominated Khartoum has driven the violence. The SPLM, for example, fought for greater southern political autonomy and access to national economic resources while resisting the imposition of alien religious and judicial systems, like sharia-based institutions; others, like the people of the Nuba Mountains, Abyei, and the Southern Blue Nile, regions rich in natural resources, have fought for control over

revenues extracted from their soil;31 similarly, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equity Movement (JEM) in the western Darfur region today fight against political and economic marginalization from Khartoum. The Beja community and other movements in the east, clustered around Port Sudan, demand greater wealth and power sharing with Khartoum, in addition to being recognized as the sole representative of the people of eastern Sudan.

The strength of these movements has varied widely. But the SPLM has long been Khartoum’s greatest nemesis. Under the leadership of Colonel John Garang, the SPLM emerged in the 1980s, ultimately consolidating control over much of the southern third of the country and pockets of territory in central and eastern Sudan. Khartoum’s ability to withstand SPLM aggression, not to mention other movements’ pressure for self-rule, has owed to its power of the purse and its effective divide-and-rule practices. A country in size of over one million square miles, Sudan’s is blessed with a fertile agricultural crescent in the north and central regions, and substantial mineral deposits; the aggressive development of the oil sector, which began in 1978, produces nearly 400,000 barrels of crude oil per day. Marshalling and hoarding this revenue, rather than redistributing it across Sudan, Khartoum has funded an extensive military apparatus.

Moreover, Khartoum has skillfully manipulated rival movements against one another, limiting alliances that could seriously threaten its grip on power. This tactic is most illustratively on display in Darfur today, whereby the government subsidizes local Arab militia to attack the SLA and JEM. Similarly, although today the SPLM and Sudan Popular Defense Forces (SPDF) have forged an alliance, Khartoum provoked them against one another in the late 1980s when it funneled resources to the SPDF in an effort to undermine SPLM strength.32 Not only was this a clever military tactic, but it also helped to undermine the political unity of southerners in opposition to the northern regime, because Khartoum’s sponsorship of the SPDF stoked interethnic hostilities, pitting Nuer SPDF supporters against Dinka followers of the SPLM.

Finally, Khartoum has employed ruthless offensive strategies to counter challenges to its dominance. The remote Nuba Mountain region, for example, has been the scene of battles between the government and the

31 Commonly referenced as Sudan’s ‘Transitional Areas’ or ‘Three Areas,’ each of these regions lies in the geographic north but have fought alongside the SPLM for almost two decades. Their grievances concern control over local resources, but also involve resistance to the imposition of Islamic institutions and opposition to divide and rule policies. For a helpful overview, see International Crisis Group. “Sudan’s Other Wars,” (2003).

local population for almost two decades. Khartoum employed a scorched earth policy there, effectively halting food production. Furthermore, until the recent ceasefire agreement, Khartoum had not allowed vital humanitarian relief into the region for thirteen years.

Section III: The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement

The CPA’s signing marked the culmination of more than ten years of negotiation between Khartoum and the SPLM, mediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). A collection of eight detailed protocols inked primarily since 2002, the CPA sets out political, economic, security and judicial arrangements for an interim period of six and a half years. Its stated goal is to promote stability, unity, development, democracy and reconciliation throughout Sudan. In addition to the important institutional features outlined below, the CPA sets out a clear sequence and schedule of benchmarks for the interim period including: population census by the end of the second year to determine the appropriate proportion of the parties in the relevant institutions (2006); general elections at all levels of government by the end of the third year (2007); and referendum and independence for southern Sudan and Abyei and at the end of the six and half years (2011).

The CPA is indeed consociational, as reflected by its provisions for: power sharing in major national government branches, the civil service, and the security sector; national wealth sharing; regional autonomies; variations on minority vetoes; and subnational power sharing. The agreement treats the NCP and the SPLM as the dominant parties in the north and south respectively, though it reserves a small percentage of power for ‘other’ northern and southern political movements.
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Government of Sudan (GOS)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Presidential Executive</strong></th>
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<td>Interim Power Sharing Presidency: northern President (Bashir), southern First Vice President (The President of Southern Sudan: Kiir), northern Second Vice President.</td>
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| **Presidential Cabinet** | Council of Ministers appointed according to the following percentages: 52% NCP, 28% SPLM, 14% other northerners, 6% other southerners. |

| **National Bicameral Legislature** | Entrenched power sharing in the National Assembly: 52% NCP, 28% SPLM, 14% other northerners, and 6% other southerners. Council of States includes two representatives from each of the 26 states. |

| **Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS)** | Pending the first elections, Salva Kiir will be GOSS President; Council of Ministers to be shared among the SPLM (70%), the NCP (35%) and other southern political forces (15%). Interim Southern Sudan Assembly has the same representation formula as the executive. |

| **Autonomy and Self-determination** | A referendum in southern Sudan and Abyei, either to confirm the unity of Sudan or to vote for secession, marks the end of the six and a half year interim period. In the interim, decentralization of power and the establishment of the GOSS are intended to provide self-determination within the context of a unified Sudan. |

| **Subnational Powers** | Decentralization to the state level on issues of local importance. |

| **State Legislatures** | Power sharing within the states: southern states 70% SPLM, 10% NCP, 20% other southern parties; northern states 70% NCP, 10% SPLM, 20% other northern parties. |

| **Three Areas** | Special administrative arrangements in Abyei, Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile states. During interim, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states’ executive and legislatures will be shared between the NCP (55%) and the SPLM (45%), with a rotating Governorship. |

| **Civil Services and Appointments** | Based on principle of equitable representation; specific training and recruitment targets of 20-30% southerners, including not less than 20% of middle and upper level positions in the first three years; “adequate representation” of southerners in the Constitutional Court, National Supreme Court and other national courts in Khartoum; Justices of the Constitutional Court appointed by 2/3 of Council of States. |

| **Wealth Sharing** | Provisions for oil wealth sharing provide for 50% of oil revenue paid to the GOSS from oil producing wells in southern Sudan and the rest of the 50% to the National Government and the states in northern Sudan; National, GOSS, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile land commissions; Southern Sudan |
Security Arrangements

Maintenance of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in the interim period, with schedule of disengagement and redeployment of SPLA currently north of the 1956 border and of SAF currently deployed in southern Sudan; southern militia members decide within year whether to join the SAF or the SPLA, or be absorbed into the GOSS as part of a demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process; Joint/Integrated units established, comprising northerners and southerners; Joint Defence Board, including the chiefs of staff of the SLA and the SPLA, responsible for command and control and coordination between the two forces.

Based on the four main characteristics of consociationalism laid out in Section I, the CPA exhibits a high degree of consociationalism. However, a key flaw of the CPA’s consociational prescriptions are that they treat Sudan as an essentially north-south society, and treat the NCP and SPLM as dominant monoliths within their respective regions. The most important risks of the CPA, therefore, have not as much to do with the agreement’s embrace of consociationalism as with the agreement’s application of consociationalism upon a poorly-understood and narrowly-rendered Sudan.

Regarding power sharing, for example, the CPA makes provisions for a government of national unity. At the executive level, the CPA provides for a presidency consisting of the President and two Vice Presidents. Pending elections, President Bashir will maintain his post while Salva Kiir will act as First Vice President. Even after elections, power sharing mechanisms institutionalize that if the President is from the north, the First Vice President shall be the President of the GOSS; if someone from the south wins the national Presidency, the First Vice President shall be appointed from the north. The membership of the National Petroleum Commission (NPC) also reflects a grand coalition principle by including the President and the President of the GOSS as Co-chairs, four permanent representative of the National Government, four permanent members of the GOSS and representatives of the state in which the petroleum project is located.

Regarding the minority veto, the CPA is actually less explicit than other consociational agreements. In typical cases, members of the government of national unity will hold a minority veto to ensure that their
presence in the cabinet influences policy. The CPA, however, makes no formal provisions for this type of veto power; in fact, the decision-making process of the government of national unity is not specified. Still, the CPA does specify that decisions made within the presidency shall be collegial and reflect partnership between the President and the Vice Presidents. Given the guaranteed balance of the north and the south, this provides a regional veto. A referendum on secession represents perhaps the ultimate minority veto. If the NCP reneges on its CPA obligations during the interim period, for example, southern Sudan holds the power to vote for secession and independence, vetoing the unity of Sudan. Arrangements for the Abyei Area extend similar veto power to the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya to decide whether they will remain a part of northern Sudan or join southern Sudan.

With regards to proportionality, the third element of consociationalism, there has not been a decision yet about the electoral system. Nevertheless, much of the CPA revolves around the idea that national representation will be based on population ratio; in particular, moreover, it promises that southerners will have proportionate and equitable representation in all national legislative chambers.

Proportionality in other components of the arrangements is clearer. National civil service positions are to fairly represent all the people of Sudan. This is based on an agreed percentage of southern representation over time. Similar guarantees are enshrined for adequate southern representation in the Constitutional Court, the National Supreme Court and other courts. In terms of proportional resource allocation, 50% of the net oil revenue derived from oil producing wells in southern Sudan shall be allocated to the GOSS. Other revenue is also to be shared on a 50/50 basis. Even revenue collected exclusively by the national government must be pooled into a National Revenue Fund (NRF) to be administrated by the National Treasury in which southern Sudan has a veto through the First Vice President.

Lastly, and most clearly along consociational lines, segmental autonomy is a striking feature of the CPA. While the term is never mentioned in the agreement, the CPA has strong federal characteristics with power delegated to three tiers of government: the GOS, the GOSS and the states. Powers of local importance are delegated to different tiers of government – each with its own legislative, executive and judiciary capacities, as well as specific revenue-raising mechanisms and oil shares for oil-producing states. Consistent with the theory of segmental autonomy, moreover, the CPA also grants states power over cultural affairs, regulation of religious matters within the bounds of the National Constitution and the CPA, education, laws in relation to
agriculture and separate flags and emblems. All of these issues have figured prominently in the various conflict levels in Sudan and their devolution to the state provides greater room for self-rule.

The second component of segmental autonomy is representation at the centre. As noted above, the President of the GOSS is guaranteed a seat in the Presidency (in the interim as First Vice President) and a share of the national executive. The second legislative body, the Council of States, is composed of two representatives from each state and from the Abyei Area. This Council must approve any national legislation with implications for the states.

Section IV: Threats to Stability in the North and South

The signing of the CPA was enabled by the focus on two clear power points in the north and south. Bashir of the NCP and Garang of the SPLM curtailed internal opposition to their respective leaderships, whether by cooption and repression, as in the former case, or by a series of alliances, as in the latter. However, cracks are starting to appear in both of these groups. Subsequent fragmentation could have serious consequences for Sudan’s hopes for democratic peace – and might sow further doubt about the efficacy of consociationalism.

In the north, Bashir achieved single-handed control over Khartoum by the dominance of his NCP in Parliament, and by the squashing of all effective political opposition. Bashir was elected to a second, non-renewable five-year term in 2000, but the CPA extends his reign - he and his ruling clique are guaranteed the presidency at least through the interim period. This political insurance, in combination with Bashir’s recent strategic appointment of allies in key national and regional posts, insulates the president from rival northern politicians in the near term.

In the late 1990s, Bashir’s most prominent opposition came from Hassan al-Turabi, the leader of the National Islamic Front (NIF), who introduced the strict use of sharia throughout Sudan in 1991. For much of the 1990s Bashir and Turabi, the Speaker of Parliament, enjoyed cooperative – if cool – relations. But when Turabi attempted to strengthen parliament at the expense of the presidency, Bashir ordered his imprisonment. Turabi was released four years later in 2003, but is no longer seen as a credible threat to Bashir. Turabi has few western allies, either, on account of his strong Islamist views and alleged links to international terrorism. This

33 Turabi was charged with treason. In addition to undermining the president, he was accused of negotiating secret deals with the SPLM.
reputation stands in contrast to Bashir, whose post-9/11 counter-terror efforts, particularly in terms of sharing Sudanese intelligence on al-Qaeda, has not gone unnoticed by the Bush administration.

Still, factions beneath the NCP surface may assert themselves more forcefully in the future. Rumors of a coup plot against Bashir in 2003 highlight the possibility of military disaffection with the NCP. Very few within the government, moreover, are thought to be interested in sharing power or in holding truly national elections. Splits within the party between hardliners are likely to be shaped by two primary factors: religion and international affairs.

The role of Islam in the state has long been a source of tension within the regime. Islamists associated with Turabi favor stricter application of sharia than Bashir favors. In fact, their advocacy for the use of sharia throughout Khartoum became so contentious during the CPA negotiations that the matter’s resolution was postponed for future deliberations; Islamists are also unhappy that Islamic banking is limited to Sudan’s northern regions.

Furthermore, the NCP is struggling to contain the international forces that increasingly shape Sudanese politics. Ongoing international efforts to mediate north-south relations, in addition to international opprobrium over the crisis in Darfur, have introduced international opinion as a major factor within Sudan. Some hardliners within the NCP are content to disregard the international community, vocalizing their opposition to African Union and United Nation peacekeepers on Sudanese soil. But other more moderate voices wish to avoid further international isolation, many of them recognizing that receptivity to international concerns can ward off harsher sanctions, potentially encourage foreign direct investment, and accelerate oil exports, all of which are seen as keys to stimulating sorely-needed economic growth. In any case, as these voices weigh in against one another, we may find as time passes that the NCP that signed the CPA has changed dramatically.

Like the NCP, the SPLM in the south largely is unchallenged today, but similarly cannot become complacent. Salva Kiir sits atop an uneasy coalition of ethnic, religious, and regional interests that suppressed their internal differences to speak with one voice in opposition to the NCP. This voice emerged by means of an extraordinary series of agreements between the SPLM and other movements. In 2002, for example, the SPLM allied with Riak Machar of the SPDF; the agreement was significant because the SPDF, largely an ethnic Nuer movement, had been at war intermittently with the Dinka-dominated SPLM for over a decade. 2002 also saw

SPLM agreements with the Equatoria Defense Force, and the Sudan Alliance Forces. Finally, the Umma Party, led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, who has twice been prime minister in the north, has allied with the SPLM. The effect of these agreements, for now, is to render the SPLM the unrivaled movement in the south, and even the unofficial mouthpiece for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) - an umbrella body of rebel groups and opposition movements, whose exile members remain in Eritrea, Egypt, and Kenya, and whose other prominent members include the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the north’s largest opposition party, the Sudanese Communist Party, the east’s Beja Congress, and Darfur’s Sudan Liberation Army.

Whether the SPLM can manage democratically this diverse coalition of interests is debatable. Encouragingly, the SPLM drafted a policy on dialogue with other southern voices and movements in 2003, recognizing that “in view of its national responsibilities as a principal party to the peace agreement, the SPLM remains committed to work with all concerned towards the attainment of the noble objectives of sustainable reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, justice, unity of purpose, and the prosperity of all the constituencies of Sudan.”

Towards this end, it proposed a series of conferences to solicit the broad swath of opinions in the south and throughout broader Sudan, including an Elders Conference, a conference of Armed Groups, Political Groups, Civil Society Organizations, Religious Groups, and a Community-to-Community conference at the grassroots; it also calls for north-south conferences. To date however, these conferences have not been scheduled, and it remains to be seen just how committed the SPLM will be to these proposals.

Successfully accommodating so many southern voices, firstly, relies on magnanimous, responsive leadership on Kiir’s behalf; the SPLM high-command’s autocratic decision-making style, largely shaped by its experience as a guerilla movement, is not encouraging in this regard. Moreover, as the leader of the struggle for southern independence for decades, a unique culture has formed within the SPLM that views other rebel movements condescendingly. The SPLM has been said to be dismissive of other opposition groups, in some ways resentful that they are now reaping the benefits of a struggle for which they think they’ve made the bulk of the sacrifices. The need for internal democratization and reconciliation in the south, then, is paramount.

Without it, we may witness a fracturing of the SPLM-led coalition.

The risk of an SPLM-SPDF split stands out as potentially destabilizing. The SPDF was formerly aligned with the SPLM, but they diverged in 1991, unable to resolve ethnic tensions between SPLM Dinka and

35 Draft of the SPLM Policy on Dialogue.
SPDF Nuer. Khartoum also played a role in fomenting dissension between the two, funneling resources to the SPDF to undercut SPLM strength. By 1997, Machar was appointed to head the Southern States Coordination Council, the body through which Khartoum formerly administered southern Sudan. Although Machar ultimately rejoined his forces with the SPLM in 2002, the alliance will face great difficulties as it attempts to manage Dinka-Nuer rivalries; the two ethnic groups are the largest in southern Sudan. Moreover, while the CPA’s security arrangements allow the SPLM to maintain its military wing alongside the new Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Nuer-dominated South Sudan Defense Forces are called upon to disband or integrate themselves either into the SPLM or SAF. Can armed rebels be motivated to disarm, or align with former enemies?

Kiir will have to be sensitive to Nuer representation in government – along with Shilluk and Equatorian representation - if he hopes to maintain this awkward relationship. The ironic risk of the CPA is that the exclusion from Khartoum that the south formerly complained of might be replaced by SPDF and other groups’ complaints that they’re now being excluded from the SPLM power apparatus. In the short term, Machar will be in charge of designing the GOSS legislature; his leadership in this way – particularly the way in which he structures power relations between SPLM and SPDF loyalists - has the potential either to begin smoothing their relations, or to hasten aggravating them.

The future alliance of the SPLM with Umma could be tense as well. Mahdi’s loyalty to the SPLM seems transient at best. Throughout the 1990s Mahdi was known to have been in secret talks with the government, and his party seems split between those who wish to remain in opposition and those who wish to align with the government; as recently as 2002, for example, eight high-ranking members of Umma (led by Mr Mahdi’s cousin Mubarak al-Fadil al-Mahdi) broke away from the party and took up positions in government. If Khartoum opts to pursue back-door channels with Umma leaders again, just as it might with its former allies in the SPDF, Kiir’s grip over southern political life may be further eroded.

Finally, ties between the NDA and SPLM are weak. For one, the NDA has long called for the NCP’s overthrow. This has always strained its relations with the SPLM, which has less-confrontationally sought power-sharing with the NCP and greater autonomy. Moreover, dating back to 1990, NDA politicians have been

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wary of SPLM stirrings for full-scale independence; it may hesitate to cooperate in any southern moves towards secession as in the interim period wanes.

Amid the SPLM’s politics with its current allies and former rivals, additionally, it must not neglect its grassroots base. The SPLM leadership has commit itself to a federal Sudanese state; it lobbied the NCP for autonomy and a referendum on secession in six years, but is not seen as favoring full-fledged independence. But years of suffering under the destruction of Khartoum may have convinced many southerners on the ground of the need for a separate southern state. The SPLM, thus, will be challenged to maintain its followers’ loyalty, especially with regards to the issue of independence. This challenge will be exacerbated by the sheer scope of southern Sudan’s public needs. Decimated by decades of war, the south is among the most inhospitable regions in the world. A recent UN-World Bank study estimated that $8 billion is needed for Sudan’s reconstruction, most of it earmarked for the south. Basic services like electricity or running water are luxuries enjoyed by the few. Schools and hospitals barely exist, not unlike paved roads. Hundreds of thousands of refugees must be re-absorbed, from neighboring countries and from farther afield across the continent. And the security challenges are equally daunting: countless landmines pose a constant invisible threat, and a myriad of militias must be demobilized, disarmed, and reintegrated into society.

Section V: The CPA and Violence in the West and East

Ameliorating hostilities between the central government and southern rebels is the CPA’s main focus. It is a major first step towards achieving a democratic peace throughout the country. But it is also incomplete. Sudan is home to several other conflicts as well, in which regional communities are pitted in opposition to the Khartoum government. Each of these regions fight for some measure of autonomy over their political, economic, and/or cultural affairs. The CPA addresses some of these other conflicts, notably in the disputed territories of Abyei, the Nuba Mountains, and the Southern Blue Nile. However, the CPA largely neglects at least two other major conflicts in Sudan’s west and east. In the west, rebels in the Darfur region took to arms in 2003 at least partially because they perceived the CPA process to be neglectful of their grievances. And in the east, forces aligned with the ethnic Beja community have resumed low-level hostilities because they feel

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excluded from the emerging state power structure. Because these other conflicts can detract from the momentum generated by the CPA, full democratic peace in Sudan hinges on their resolution as well.

The present genocidal crisis in Darfur began when the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), later joined by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and at least three other new rebel groups comprising African Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaalit populations, attacked government positions in the region, claiming that Khartoum-funded Arab militia (so called ‘janjaweed’) were attacking their villages. In fact, this conflict, in one of Sudan’s most heavily impoverished and underdeveloped regions, is several decades in the making. Its roots owe to Darfurians’ deeply-held feelings of marginalization and deliberate neglect by the Khartoum government.

Amid heightened and increasingly tense competition over scarce natural resources in Sudan’s harsh western region, notably over access to grazing lands and water, Khartoum has strategically exacerbated ethnic conflict between Darfur’s African and Arab groups. The Islamist central government’s main reason for this divide-and-rule strategy seems in response particularly to African groups’ historical support for the secular Democratic Unionist Party and Umma Party in the region, and later, for the SPLM. In turn, the government has long sought the cooptation of the region’s Arab nomadic tribes, who are empowered in the region at the expense of African groups. In practice, these Arab groups’ loyalty to Khartoum has been solicited in two ways. First, on the political front, Khartoum has periodically created new local and regional administrative bodies in Darfur, stocking them with acquiescent Arab tribal leaders. Second, militarily, Khartoum has funneled an assortment of small arms and munitions to the Arab tribesmen, first for the purpose of resisting SPLM incursions into the region, and later for tamping down the present African-led insurgency.

The rebels claim to be “motivated by resentment at the marginalization of their region and the constant victimization of their communities … that had disrupted the peaceful coexistence between the region’s African and Arab communities.” Their feeling of marginalization and neglect, of course, seemed to be confirmed by their exclusion from the CPA negotiations. From the onset of this present stage of conflict, the government


resisted including the rebels in the CPA talks, portraying them as “criminals, bandits, and terrorists;” it also declared that the rebels were not fit for negotiation, and instead should be dealt with militarily.

By failing to at least consider the rebels’ demands during the CPA negotiations, however, both the government and the SPLM missed a chance for alleviating further conflict. After all, the Darfur rebels’ political agenda hardly differs from the SPLM’s negotiating position during the talks. Since 2003, the SLA, for instance, has declared its objective to be the creation of “a united democratic Sudan by devolving power and separating the state and religion … [seeking for the western region] fairer representation, respect for human rights and broader social justice.” They have demanded in particular 23% of all seats in the new government to be reserved for the west, in addition to 23% of national wealth. Nevertheless, for reasons owing both to Khartoum’s intransigence about considering the rebels’ political demands and to debilitating infighting among the rebels, the Darfur conflict has been allowed to fester on. The human toll of this conflict, of course, has been appalling and reasonably well-documented elsewhere. Less often considered but no less fundamental to Sudan’s future is the effect of continued hostilities in Darfur on Sudan’s hopes for democratic peace.

In short, Darfur has emerged as a major factor derailing the full implementation of the CPA. That is, for as long as the conflict continues, both Khartoum and the SPLM cannot devote their full energy to the CPA. What’s more, in order to elicit concessions from Khartoum in its negotiations and subsequent dealings with the south, international mediators have had to tone down their demands of the government about the crisis in the west. Even today, international officials are reluctant to press the government too forcefully with regards to Darfur, fearing that such pressure might jeopardize the CPA’s hard-earned progress. The result is that the Abuja negotiations seeking a rapprochement between the western rebels and the government have become a protracted, sluggish affair. Further, Khartoum can claim that it cannot invest its full energy in the CPA’s implementation because it is too bogged down in the west. This same dynamic can be observed within the

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Financial Times, Mar. 18, 2005.
SPLM. Before John Garang’s death, for example, he stated publicly that he would not participate in a government that continues to carry out military attacks in the region, as it does in Darfur.47

Political parties – and today, armed movements - in Sudan’s east voice similar perceptions of marginalization by Khartoum. The Beja Congress (BC) and to a lesser extent the Rashaida Free Lions today make demands of the government that hardly differ from the Darfur rebels’ or from the SPLM’s of just a few years ago. Like those groups, these eastern groups’ grievances stem largely from the underdevelopment suffered in their region, which is interpreted as a result of deliberate neglect by the government. In personal interviews at their foreign offices in Cairo and Asmara, leading eastern political leaders enumerated a number of specific frustrations with Khartoum – frustrations that have motivated their violence in the past, and frustrations that, if not assuaged, threaten to motivate further violence in the future.48

In the main, they lament the almost-total marginalization of easterners from state political and economic power structures, both yesterday and today. For almost three decades, for example, the BC was banned, forcing underground or into Egypt, Eritrea and Kenya the leadership of the main movement representing the region’s nearly 2.2 million ethnic Beja residents. Furthermore, wealth derived from the eastern region has rarely been transferred back to the region’s residents. Lucrative revenues from Sudan’s only port in Port Sudan, from the pipeline connecting oil fields in the south with export processing facilities, and from the country’s most profitable gold mines and large-scale agricultural schemes – all located in the eastern region - are seen as enriching the clique of Arabs that has long controlled the state, instead of funding regional development. The east’s long bout with malnutrition, famine, and contagious disease, in turn, is attributed to Khartoum’s failure to prioritize the region’s basic needs.

Eastern leaders voice other grievances as well. In addition to protesting Khartoum’s prioritization of conservative Islamic institutions, which clash with their more moderate practice of Islam, they also resent government land policies that stripped farmers of their most fertile land in the early 1990s.49 Finally, leaders routinely cite the lack of schools and health facilities in their region. The common thread running through all of these statements is a distinct feeling by eastern leaders that their priorities are consistently ignored by an overly-


48 Interviews were conducted with Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions leaders in Cairo and Asmara, between May and June 2005.

centralized state. One leader described the feeling as being “cut off from the state completely … we may be formally a part of Sudan, but practically we’re isolated and treated like second-class citizens.”\(^{50}\)

In response to these feelings of marginalization, the easterners have recurrently taken to arms.\(^ {51}\) The first major instance was in the mid-1990s, when BC forces attacked key government camps and infrastructures. By 1997, the BC aligned with the SPLM. In a series of campaigns, these joint forces consolidated their control over a 114-square kilometer area still referred to as the “Eastern Liberated Areas” – an area almost completely autonomous from central government rule. Hostilities peaked in the area in 2000, raising fears in Khartoum that its control over the pipeline, port, and mechanized farms was in jeopardy. However, with the initiation of the CPA negotiations, violence ebbed – a lull described by an eastern leader as owing to “our hopes that these peace talks would accommodate our grievances within the context of the southerners’ grievances.”\(^ {52}\)

But easterners were to be disappointed by the ongoing CPA negotiations. “Our problems were the southerners’ problems too,” one BC leader explained, “but no one would give us a seat at the table.”\(^ {53}\) BC leaders report to have petitioned the Kenyan government (the host of the CPA talks) for representation at the negotiations; they also sent a memo to President Bashir demanding that they be included. Both requests however were denied, leading the BC to resume new military action in October 2003, “in response to the government’s rigidity and its rejection of the inclusion of other political forces in the peace negotiations … particularly its negligence of the problems of Eastern Sudan and its persistent exclusion of forces that control the region from the peace process.”\(^ {54}\)

After the signing of the CPA in 2005, the BC and Free Lions joined forces to form the ‘Eastern Front’ – a grouping one BC leader referred to as “an important way for easterners to pool their strengths and make new demands of the government that the CPA be amended.”\(^ {55}\) The Eastern Front has a series of political and economic demands. Foremost, it wants to be recognized as the “sole representative of the people of eastern

\(^{50}\) Personal interview.


\(^{52}\) Personal interview.

\(^{53}\) Personal interview.


\(^{55}\) Personal interview.
Sudan. Its other core political goals include: a federal state based on six regions (North, South, Central, West, East and Khartoum) with significant power devolved to regional, state, and local administrations; a rotational presidency comprised of the governors of the six regions; a Government of National Unity during the interim period, based on each region’s percentage of the total national population; an interim constitution drawn up by a conference comprising the same population percentages as that in the Government of National Unity.

Economically, it demands that national revenue be redistributed according to its original source, population considerations, and the development needs of each of Sudan’s six regions. It is particularly adamant about its “fair share” of revenue from the port, pipeline, mining concerns, and large-scale agricultural schemes.

The response of Khartoum to these demands so far, however, has blended cooption and ominous signs that it is prepared for battle. On the one hand, observers describe an attempt by the government to dilute the Eastern Front’s claim to be the ‘sole representative of the people of eastern Sudan.’ One way it has done this is by propping up the DUP and non-Tigre speaking Beja in the region, by means of a fairly typical use of propaganda and patronage. It has also organized conferences to discuss issues related to eastern Sudan, but has not invited Eastern Front representatives; again, the goal seems to be an effort to cultivate a friendly group of tribal and religious leaders that provide an alternative to the Eastern Front.

Still, Khartoum seems to regard the prospect of renewed violence in the east with seriousness, if only because it fears disruptions to the oil pipeline and to its export hub at the port. It has shifted key security commanders away from the west and south and into the eastern region, for example. In addition, some Eastern Front leaders discuss “efforts [by Khartoum] to encourage tribal leaders to recruit militiamen in exchange for money and weapons, in order to create a rural force that can monitor the Eastern Front’s activities and serve as a first line of resistance.”58 Regarding these latter efforts, Eastern Front leaders commonly refer to the “emergence of an eastern janjaweed,”59 though this seems like an overstatement at this point.

In any case, “mainly owing to our frustration with not being included in the CPA negotiations or in the new institutions the CPA created for Sudan,” as one leader described his feelings regarding a new round of

56 Personal interview.


59 Personal interview.
violence, the Eastern Front has again re-escalated its military action. It claimed in June 2005 to have conducted 6 military operations since the CPA’s signing, ranging from attacks on government garrisons to kidnappings of government officials to sabotages on transportation links connecting Khartoum with the port. Deadly riots also broke out in Port Sudan in January 2005, reflecting deep hostility between the eastern public and the security forces Khartoum has deployed to the region. “The CPA, as it exists right now, unfairly penalizes us for not being from the south or north,” one Eastern Front leader summed up. “We’ll fight until the east earns a fair entitlement to power in Sudan.”

Section VI: History Repeating? The 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement

In spirit if not in substance, Sudan has attempted the CPA before. In 1972, the government of President Jafar Nimayri, after negotiations with southern Sudanese leaders, signed the Addis Ababa Agreement: a collection of protocols promising greater national representation for southerners and increased control for southerners over their regional affairs. At its core, the Agreement was Sudan’s most ambitious attempt to date to redress the southern grievances that for two decades had fueled bloody unrest. Though the Agreement’s early years coincided with a lull in conflict, however, by 1983 Sudan was again mired in civil war. When assessing the viability of the CPA to usher in democratic peace presently, therefore, it might be useful to overview briefly Sudan’s past experience under broadly consociational structures.

The goal of the Addis Ababa Agreement was to enshrine pluralism and equality as the basis for a ‘new Sudan.’ Hopes for a more peaceful and unified Sudan were pinned on proportional representation of southerners in the national government, a power-sharing executive, and southern regional autonomy. Initially,

60 Personal interview.

61 In other words, the Addis Ababa Agreement was an attempt to solve Sudan’s persistent problems of identity. It intended to do so by acknowledging Sudan’s diversity, granting equal recognition before the law to all of Sudan’s religions, ethnicities, and languages, and including special legal provisions for minorities. For a useful discussion of identity in Sudan and the Addis Agreement’s attempts to confront it, see Francis Deng, “‘Hidden Agendas in the Peace Process,’” in M.W. Daly and Ahmad Sikainga, eds., Civil War in the Sudan (New York: British Academic Press, 1993), p. 186-214.

62 The Addis Ababa Agreement was incorporated into the permanent constitution of 1973, and gave way to the Regional Self Government Act for the southern provinces. Institutionally, this meant a southern High Executive Council (HEC) and a southern Regional Assembly; the HEC president would also be a national vice president. The southern regional government was to be responsible for internal security and social, cultural, and economic administration. Southerners were free to assess their own taxes and fees, and were promised as well a special development fund from national government revenue.
the Addis arrangements seemed promising. Why then did Sudan spiral into conflict just a decade after their creation? The reasons are complex of course, but chief responsibility lies with the circumstances under which the Agreement was drafted, the general failure of the Nimayri regime to uphold its commitments, and the institutional inconsistencies manifest in the Agreement itself.63

Firstly, the Agreement was the result of a pact between unelected military leaders from the north and south. The absence of a broadly-based national dialogue challenged the Agreement’s viability from the start. Most importantly, Nimayri negotiated the Agreement without the full support of his fellow northerners. Political forces on his left and right rejected the idea of southern autonomy, and the Islamists rendered the Agreement’s commitment to pluralism as an abandonment of Sudan’s Islamic identity.

These political pressures confronting Nimayri very likely caused him to undermine the Agreement. He did so primarily by marginalizing southern representatives in Khartoum and by abandoning the Agreement’s provisions when they conflicted with northern interests. Shortly after the Agreement was signed, for instance, Nimayri announced the formation of the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU), which would serve as the supreme political organ of the state and from which southerners were generally barred. Similarly, Nimayri unilaterally redrew the border between the north and south to ensure that oil revenue flowed into national coffers instead of into the south.

Moreover, the Agreement’s institutional design was vulnerable to Nimayri’s exploitation. For example, the Agreement endowed Nimayri with the right to appoint the head of the southern HEC, allowing the national government manipulation of southern affairs. Likewise, the Agreement consolidated responsibility for development spending in the hands of the national government, hindering southern efforts to re-develop land decimated by war.

The 2005 CPA is vulnerable for many of the reasons that led to the failure of the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement. As I’ve documented already, the CPA is notable not only for whom it includes, but also for whom it is neglectful. The agreement treats Sudan as an essentially bipolar north-south society, effectively marginalizing western-based movements in Darfur, and the Eastern Front. It remains unclear how the new CPA institutions can function properly without addressing these groups’ demands for greater political representation.

Particularly worrisome in this regard is the chance that disaffected movements like the SLA or the Eastern Front will mobilize destabilizing campaigns for secession themselves. Consociationalism’s critics often warn that provisions for group autonomy create a “slippery slope” to secession. Beyond the chance that the south pursues independence after the interim period, a prospect whose consequences scarcely have been interrogated, the Darfurians, Beja, or other regional groups may look to the south as a model for their own desires for autonomy. The example of southerners voting for their independence, and of the Abyei voting on whether to join the north or south at the same time, could exert a powerful spillover effect on the ambitions of these other groups to push aggressively for their own self-determination. It is dubious whether Sudan, already fragile, could endure these centrifugal movements while at the same time implementing difficult power-sharing arrangements.

Within the north and south, the CPA treats the NCP and SPLM as the dominant parties, reserving a smaller percentage of government seats for ‘other’ political movements. This provision already is being challenged as unfair to these ‘other’ groups. The SLA now calls for 23% of all seats in the new government to be reserved for the west, in addition to 23% of national wealth.64 The NDA, likewise, believes it should have access to more than 14% of the north’s parliamentary seats, the maximum representation for which it is eligible under the terms of the CPA. It is now arguing for “equitable representation” of all political forces at the convention to draft the interim constitution, believing that the CPA’s specific percentages are disproportioned and out-of-line with true levels of public support.65

In fact, the NDA’s argument about the illegitimacy of the CPA’s power-sharing percentages illuminates a broader danger of this institutional design: namely, its lack of any democratic legitimacy. In fairness, the instability that has persistently ravaged Sudan precluded forums for popular consultation about the CPA as it was negotiated; organizing a referendum, for instance, would have been impossible, logistically. But the fact remains that the public was entirely disconnected from this process, just as it was from the Addis Ababa process, and the extent of its support for Sudan’s new institutions has not yet been gauged. As of now, we have no measure telling whether the elites that bargained these agreements have any public legitimacy whatsoever.


save for anecdotal evidence indicating some support for the SPLM in the south.66 Lest we forget that the CPA was not even negotiated in Sudan, and women played no role in its drafting at all.

The CPA, then, boldly relies on the NCP and SPLM - parties whose legitimacy has not yet been formally tested electorally but whose sustained control over their respective regions is key to the CPA’s long-term success. This highlights another major criticisms of consociational systems like this one: their static treatment of societies, and their frequent inability to evolve alongside fluidity on the ground. The CPA depicts the north and south as monolithic entities. It entrenches the NCP as the north’s leader, and the SPLM as the south’s. But what happens to the agreement if either of these parties fragments? This is more than a hypothetical thought experiment. Cracks are already evident in the NCP, along lines of religion and foreign affairs, and in the SPLM, between the leadership and the public, and between its key alliance partners. The fact is that the CPA avails no institutional space for either of these parties to break down, and holds hostage the possibility of cross-cutting cleavages that transcend north-south lines.

Moreover, when consociationalism’s critics attack its “elite cartels,” they’re warning of institutional designs like this one. In effect, the CPA, again like the Addis agreement, was a product of the negotiations of two men: in the present case the SPLM’s Garang and the NCP’s Ali Utham Muhammad Taha, then the Vice President. The institutions they created now rely on the sharing of power and compromises between Bashir and Kiir, between their parties in the legislature, and to a lesser extent between the central government and the states. In other words, the premium for democratization and conflict resolution rests on elite shoulders. But where does the public fit in? Elite accommodation needs to be complimented by other modes of democratization, modes intended to share power among parties other than the NCP and SPLM, and which integrate popular participation into Sudan’s new institutions.

The “internal democratization” that consociationalism often overlooks is particularly important in the south. As we’ve documented, the public has not yet been consulted on the CPA, and it may prove to be uncomfortable with anything less than a fully independent south. Furthermore, the CPA offers no provisions for sharing power among the south’s many parties and movements. This may be most dangerous of all. If the SPLM cannot restrain its noted autocratic decision-making habits, electing unilaterally to staff new posts in the south mainly with its cadres, it invites the disaffection of current allies like the SPDF. Along the same lines, if

southern ethnic groups, like the Shilluk and Nuer, perceive top government posts to be concentrated in the hands of Dinka leaders, the risk of damaging ethnic conflict is heightened. Either way, the challenges the SPLM is about to encounter as new representatives are named for southern posts illuminates consociationalism’s tendency to prioritize elite compromise when lower-level compromise is just as necessary.

Indeed, the SPLM’s unenviable predicament with regards to all of these new seats illustrates two more dangers of consociational solutions like this one. First, because institutions for power sharing, proportionality, and group autonomy inherently draw more minorities into government than might otherwise occur under majoritarian rules, minorities are challenged to provide sufficient numbers of skilled officials to occupy all their new posts. This need not necessarily be a problem, particularly if plenty of skilled officials are available, and if clear mechanisms for internal power-sharing are developed; filling all these new positions, if carried out equitably, can exert a powerful accommodative effect. But if not, this bureaucratic process could actually motivate internal conflict, either between political leaders who feel marginalized, or between leaders and the public, who are unsatisfied with the pace of reconstruction.

Thus secondly, consociationalism introduces some risks in terms of capacity. Of course, dangers of incapacity are not unique to consociationalism – they’re present in any institutional design. But incapacity certainly can be exacerbated under consociationalism, because the model explicitly empowers all relevant groups in a society, no matter how much experience they have with democratic governance. This could be problematic in Sudan’s south. The SPLM has long been a rebel movement, not a political party per se. It suffers from a shortage of trained professionals, has very little internal democracy, and it remains unclear about how it can fill all the positions it negotiated for itself recently. Aggravating this general incapacity, moreover, is the scope of southern Sudan’s public problems. Can the inexperienced SPLM and its allies slake the massive expectations motivated by the CPA’s signing?

The chance that the SPLM cannot fulfill all its new obligations calls our attention to a final danger of consociational institutional design: by formally entrenching power in the hands of specific parties, public frustration with those parties’ performance can into transmute into frustration with the democratic system itself. The argument here is the same as that against presidential executive systems. When politics becomes associated with a singular leader or set of leaders, especially in societies lacking democratic experience, it is often difficult for the public to differentiate between the government of the day and the regime in toto. In these
cases, the potential for regime-targeted hostility is augmented. We cannot overlook this possibility in Sudan. In a society flooded with arms, where mutual distrust is rampant, and in which the public is desperate for positive change, consociationalism’s reliance on a few parties, whose governing abilities are either spotty or unproven, could be a toxic mix.

Section VII: Amending and Improving the CPA

When it comes to the chances of the CPA giving rise to a robust, sustainable and just democracy in Sudan it is apparent that the power-sharing institutions are flawed in their limitations and lack of protections against authoritarianism, corruption and one-party dominance. First, they do not fully encompass and include all the key participants in the conflict or those communities who may well take up arms if their exclusion from state power is replicated in the new dispensation. Second, there are inadequate guarantees that Khartoum will decentralize significant powers to federal states (beyond the south as a whole) or that the states of the union will be multi-ethnic and internally democratic. Third, in the long interim period before elections, the governments of Sudan and southern Sudan will be appointed, controlled and administered by the NCP and SPLM without any pressures for internal democratization, mechanisms of accountability or guarantees that wealth will not be carved up between an elite few at the expense of the massively impoverished masses. Making democracy manifest hinges upon real connections between the governed and governors and some substantive attention paid to issues of justice – for past crimes and future opportunities.

Broadening the power sharing, nationally and sub-nationally. The CPA has attractive power sharing features that should be augmented to include not just northern and southern movements, but movements from throughout Sudan, including especially the east and west. This means, in the case of the GOS executive and legislature, national civil service, and security sector, incorporating eastern and western representatives more prominently and formally into the power-sharing scheme. After all, Khartoum and the SPLM have already characterized the CPA as a model upon which the Darfur conflict can be resolved, and thus, the representatives of Darfur should be reassured, as should be the Eastern Front. As a first step forward, then, power sharing at the national level needs to be expanded. Western- and eastern-based rebels should be guaranteed representation in the national government. In the medium term and post-election period, provisions for representation and inclusion of groups gaining minimum percentage of national vote should be included in the Interim Constitution.
This would persist until the end of the Interim period (6 years) and could be revisited depending on the result of
the referendum.

Moreover, the sub-national regime of the south, and the proposed regimes of the east, west, and in the
disputed areas, should more explicitly enshrine power-sharing within their respective domains. The need for
power sharing within the new GOSS, for example, is unambiguous. The SPLM is understandably wary of
ceding influence to what it sees as ‘junior partners’. But the devastation wrought upon the south, and the wide
range of movements within it, demands inclusive representation in the GOSS. The SPLM still may control the
GOSS presidency, and many of its key ministries, especially those related to security and the natural resources.
But a magnanimous gesture that allocated seats in the GOSS proportionally could be a major step towards
assuaging the fears of other southerners that the SPLM will rule over it like Khartoum had for so many decades
prior. If southern ethnic groups, like the Shilluk and Nuer, perceive top government posts to be concentrated in
the hands of Dinka leaders, the risk of damaging ethnic conflict is heightened.

Making decentralization manifest through expanded federalism. It is clear that ameliorating hostilities
between the central government and southern rebels is the CPA’s main focus. And the agreement represents a
major first step towards achieving a democratic peace at that level. But it is also incomplete. Its model for
federalism in the south needs to be expanded, allowing for asymmetrical autonomous regimes throughout the
country and creating a more decentralized Sudanese state.

There maybe a case for autonomous regimes in both the east and west and the disputed territories on
the north/south border. This would institutionalize a decentralized Sudan where key security and financial
powers are reserved for the national government, but significant decision-making is devolved to state and
regional governments. The fact remains that distrust of centralized government in Sudan is rampant.
Recognizing this, an inevitable institutional solution is to concentrate on institution-building at the sub-national
level.

Encouraging internal democracy and accountability. It is particularly crucial that the SPLM foster
accountability by not neglecting its grassroots base. The SPLM leadership has committed itself to a federal
Sudanese state; it lobbied the NCP for autonomy and a referendum on secession in six years, but is not seen as
favoring full-fledged independence. But years of suffering under the destruction of Khartoum may have
convinced many southerners on the ground of the need for a separate southern state. The SPLM, thus, will be
challenged to maintain its followers’ loyalty, especially with regards to the issue of independence. This challenge will be exacerbated by the sheer scope of southern Sudan’s public needs. Decimated by decades of war, the south is among the most inhospitable regions in the world. Indeed, the viability of the CPA and power sharing in Sudan depends on cultivating support in the general population. To date, the process has taken place behind doors and at an elite level. The CPA commits to initiating a mass campaign of public education. This needs to take place in both the north and south and will require significant support from international actors. Sudanese leaders may be able to learn from and borrow experiences from other countries where mass civic education campaigns have succeeded in captivating the hearts and minds of the population, contributing both to democratization and reconciliation. If at all possible, civic education should be a joint project of the GOS and the GOSS, as well as the broadened representation, to mirror the spirit of inclusion and power sharing enshrined in the CPA.

Conclusion

Given the enormous suffering brought upon the Sudanese people over the last several decades, any initiative that eases the blood-letting and moves Sudan towards democracy is an important and heartening first step. But the CPA, and the consociational precepts that inform it, must be imagined precisely in that way: as a first step. Consociationalism, especially in the de jure power sharing style of the CPA, may best be rendered a triage institutional design – one that is effective in the short term in lending group leaders cover to stop fighting. But such arrangements may not be a sufficient guarantee of long-term democratic health because they reflect the dominant political dynamics of the conflict period.

Alas, today’s political dynamics are not necessarily tomorrow’s. In time, the CPA’s crafters, signatories and benefactors should find that the north and south, the NCP and the SPLM, are no longer the key or only political groups in Sudan. When they do, one hopes that they’ll have the courage and wisdom to change the CPA’s consociationalism. And therein lies the enduring value of studying Sudan in this way: consociationalism can be decisive for patching wounds and launching democratization, but democratic maturation demands nuanced, timely and closely monitored institutional re-stitching. Academics and policymakers both would be wise to heed that lesson.
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