THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN SUDAN

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Introduction

The political and economic conditions in Sudan and particularly southern Sudan and Darfur have not improved despite the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 between the northern and southern areas of Sudan. During this Civil War, it is estimated that about 2 million lives were lost with 4 million people displaced. Current developments in Sudan have revealed that the CPA is unstable and can collapse at any time.

If the CPA collapses, the chain reaction could send the country into much greater turmoil. The Darfur crisis would worsen, and a destabilized Sudan could potentially become Al Qaeda breeding grounds like it was in 1990s. It was only when Sudan came under intense pressure from the U.S for hosting Osama Bin Laden that it decided to evict the Al Qaeda leader in 1996. Given this connection, it is imperative for the international community and NGOs to work hard to preserve the peace between northern and southern Sudan, and at the same time pressure the national government to seek a peaceful resolution with the rebels in Darfur.

As of 2003, there has been an ongoing genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan, as the government-backed “Janjaweeds” (Arab militia) terrorize the African populace of Darfur. The Darfur crisis has claimed 400,000 lives and left 2,500,000 displaced. Also, the eastern region of the country is on the verge of political quagmire. These are not the only problems affecting Sudan. Aside from an inherent bias against women, perpetuated by culture and the system alike, Sudan lacks democracy, equality, transparency, etc. The basic human rights are denied and there is no accountability on the part of the government. Women continue to be treated as second-class citizens, as the Islamic law by which the northern part of the country is governed and traditional culture in the South condones this gender injustice.

A peaceful Sudan will mean secured borders and hence one less spot for Al Qaeda to breed. Thus, engineering a free Sudan that refrains from sponsoring terrorism would be a significant accomplishment in the “war on terror” for the international community. Also, peace in Sudan will have a positive spillover effect in Uganda, Congo, and Chad, bringing a regional peace to the part of Africa that has experienced some of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history.

To revive the peace and hence rescue the people of Sudan from facing another catastrophic war, I propose that the international community take three crucial steps. First, the United Nations should intervene in pressuring the national government of Sudan to implement all the protocols agreed upon during the signing of CPA in Nairobi, Kenya. Second, the United Nations should lobby the international community to release the funds that were pledged in Oslo, Norway for the reconstruction effort, especially in the southern and western parts of the country. Last but certainly not least, the United Nations should approve more financial aid for the government of southern Sudan to guarantee its survival.
Current Political Situation in Sudan

At the end of October 2007, the SPLM, a partner in the CPA and a main political party in southern Sudan, pulled out their ministers from the Government of National Unity, complaining that the predominantly northern government is dragging its feet in implementing the peace agreement. The pullout had a negative impact on already fragile negotiations between the government and the rebels from Darfur.

Two years later, though the two parties are back on some sort of track, there is much yet to be implemented. As the country prepares to go to the polls later this year, there is a greater concern that elections will not be free and fair. To make the matters worse, the census that was much anticipated to provide clear boundaries in terms of population in the South is being disputed. This makes it very hard to envision the referendum in 2011 that both parties agreed to in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

Intervention

To bolster the peace process in Sudan, the United Nations needs to intervene at a much larger capacity. The intervention will solve the following:

I. Prevent another military showdown between the South and the North. Hence, an earlier engagement could avoid another civil war in Sudan.

II. United Nations intervention will make border demarcation between North and South Sudan possible. Without the border, the election scheduled to take place later in 2009 will be meaningless. Consequently, the referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan will be affected.

III. Darfur is currently a daunting issue for the international community. Human rights violation in that particular area must be stopped. An intervention from the United Nations will stop Sudan from committing further atrocities in Darfur.

The civil war in Sudan between the Sudan’s People Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan’s government has brought a tremendous loss to the country. It is estimated that about 2 million lives have been lost and 4 million people displaced in southern Sudan since the war started in 1983. The country cannot afford another showdown.

Furthermore, an intervention will allow border demarcation between North and South Sudan, so that when the referendum arrives in 2011, the country is ready and there are no setbacks. The referendum must be viewed as the only hope to bring a lasting peace in Sudan; hence, laying the ground now will make that hope attainable.

Also, an intervention will force Sudan to stop committing genocide and the marginalization of the people of Darfur. In general, an intervention at an earlier stage will minimize costs in terms of human lives and humanitarian assistance. Since the war on terror is about taking preventive measures, investing in Sudan now is a preventive measure. The United Nations has a moral duty to act accordingly to preserve human dignity around the world in order to remain respected as an organization.

Reconstruction

A final peace will come to Sudan only if the international community and in particular, capable governments like U.S, act to support a collective approach to peace. Part of a complete peace
process is a strategy to develop infrastructure and allow citizens to realize a peace dividend. The United Nations must lobby the international community to uphold the promises made in Oslo, Norway to release funds that were pledged for reconstruction effort in Sudan. The funds are critical in accomplishing the following goals:

I. Provide funds for infrastructures such as roads, schools and health facilities. Priority must go to infrastructures that can allow economic growth.

II. The Sudanese government can use the funds to train and develop leaders in order to create accountability and path to good governance.

III. The funds will also be used to receive and accommodate refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to resettle in Sudan and hence contribute toward development.

Infrastructures such as schools are vital in advancing a permanent peace in Sudan. The United Nations has continuously ranked Sudan behind Afghanistan in girls’ enrolment in schools. Boosting girls’ enrolment and empowering women in general have a greater impact on a society, because in the least developed countries like Sudan, life revolves around women, and educated women make good choices for families. Education will also dramatically reduce the infant mortality rate.

Developing a democratic country takes resources, but those resources will be in vain if there are no good leaders to execute and implement democracy. This is where the funds are critical in cultivating democratic leaders who genuinely care about the welfare of the country.

As mentioned earlier, there are huge numbers of displaced persons in Kenya, Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia and many other neighboring countries who fled during the civil war. This population must be accommodated as they return. A successful integration of these returnees could boost the chances of lasting peace in Sudan.

The U.S and other international communities will monitor the disbursement of the funds in order to guarantee proper usage and spending. The U.S can provide technical expertise for the Sudanese government in allocating the funds to improve efficiency and better management.

Foreign Aid

As a supplement to these funds, the international community must provide more foreign aid to southern Sudan. A stronger South is a balancing force in Sudan and it will prevent the North from violating the peace agreement.

The aid can be in many different forms.

I. Knowledge transfer program.
II. Leadership development program.
III. Public Institutions Building program.

Sudan and South Sudan in particular, lost many of its intellectual personnel during the civil war era due to the brain drain. A program to transfer knowledge back to the region will bolster peace efforts. The program can be coordinated by affluent countries by sponsoring students from Sudan for higher education. These countries can also station some of their own experts on democratic governance in Sudan as a tool to spread democracy.
Providing southern Sudanese with an incentive to return and offer their expertise and contribute to the development of their country can also be a good way for the West to export democracy to Sudan. The “Lost Boys” of Sudan, a group of young immigrants from South Sudan, can be vital tools in the efforts to bring democracy to Sudan. These young men and women, influenced by the American values of democracy, rule of law, and care for humanity, are a good investment basket for America. The foreign aid can also come in the form of a training program. This program could target top leadership in various sectors to advance their set of skills.

Last but not least, the foreign aid can come in form of public institutions building program. Institutions such as education, banking, health and many others are largely nonexistent in the South. An effort to establish well-founded institutions will reduce the risk of another war and increase a quick recovery from civil war aftermath.

**Conclusion**

For many years, the international community has turned away from engaging itself to halt the roots of humanitarian crises in Sudan. As the world enters this crucial time of the war on terror, it is beneficial to close all the loopholes that allow international terrorism to breed. Intervening in Sudan to stop genocide and halt all atrocities committed by the government is not only a great achievement in the war on international terrorism, but also a means of bringing regional peace to a part of Africa that has endured some of the most brutal humanitarian crises.

A peaceful Sudan will also alleviate United Nations food shortages. It is estimated that Sudan has many as 4 million refugees dependent on United Nations food supplies - achieving peace in Sudan will allow United Nations to focus on other disaster responses. Hence, it is important for the international community not only to intervene and provide foreign aid, but also to help with the reconstruction effort in southern Sudan in order to stabilize the comprehensive peace.