

# Issue Brief

## The Sudan Referenda: What Role for International Actors?

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On January 9, 2011, Sudan is scheduled to hold two referenda in accordance with the 2005 *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* (CPA), which ended the twenty-two-year civil war between north and south. One referendum will determine whether Southern Sudan will become an independent state after a six-month postreferendum period ending on July 15, 2011; and another will determine whether the Abyei region is to continue to be administered by Khartoum or if it is to become part of Southern Sudan. This issue brief highlights the main actors and challenges in the referenda preparations. Given the lack of trust between the parties and the intractable nature of the challenges, it argues that sustained and substantive international engagement will be required not just in the lead up to the referenda but also over the long term to help Sudan (as one or two countries) chart a course toward a more peaceful and prosperous future.

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### Introduction

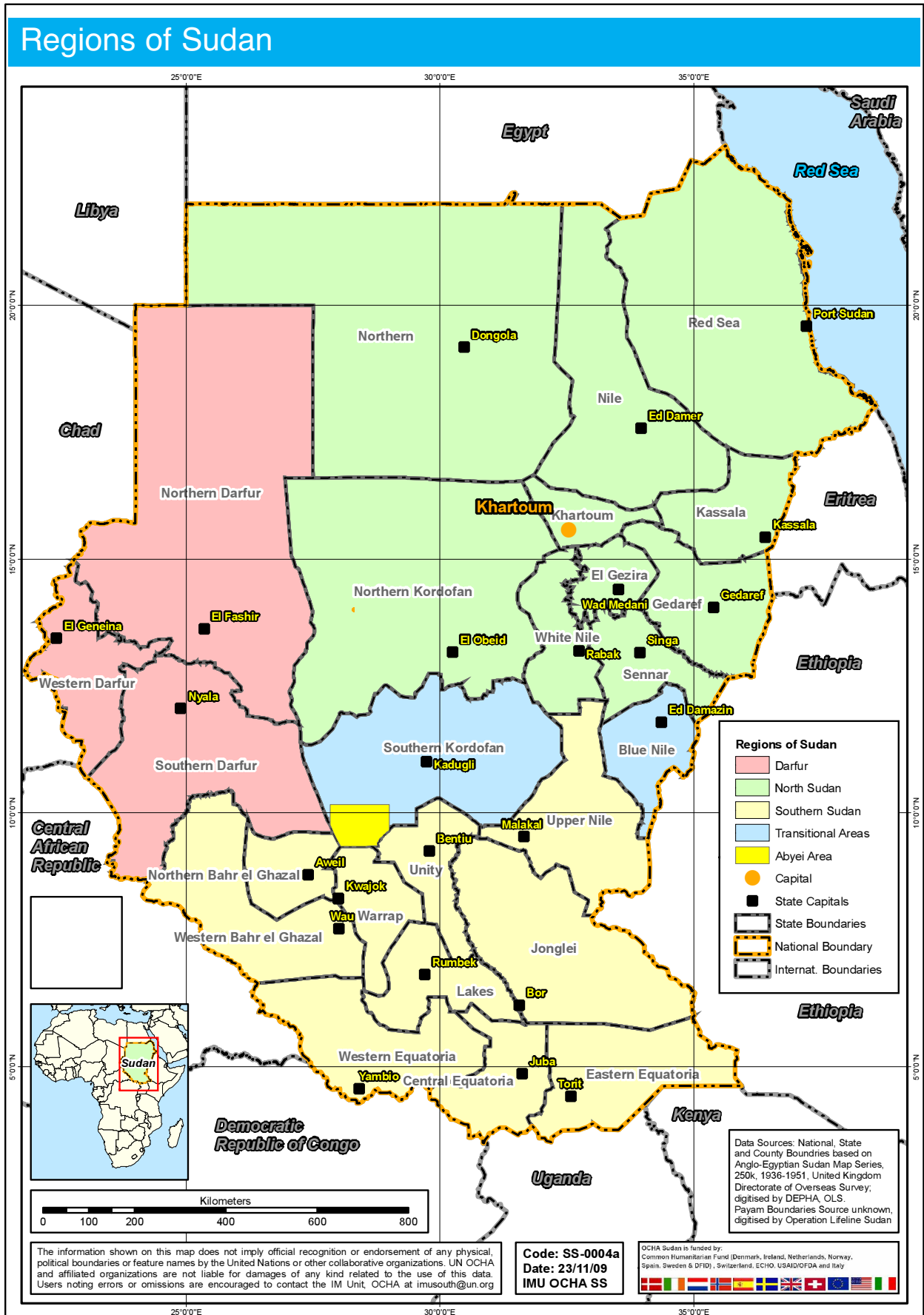
Two referenda are scheduled for January 9, 2011, in Sudan. In one, the people of Southern Sudan will decide whether they will remain part of the Republic of the Sudan or form an independent country with its capital in Juba; in the other, residents of the Abyei region will determine whether or not Abyei will become part of Southern Sudan.

Assuming that Southern Sudan secedes, it will become the first new African state in nearly two decades. In this scenario, how postreferenda issues are handled will significantly shape what form the new state takes politically, economically, and diplomatically after a six-month transition period. In the unlikely scenario that the people of the south do not vote to secede, significant tensions will nonetheless remain between the main political actors in the north (the National Congress Party [NCP]) and the south (the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army [SPLM/SPLA]), primarily over the distribution of wealth and resources between center and periphery.

The Abyei referendum is also of great importance to the future of Sudan. The Abyei region lies at the crossroads of north and south, and has been a locus of instability in recent years. In 2008, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and allied militias clashed with the SPLA in Abyei town, leading to more than 100 deaths and displacing thousands of people. Clashes between the two armies in Abyei were reported as recently as July of this year.<sup>1</sup> The *Misseriya*, a nomadic tribe supported by Khartoum, remains concerned that if Abyei becomes part of Southern Sudan, its cross-border movements would be curtailed, limiting access to water and grazing lands for their cattle. At the same time, Abyei's *Ngok Dinka* tribe fears northern encroachment upon its traditional homeland, especially by the *Misseriya*, and thus is wary of any process that could result in Abyei becoming part of northern Sudan.

Many have speculated that the failure to hold credible referenda on time would risk a return to war. Recently, President of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit and President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir both stated that there would be no return to war, toning down the bellicose language after earlier statements by both sides indicating that a return to violent conflict is a possibility. While war would be a nightmare scenario for all stakeholders in and outside of Sudan, the greatest victims would be the Sudanese people, who have endured more years of warfare than peace since the country's independence in 1956. In the last civil war between north and south, approximately 2 million Sudanese lost their lives.

<sup>1</sup> International Crisis Group, "Sudan: Defining the North-South Border," *Africa Briefing* No. 75, September 2, 2010, p. 10.



Map courtesy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

## The Challenges

### SOUTHERN SUDAN REFERENDUM

There are several factors complicating the Southern Sudan referendum. One potential problem is that eligibility requirements are based on ethnic and communal background, neither of which has been fully defined in the *Referendum Act*.<sup>2</sup> Disputes over eligibility will thus most likely occur, as potential voters outside of the south will be required to establish their southern heritage. While polling stations will be set up in northern Sudan, where 2 million southerners reside, and in diaspora countries such as Australia, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States, making them accessible to many potential voters could be a challenge. Of particular concern is whether some southerners living in the north will have to travel to Southern Sudan to register and vote.

Conducting a free and fair referendum requires an environment in which fear and violence are limited. Recent history is not promising in this regard. Intimidation and violence were widespread throughout greater Sudan in the April 2010 elections.<sup>3</sup> How southerners voting in northern Sudan will be treated both in the lead up to and in the aftermath of the referendum is a cause for concern. The Minister of Information of the NCP recently announced that southerners living in the north would lose their political, economic, and social rights if the south votes to secede.<sup>4</sup> Likewise it has been reported that pro-unity groups in Southern Sudan have faced intimidation.

Several border areas between north and south are also still disputed. In a speech before the Sudanese parliament on October 12, 2010, President al-Bashir stated that border demarcation is the “decisive factor in conducting a free and fair election.”<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, it is unclear whether Khartoum is ultimately prepared to accept a vote for secession. *The Economist* recently characterized Khartoum as being in “a state of denial” about the impending Southern Sudan referendum, conceptualizing it as an opportunity to preserve the unity of Sudan.<sup>6</sup> At best, mixed signals have been sent from Khartoum. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, President al-Bashir stated that “the government is working to keep the peace” and that “there would be no return to war.”<sup>7</sup> However, this statement clashes with his recent address to the Sudanese parliament in which he said that northern Sudan would not accept a vote for independence, adding that “unity is the probable outcome for the south if it is given freedom of choice in a fair, free election,”<sup>8</sup> a perspective at odds with the predictions of most analysts.

In spite of these many challenges, planning for the Southern Sudan referendum has started to gain momentum. Printing of voter-registration forms has been completed. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which plans to provide support at the county level in Southern Sudan to monitor and support the referendum, began to establish new county referendum bases in early September. Later in September, the Carter Center deployed sixteen election monitors across the north, the south, and Abyei to observe and assess all aspects of referenda planning and implementation. The South Sudan Election Referendum Commission, which could not proceed with its work until late August 2010 because of disputes over its leadership, has recently announced that voter registration will begin on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Registration is currently scheduled to continue until the end of November. This will be followed by an appeals process in which complaints about eligibility will be considered and adjudicated. At the moment, it is anticipated that the final referendum register will be available on January 4, 2011.

2 Democracy Reporting International, “Assessment of the Southern Sudan Referendum Act,” Berlin, July 2010.

3 Human Rights Watch, *Sudan: Democracy on Hold: Rights Violations in the April 2010 Sudan Elections* (New York, June 2010).

4 Amir Idris, “The Danger of a Racialized Debate on the Referendum,” *Sudan Tribune*, October 1, 2010.

5 As quoted in *Daily Nation*, “Bashir: We Won’t Accept an Alternative to Sudan Unity,” October 13, 2010, available at [www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/Bashir:%20No%20acceptance%20Sudan%20unity%20alternative/-/1066/1031494/-/imo9og/-/index.html](http://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/Bashir:%20No%20acceptance%20Sudan%20unity%20alternative/-/1066/1031494/-/imo9og/-/index.html).

6 *The Economist*, “South Sudan: Are they Headed for a Crash?” September 25–October 1, 2010.

7 Omar al-Bashir as quoted in AFP, “Sudan’s Bashir Pledges No Return to War with South,” October 20, 2010, available at [www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ihALoQ4NcGnyJN77-okv9yOaOHzw?docId=CNG.8ba19bfd5fd769f4c21b71be0ecedf35.1e1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ihALoQ4NcGnyJN77-okv9yOaOHzw?docId=CNG.8ba19bfd5fd769f4c21b71be0ecedf35.1e1).

8 *Daily Nation*, “Bashir.”

## ABYEI REFERENDUM

Planning for the Abyei referendum has been delayed by significant complications. The Abyei Referendum Commission has yet to be formed because the NCP and SPLM cannot agree on its membership. Abyei's borders are also in dispute, which has caused disagreement over voter eligibility, especially among the nomadic *Misseriya*, who have threatened violence if prevented from voting.<sup>9</sup> Until these issues are resolved, voter registration cannot occur, a budget for the referendum cannot be approved, and poll workers cannot be hired and trained.<sup>10</sup>

Various proposals on Abyei have been put forth in recent weeks. One failed US proposal in late September called for voter eligibility in the Abyei referendum to be extended only to those who have resided in Abyei for at least one year. As part of this package, oil revenue in Abyei would be shared by Khartoum, Southern Sudan, and the two tribal groups in the region, the *Misseriya* and the *Ngok Dinka*. This proposal would have been unfavorable to Khartoum, which would have lost the votes of the migratory *Misseriya*, a group that is largely in favor of unity. During the negotiations on Abyei in Ethiopia in early October 2010, the NCP suggested splitting Abyei in half, a proposal that was rejected as well.<sup>11</sup>

Both sides have committed to reaching an agreement at the next round of meetings on Abyei, which were originally scheduled for late October, but have been postponed indefinitely. It is likely that the parties will be represented at a higher level than at the early-October negotiations, with Salva Kiir and Ali Osman Taha currently scheduled to participate. Additionally, Thabo Mbeki, former president of South Africa and chair of the AU's High-Level Implementation Panel, will likely serve as mediator, while participation by US representatives and Haile Menkerios, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan, is also expected. In addition to the Abyei referendum, it is anticipated that border demarcation and postreferendum issues will also be on the agenda.

The challenges surrounding the referenda are thus daunting. To address these challenges sustained international engagement will continue to be necessary. Who are the key international actors? What are they currently doing? And what sort of engagement would be most effective moving forward?

## Key International Actors

### THE UNITED NATIONS

In accordance with the CPA, the Government of National Unity is responsible for the conduct of the referenda. At the same time, the UN will provide technical and logistical support to the referenda commissions, including that related to security, the distribution of electoral materials, voter registration, and electoral monitoring and verification. The UN Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED), a branch of UNMIS, will assist national election officials in disseminating material, registering voters, monitoring the vote, and counting and announcing the results of both referenda. UNMIS also plays the critical role of training the Southern Sudan Police Service in an effort to create a safe environment conducive to fair and conflict-free referenda. The UN Development Program (UNDP) will support this training with technical expertise and materials such as training kits. In the coming weeks, the UN will likely bolster UNMIS with several hundred additional staff members, including many UN volunteers, in order to strengthen the technical and logistical capacity of the referenda commissions and maintain a presence at the county level in Southern Sudan.

A great deal of international attention and support has accompanied referenda preparations in recent months. This has especially been the case in the UN. The Secretary-General hosted a high-level meeting on the Sudan on September 24<sup>th</sup> on the margins of the General Assembly debate in an effort to focus the attention of world leaders on the issue. The meeting resulted in a communiqué in which participating member states, many represented by heads of state and foreign ministers,

9 *Sudan Tribune*, "Tensions Simmer Over Sudan's Abyei as Misseriya Tribe Threatens Use of Force," September 30, 2010.

10 US embassy spokesperson Alyson Grunder, quoted in Peter Heinlein, "North, South Sudanese Leaders to Hold Crucial Talks in Ethiopia," VOA News, October 3, 2010, available at [www.voanews.com/english/news/North-South-Sudanese-Leaders-to-Hold-Crucial-Talk-in-Ethiopia-104244554.html](http://www.voanews.com/english/news/North-South-Sudanese-Leaders-to-Hold-Crucial-Talk-in-Ethiopia-104244554.html).

11 Enough Project, "Sudan Peace Watch," October 13, 2010, available at [www.enoughproject.org/publications/sudan-peace-watch%E2%80%9313-2010](http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/sudan-peace-watch%E2%80%9313-2010).

underscored the importance of fulfilling the CPA, including the peaceful and timely completion of the referenda.<sup>12</sup> Both CPA parties also committed to holding the Southern Sudan referendum on January 9<sup>th</sup> during this meeting, and acknowledged their responsibility to take forward the preparations.

Aware of the many political pitfalls that potentially litter the path to the referenda—and at the request of the NCP and the SPLM—the Secretary-General established the UN Panel on the Referenda on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, which is mandated to monitor referenda preparations and provide good offices to the parties. This panel is led by Benjamin Mkapa, former president of Tanzania, and also includes Antonio Monteiro, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, and Bhojrah Pokharel, the former Chairman of the Election Commission of Nepal. It will closely follow events and troubleshoot by engaging with the main Sudanese actors to resolve tensions or disputes that threaten to derail referenda processes. It will also likely report to the Secretary-General on its findings.

The UN Security Council has also been especially active on Sudan. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, it issued a press statement in which it “called for the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to take urgent action to facilitate peaceful and on-time referenda that reflect the will of the Sudanese people, to respect their results, and to resolve key remaining post-referenda issues.”<sup>13</sup> A Security Council mission also traveled to Sudan from October 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, making stops in Juba, el Fasher, and Khartoum and meeting with representatives of the government of Southern Sudan and the government of Sudan. During the trip, members of the Council underscored their commitment to supporting the parties in holding credible and peaceful referenda on time, while expressing concern about delays in the preparations. These concerns were reiterated by Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, in his briefing to the Council on October 25<sup>th</sup>; in the briefing, he stated that he was “deeply alarmed” at the lack of progress on preparations for the Abyei referendum and that, while “palpable progress” has

been made on Southern Sudan referendum preparations, limited time remains. The Council will undoubtedly stay heavily engaged in Sudan, including on both north-south issues and Darfur, in the upcoming weeks and months. In fact, the Council is expected to meet at the ministerial level on November 16<sup>th</sup> for a briefing on referenda preparations, as well as Darfur and the related peace talks in Doha.

Although several observers have correctly noted that the referenda are nationally owned processes, the UN has by necessity assumed a great deal of responsibility in facilitating them. This is a credit to the organization. But it is also very tall order, especially in a highly politicized environment in which the issues are intractable and the Khartoum and Juba governments do not seem to have a strong appetite for cooperating with one another. The UN’s credibility could be enhanced or tarnished depending on how events unfold.

#### THE AFRICAN UNION

Although it lacks the capacity and resources to assist significantly with technical and logistical issues, the African Union’s facilitation on the political front will be critical in the coming weeks and months. The AU High-Level Implementation Panel (also called the Mbeki Panel, after its chair) will “assist the Parties in the event that they require intervention to resolve any of the matters on the post-referendum agenda...” and “to help prepare the conditions to ensure that the January 2011 Southern Sudan and Abyei referenda are free and fair.”<sup>14</sup> The Panel has already played a key role in resolving one political impasse: its mediation helped to break a stalemate over the formation of the South Sudan Referendum Commission, when it brokered an agreement acceptable to both parties on the appointment of the Secretary-General of the commission.

In addition, the AU is co-chairing the Sudan Consultative Forum with the UN. The international forum meets bi-monthly and strives to coordinate international efforts to implement the CPA, address postreferenda arrangements, and find solutions to the Darfur crisis. Other than the UN and the AU,

12 UN Secretary-General, *Communiqué on Sudan High-Level Meeting*, UN Doc. SG/2165, September 24, 2010.

13 UN Security Council, *Security Council Press Statement on Sudan*, UN Doc. SC/10031, September 15, 2010.

14 UN Security Council, *6338th Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.6338, June 14, 2010.

participants include the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the European Union (EU), the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the League of Arab states (LAS), countries in the region, the UN Security Council's permanent members, members of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (which monitors the implementation of the CPA), and Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Qatar and Sweden. The forum convened in July, and is scheduled to meet again on November 6th.<sup>15</sup>

### NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES<sup>16</sup>

Regional perspectives on the Southern Sudan Referendum vary depending on cultural, economic, and political factors. Uganda is perhaps the strongest proponent of an independent Southern Sudan in the region. It has been supporting the SPLM/SPLA militarily since the 1980s, and strong trading ties exist between Southern Sudan and Uganda. Uganda and the SPLM/SPLA also have a common enemy in the Lord's Resistance Army, which Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has accused Khartoum of supporting. Ethnic kinship binds tribal groups that span the border of Southern Sudan and Uganda as well.

As the country that hosted the negotiations that led to the CPA, Kenya has an important diplomatic interest in seeing the referenda successfully conducted. While Kenya has been careful not to antagonize Khartoum, it also has very close ties with Southern Sudan, providing military training to SPLA officers and enhancing financial relationships with the south.

Given its engagement in regional conflicts (including its brutal interstate war with Eritrea and its involvement in Somalia's civil war) and its own internal disturbances in recent years, Ethiopia's primary concern is with stability in the region. As such, its goal is to ensure that the referenda and their aftermath are peaceful.

Egypt has considerable strategic concerns about

secession. It is worried that an independent south might demand an increased share of water from the Nile. Likewise, the possibility that Islamist elements could be strengthened in Khartoum in the wake of Southern Sudanese secession would not be welcomed in Cairo.

Finally, although Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi has not been consistent in his policy statements, he recently stated that a vote for secession would set a bad precedent that could spread across Africa like a "contagious disease."

### THE UNITED STATES

While several countries have provided substantial diplomatic and financial support for the referenda, the United States is perhaps the most engaged and influential bilateral actor. The current US policy on Sudan was unveiled at a State Department press conference in October 2009. According to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, it has three primary objectives: "First, an end to conflict, gross human rights abuses, war crimes, and genocide in Darfur; second, implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that results in a united and peaceful Sudan after 2011, or an orderly path toward two separate and viable states at peace with each other; and third, a Sudan that does not provide a safe haven for terrorists."<sup>17</sup> Rather than reacting to crises, the policy is meant to be proactive in nature, combining a series of incentives and pressures to change the behavior of the Khartoum government and promote peace in Sudan.<sup>18</sup>

As one of the main architects of the CPA, the US is keen to ensure that the agreement (including the Southern Sudan referendum) reaches a successful conclusion, underscoring this goal in its 2010 "National Security Strategy."<sup>19</sup> As noted in Secretary Clinton's statement, US engagement—both in Darfur and in north-south issues—reflects the administration's often-repeated commitment to the prevention of atrocity crimes. The policy also links

15 A meeting was not held in September, apparently because its members were focused on the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York and related meetings on its margins.

16 This section draws from International Crisis Group, "Sudan: Regional Perspectives on the Prospect of Southern Independence," *Africa Report* No. 159, May 6, 2010.

17 US Department of State, "Remarks on the Sudan Strategy," October 19, 2009, available at [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/10/130686.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/10/130686.htm).

18 Ibid.

19 White House, "US National Security Strategy," May 2010, available at [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf). According to the Strategy, "...the United States remains committed to working with the international community to support implementation of outstanding elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to ensure that the referendum on the further of Southern Sudan in 2011 happens on time and that its results are respected. In addition, we will continue to engage in the efforts necessary to support peace and stability after the referendum..." p. 48.

the situation in Darfur and north-south issues, which the US had not explicitly done before.

In terms of material support, the US government is Sudan's largest bilateral donor, having provided \$6 billion to the country since 2005.<sup>20</sup> In 2009, USAID assistance to the country (as well as eastern Chad, where approximately 250,000 Sudanese refugees live) was over \$1.1 billion; the lion's share of these funds (nearly 62 percent) is used for food aid.<sup>21</sup> Funds from the US have been critical in addressing hunger in Southern Sudan.<sup>22</sup> The US has also been involved in efforts to train Southern Sudan's military.<sup>23</sup>

In preparation for the referenda, the US has bolstered its diplomatic presence in Sudan. In late August 2010, veteran diplomat and Africa expert Princeton Lyman was dispatched to the region to lead US negotiating efforts. According to the State Department, Lyman's mandate is to "serve as a part of an expanded US negotiation team...to... augment and complement the efforts of the U.S. embassy in Khartoum and U.S. Consulate General in Juba as our diplomatic mission to Sudan assists in the final elements of implementing Sudan's North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)."<sup>24</sup> In early October, Lyman and US Special Envoy Scott Gration met with NCP and SPLM representatives in Addis Ababa, to help the two parties resolve the deadlock over the membership of the Abyei Referendum Commission and border demarcation. These talks failed to resolve the deadlock over Abyei.

## What Should International Actors Be Doing?

While decisions made in Khartoum and Juba will ultimately determine how events unfold in greater Sudan, international actors have a crucial role to play in facilitating their constructive interaction and in helping Sudan to chart a course to a more peaceful and prosperous future. As external actors continue to plan for the referenda and their

aftermath, several key points should be emphasized.

### 1. Ensure AU and UN panels work together.

The AU High-Level Implementation Panel and the UN Panel must think creatively about how best to work together. The two panels have overlapping mandates, which means that they could undermine one another if they are not careful. Too much is at stake for disagreements over roles and responsibilities to interfere with their activities. A formula that ensures sustained strategic engagement with key actors in the north and south would be useful in helping the referenda to occur without significant violence or disruption.

### 2. Provide ongoing mediation support.

Ongoing international support for mediation and reconciliation between north and south will be required for months and years ahead, regardless of the results of the referenda. In the coming months, the UN, the AU, and other key multilateral and bilateral actors must be prepared to continue to work with the parties to help them to resolve critical postreferenda arrangements (e.g., wealth sharing, borders, citizenship, etc.), given the intractable nature of these issues and the probability that many of them may not be finalized by January 9, 2011.

### 3. Coordinate strategic peacebuilding efforts.

To help it recover in a meaningful way, the south will need sustained and significant peacebuilding engagement from the international donor community provided in a strategic and coordinated manner. As suggested by the Brazilian permanent representative to the UN at the Security Council's June 2010 debate on Sudan, it might be useful to think of what role the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) could play in the future of the south.<sup>25</sup> This would be consistent with the recommendation of the co-facilitators of the PBC review, who advocated that the PBC "move beyond a limited and limiting view

20 USAID, "USAID Sub-Saharan Africa, Sudan," September 20, 2010, available at [www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan\\_africa/countries/sudan/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/sudan/index.html).

21 USAID, "Sudan: Monthly Update," September 2010, available at [www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan\\_africa/countries/sudan/docs/sep10\\_monthly\\_update.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/sudan/docs/sep10_monthly_update.pdf).

22 *The Economist*, "South Sudan."

23 *Ibid.*

24 US Department of State, "Ambassador Princeton N. Lyman to Lead Sudan Negotiation Support Unit," Press Release, August 25, 2010, available at [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/08/146271.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/08/146271.htm).

25 UN Security Council, *6338th Meeting*, p. 23.

of the Commission,” and that the “Security Council...consider a wider range of situations for referral... (including larger countries).”<sup>26</sup> South Sudan would be the most complex and challenging case the PBC has faced to date, and would certainly test how far this body has come since its founding in 2005. Nonetheless, the option should be carefully analyzed to determine what type of PBC involvement could be most effective and what the potential value of such engagement would be.

By any measure, an independent Southern Sudan would qualify as an extremely fragile state. Governance is problematic. Infrastructure and administrative capacity are lacking, especially outside of Juba. The SPLM is still making the transition from guerilla movement to ruling party.<sup>27</sup> In the midst of the April 2011 elections, it was accused of intimidating opposition candidates, a couple of whom (George Athor and David Yau Yau) took up arms against the SPLM after the election.<sup>28</sup> The south is also affected by intercommunity violence, and has had to fend off incursions from the Lord’s Resistance Army. Statistics on health, education, and poverty are alarming here as well. Over 90 percent of the population lives on less than \$1 per day, nearly 17 percent of children die before reaching their first birthday, and less than 2 percent of children in the South complete primary school.<sup>29</sup>

Since the signing of the CPA, the south has received considerable foreign assistance. According to press reports, much of this money has been lost to corruption. The south has also been using much of its income to build its armed forces in preparation for a potential renewal of conflict with the north,<sup>30</sup> and, thus, has been distracted from the necessary tasks of development and reconstruction. This underscores the importance of finding a political solution to the north-south conflict as an important precondition to the successful reconstruction and development of Southern Sudan.

#### 4. Prepare for the worst.

While hoping for the best, multilateral and bilateral actors should be prepared for the worst. Northern and Southern Sudan have strong disincentives to reignite the conflict. However, both sides are heavily armed, and some analysts have suggested that a relapse into conflict is more than a remote possibility, especially if things do not go well or as planned on January 9<sup>th</sup>. A robust preventive deployment by external bilateral and/or multilateral actors is one option if tensions bubble over. A no-fly zone along the north-south border in case of renewed hostilities is another option that would prevent strafing from the air of the kind that has been so deadly in the Darfur conflict.

During the Security Council’s trip to Sudan in early October 2010, Southern Sudanese President Salva Kiir requested that UN peacekeepers be placed along the north-south border in the lead up to the referendum. Subsequently, Alain LeRoy, UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, indicated that moving UN troops to critical spots along the border and bolstering UNMIS’s troop strength to enhance its border presence are potential options. While northern Sudan has already objected to troop increases, the Security Council should explore strategies to induce Khartoum’s compliance. It may be that member states would be willing to take the helpful step of contributing more to UNMIS if Khartoum’s compliance is secured. While DPKO has informally reached out to some member states, their level of interest is unclear.

#### 5. Help Sudan strengthen center-periphery relations.

North-south relations should be seen as part of a broader mosaic of center-periphery tensions that has troubled the Sudan since independence. It is encouraging that key external actors—the UN, the AU, the US, and others—have begun to

26 United Nations, *Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*, UN Doc. S/2010/393-A/64/868, July 19, 2010, op. 128-129 .

27 Security Council Report, “Sudan,” October 2010, p. 24, available at [www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.6280879/k.8E00/October\\_2010brSudan.htm](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.6280879/k.8E00/October_2010brSudan.htm) .

28 *The Economist*, “South Sudan.”

29 United Nations Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, “Scary Statistics—Southern Sudan, September 2010, available at [www.unsudanig.org](http://www.unsudanig.org) .

30 *The Economist*, “South Sudan.” According to this article, “The SPLM leadership spends 60% of its income on weapons and army pay, as an insurance, it is argued, against renewed hostilities with the north.”

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conceptualize the situation in these terms. They must not lose sight of this goal in policy implementation. At the strategic level, it is essential that bilateral and multilateral actors harmonize their efforts to assist Sudan in a cohesive and integrated manner that recognizes and strives to address the interconnectedness of the challenges facing the country as a whole. The rebel groups in Darfur are watching the outcome of the Sudan referenda closely, and if Southern Sudan secedes, they may increase their demands at the negotiating table. Likewise, while all eyes are on the referenda and the Doha negotiations over Darfur, it should not be forgotten that South Kordofan and Blue Nile will also be holding

popular consultations on their future governance in January. All of this suggests that external actors need to compel and/or provide Khartoum with incentives to devise a strategy to make unity attractive for the rest of the country, which it appears to have been unable or unwilling to do in the south.

However, it should be emphasized that the future of Sudan is in the hands of the Sudanese. Regardless of the level and quality of engagements by external actors, decisions in Khartoum, Juba, and elsewhere in Sudan will have the greatest role in determining whether the country will be able to escape its violent past.

– November 2, 2010

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