

*"Money Makes the War Go Round:
Transforming the Economy of War in Sudan"*

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**FOOD AID, LAND TENURE
& THE SURVIVAL OF THE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY**

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The human cost of the current war in the Sudan has been immense, though no reliable figures exist to tabulate that cost.² After nearly two decades of fighting issues of relief and rehabilitation have become entangled with the related issues of war aims and the peace process. The relief effort in the Sudan has become a contested example in current debates concerning the efficacy of humanitarian interventions.³ The way the war is being fought is directly linked to the pursuit of long-term economic objectives in the country. The war economy of both the government and the guerrillas involves, in different degrees, the capture of labour as much as the capture of territory. On the government's side relief has become part of their development strategy, and population displacement, slavery and the exploitation of oil, often seen as separate issues by external observers, are inextricably linked in the war effort. In a reinforcing cycle, the economic strategy for the development of the country has produced the war as much as it has been a product of war.

War & Economics

¹ Portions of this paper are extracted from Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford: James Currey, in press).

² See Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars* (London/NY: Zed Books, 2001), pp. 211-12, on the wildly varying figures current within relief circles on either side of the conflict.

³ Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics & the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997); John Prendergast, *Crisis Response: Humanitarian Band-Aids in Sudan and Somalia* (London/Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997); Joanna Macrae & Anthony Zwi (eds), *War & Hunger: Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies* (London: Zed Books, 1994); Joanna Macrae, *Aiding Recovery? The Crisis of Aid in Chronic Political Emergencies* (London/NY: Zed Books, 2001); Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.

The current war is being fought in the context of massive economic reorientation and dislocation which began in the 1970s. The 'bread basket' strategy of the Nimairi period, which did so much to bankrupt the Sudan, set in motion major economic and social disruptions in the rain-fed North. The shift from subsistence agriculture to export-oriented, highly capitalized, mechanized agricultural schemes had its greatest impact in the so-called 'Transition Zone' along Southern Kordofan, Southern Darfur, Blue Nile and the Sudan-Ethiopian border region, resulting in the dispossession of small-holding farmers from their customary rights to land, the erosion of land-use rights by pastoralists, and the creation of a large force of agricultural wage-labourers, whose numbers were increased through displacement by drought and war in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴

In 1970 the Unregistered Land Act abolished customary rights of land use and access to land and set the foundation for the central state leasing of land for large-scale farming schemes. In 1974 the Law of Criminal Trespass strengthened the rights of leaseholders to their lands, further restricting the right of access by nomads and smallholding farmers. The current government amended the Civil Transactions Act in 1990 to prohibit the recognition of customary land rights in the courts throughout the country. The cumulative effect of these legal reforms has been that not only has political power been concentrated further in the central government, but control of the very land on which people live and depend has been transferred to those with access to that power.

After the end to the first civil war a number of governments and international agencies became directly involved in the economic development of the Sudan. An unusual constellation was created of foreign donors (including the USA, Saudi Arabia

⁴ For early analyses of the undermining of the subsistence economy and asset-stripping see: Jay O'Brien, 'Sowing the seeds of famine: the political economy of food deficits in Sudan', in Peter Lawrence (ed.), *World Recession and the Food Crisis in Africa* (London: James Currey, 1986); Mark Duffield, *Sudan at the Crossroads: From Emergency Preparedness to Social Security*, IDS Discussion Paper 275 (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, May 1990).

and Iraq), international institutions (the IMF, the UN, Islamic banks) and NGOs of varying denominations and political orientation who were tied to the Sudan's national development strategy and committed to the government's survival.⁵

The demands of relief overtook the needs of development as first famine and then war commanded the attention and resources of donors and international agencies in the early 1980s. The transfer of assets, which began before the war, accelerated, especially after the 1989 NIF coup. The NIF has been more systematic and determined than previous governments in the transfer of resources, whether those of rural peoples in land, labour and livestock, or national assets, such as oil, but the development strategy is essentially the same as that prior to 1983. Since 1989 the government has manipulated the international relief effort to further both its economic and strategic goals in the war, but it has also tried to harness the active collaboration of relief agencies through the ideology of development itself, which has been presented as both politically neutral and a strategy for peace. The measure of its success can be gauged to the extent that donors and agencies have accepted its premisses about development and have acquiesced in its restrictions on relief.

'Development' in the Sudan is not politically neutral. The conflict over what type of 'development' is to be implemented, and who will control and benefit from the country's resources, is not confined just to the assets of the South. This is why the war has moved out of the South into those areas, such as the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and the eastern Sudan, where asset transfer – especially in land – has been most marked. Following a pattern first begun during the Turco-Egyptian transformation of the Sudan's economy in the nineteenth century, religion and race are increasingly determining who has access to the greatest economic opportunities through financing, government leases and concessions, and use and control of the work force.

⁵ De Waal, *Famine Crimes*, pp. 88-91; Africa Watch, *Food and Power in the Sudan* (London: Africa Watch, 1997); Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or Development Diplomats? NGOs and Foreign Aid* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), pp. 186-202.

Within the relief effort itself the international agencies participating in the UN's umbrella Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) are confronted by a central dilemma: they are called upon to alleviate the effects of the disaster-producing activities of their major counterparts: the government of the Sudan and the Southern movements. In the war zones affected by direct fighting civilian populations have been repeatedly targeted by the Sudanese army, the government's Popular Defense Force (PDF), the Southern factions and allied militias. In the early period of the war (1984-8) such raids were mainly intended to deny the opposing side supplies or civilian support, and the subsistence economy of the rural populace became the primary target of organized forces as livestock was captured, houses were burned, and wells destroyed. Since 1991 interfactional fighting within the SPLA has intensified the asset-stripping nature of such attacks, where food stores and standing crops have been seized or put to the torch, relief inputs have been captured and relief centres have invited attack. All of these activities have produced widespread displacement, as specific populations have been denied the opportunity or the means to feed themselves, and as groups of people have fled areas of conflict seeking refuge elsewhere.

The pattern of the war indicates that resource depletion and economic subjugation are the objectives of war, not just its incidental consequences. Populations stripped of their assets are deprived of economic independence. Demolitions of displaced settlements around Khartoum, and forcible relocations of displaced persons to schemes and 'peace villages' around Wau and Juba, or in Upper Nile, the Nuba Mountains and along the Ethiopian borderlands have produced a dependent and portable labour reserve who serve a double purpose: 1) to implement the government's 'pacification' programme through resettling and reclaiming territory formerly contested by the SPLA, and 2) to extend political and economic control over the resources of these areas through agricultural schemes owned and operated by interest groups currently represented in the army and government, in a

way which the central government and Northern merchants were unable to do in the days of the former Southern regional government before 1983.

The economic strategy of the SPLA is far less clearly defined or focused. In the past concentrations of displaced civilians have been used to attract relief resources, especially in the refugee camps in Ethiopia before 1991. This tactic cannot be implemented so effectively now. Relief thinking within the SPLA since 1991 has increasingly favoured the rehabilitation of the rural subsistence economy in areas under its control, rather than the creation of more displaced settlements and relief camps. Thus two different 'relief' strategies reflect the opposing political goals in the civil war. In the name of 'development' the government seeks to control the movements and productive capacity of a population displaced by war. The SPLA supports the return of that population to its home areas and the revival of the subsistence economy through the supply of relief inputs. In so far as the Northern and Southern Sectors of OLS have adopted the relief strategies of their respective counterparts, the international relief effort has become divided against itself.

The International Relief Effort

If development is political, so, too, is relief. The international political climate has had a direct bearing on relief policies of donors, the government and the SPLA. Throughout the early years of the war the Reagan administration in the US maintained crucial financial support for the succession of Khartoum regimes, as well as hostility towards the Derg in Ethiopia and its associates, including the SPLA. As far as actual relief operations in the Sudan went, there was active complicity between some international agencies and the government, especially in the Bahr al-Ghazal famine.⁶ The US cooperated in obstructing the expansion of relief to non-government-held areas, and the UN followed suit. The collusion between a major donor and the UN in denying relief to civilians outside the government's immediate

⁶ David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

control, and their failure to respond to the government's relief abuses, had a direct impact on the formulation of the SPLA's own attitude towards relief. The suspicion engendered by what appeared to be UN and NGO duplicity and hypocrisy has never been fully dispelled.

The stark reality for the SPLA was that it was operating in a vast territory where overland transport and communication was only seasonal. The physical infrastructure of civil administration in many rural areas had already been in decline prior to the outbreak of war, and the regional government had progressively removed itself from the provision of services by devolving that responsibility to international agencies. The pattern of fighting in the early years of the war meant that there was an immediate retraction of rural services and commercial networks to government-held towns. The military strategy of government troops and their militia allies was to despoil and depopulate the rural areas and to interdict SPLA supplies from Ethiopia. Attacks on civilian settlements and livelihoods produced a growing displaced population. The scale of destruction was immense.⁷ As long as government forces could move through the rural areas and target rural services and the subsistence economy, the replacement of the civil infrastructure was not a realistic option.

The military response the SPLA adopted to confront these threats in the mid-1980s directly shaped their relief policies. First, given the chronic insecurity in the rural areas the SPLA organized the movement of people into the Ethiopian refugee camps where at least some services were provided, food and medical supplies were available, and recruits could be sent to the surrounding SPLA training camps and bases. Second, the SPLA attempted to restrict government military activity in the rural areas by besieging administrative centres, garrison towns and major cities, interdicting food and medical supplies to the towns (often brought by foreign aid

⁷ Douglas H. Johnson, 'Destruction and reconstruction in the economy of the Southern Sudan', in Sharif Harir and Terje Tvedt (eds), *Short-Cut to Decay: The Case of the Sudan*, (Uppsala: Nordic African Institute, 1994), pp. 126-43.

agencies), and attacking militia organizations and the civilian populations from which they were drawn. Third, the SPLA's civil administration concentrated on co-opting the native courts and re-imposing a system of law and order. To maintain the SPLA's ground forces, as well as the rudimentary structures of civil administration, the rural population was taxed in kind, providing the SPLA with grain and livestock. By 1988 this combination of strategies was having a marked effect on improving the security of the civilian population under SPLA control.

It was by this time, too, that dissatisfaction with the UN had led a few agencies to make their own contacts with the SPLA and begin limited relief operations in parts of SPLA territory. These contacts were part of the momentum which eventually led to the formation of OLS. With the floods of 1988, which attracted many journalists to Khartoum, international attention was finally directed to the large numbers of war-displaced fleeing Bahr al-Ghazal. UNICEF negotiated with both the government and the SPLA an umbrella operation which would allow participating agencies to work on both sides of the battleline.

The original goal of OLS was to avert an anticipated famine in the South, and the main strategies employed to achieve this nutritional goal in its first two years were distributions of grain and the establishment of feeding centres for specific vulnerable populations. The operation was divided into a Northern Sector, accessing government towns from a headquarters in Khartoum, and a Southern Sector, accessing SPLA-held territory from East Africa. Khartoum retained full control over relief operations in the Northern Sector, while accessibility, rather than reported needs determined initial food distribution by OLS agencies in the Southern Sector.⁸

⁸ Ataul Karim, *et al*, *Operation Lifeline Sudan. A Review* (Geneva: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 1996), p. 110.

The official claim that OLS averted famine and saved people from starvation in 1989⁹ was not substantiated in the first general survey of the South carried out in 1990, which documented the degradation and contraction of the subsistence economy during the first five years of the war, leaving large parts of the country particularly vulnerable to the disruptions brought about by natural causes in 1988. OLS came into operation only in the following year and had not reached those territories experiencing the worst food shortages, who continued to distribute food through networks of kinship and exchange.¹⁰ The report recommended a shift from food aid to more sustained support for local production and distribution, especially in northern Bahr al-Ghazal. The implementation of the 1990 recommendations was obstructed from the start by Khartoum's non-co-operation, and by the World Food Programme's (WFP) preoccupation with potential famine in parts of the North in 1991. As a result OLS Southern Sector (especially WFP) was unprepared for the crisis that came with the evacuation of the Ethiopian refugee camps in May 1991.

With the fall of Mengistu in May, the Ethiopian camps emptied their full population of refugees into the Sudan within a period of less than two months. OLS and ICRC found that they had to try to airdrop or airlift food and other emergency items for some 200,000 returnees confined to remote areas along the Sudan-Ethiopian border. Because of the restrictions imposed by the government on the relief effort in the Sobat basin, OLS found itself unable to serve adequately the returnees. The split in the SPLA beginning in August 1991, and the interfactional fighting that followed not only inhibited further OLS's ability to respond to new relief needs, it generated more displacement and introduced new patterns of competition for relief resources. The presence of concentrations of displaced persons renewed the demand for the delivery of large quantities of relief supplies, while the intensification of the war meant the diversion of such supplies for military use on a far greater scale than

⁹ See Vincent O'Reilly, quoted in Larry Minear, *Humanitarianism under Siege* (Trenton NJ: Red Sea Press, 1991), p. 63.

¹⁰ UN/OLS, *An Investigation into Production Capacity in the Rural Southern Sudan. A Report on Food Sources and Needs* (Nairobi: UN/OLS, June 1990), p. 5.

before. Relief supplies and the support of relief agencies became objects to be won, especially in the fighting between the factions of the SPLA.

Development aid to the Sudan came under an international embargo with the overthrow of the democratic government in 1989. Khartoum's response was to redefine the character of relief in its own territory, giving it developmental goals. The ultimate objective of relief, like development, was to wean-war affected populations off 'relief dependency', towards 'self-sufficiency'. Whereas the Northern Sector tended to ignore the war in its advocacy of a move away from relief to development, the Southern Sector was confronted with the stark realities of war almost on a daily basis. Those in the Northern Sector who saw 'development' as a means of transforming the economy appeared to be comfortable with proposals ostensibly aimed at reducing 'relief dependency' among the dispossessed and displaced population produced by the war, but which in effect intensified pressures on them to become part of a large labour reserve as workers on government or private agricultural schemes. The Southern Sector's increased emphasis on combining food assistance with agricultural and veterinary support, health, water and education projects redefined its goal away from alleviating famine and towards maintaining the independent labour force of rural subsistence economies. The two approaches were, in effect, opposed, especially in such areas as northern Bahr al-Ghazal and the Nuba Mountains where the tactics of war on the government side were squeezing labour from non-government to government-controlled areas.

War & the Targeting of Resources

Whatever the broader political and military objectives of the parties to the current conflict, the civil war has been fought on the ground as a resource war. Battles between organized armed groups, with the intention of seizing or holding territory, are only one aspect of the fighting. Civilians have been systematically targeted in 'asset stripping' raids since the outset. The intention has been not only to seize

whatever resources they possess, but to deny these resources to the opposing side; in fact civilian populations themselves have often been treated as resources to control.

The targeting of resources has changed as the pattern of war has altered. In the early years of the war (1984-8) the government relied heavily on surrogate forces raised from 'tribal' militias (subsequently incorporated into the PDF), the most prominent being the Murahalin (Misiriyya and Rizaqat of Southern Kordofan and Southern Darfur), the Rufa'a of southern Blue Nile, the Anyanya-2 (Nuer) and Murle of Upper Nile and Jonglei, and the Mundari and Toposa militias of Eastern Equatoria. These forces adopted tactics which were aimed at denying the SPLA a civilian base of support; thus civilian settlements were attacked at least as often, if not more often, than units of SPLA troops. In Abyei (Southern Kordofan) and northern Bahr al-Ghazal the attacks had begun before the war and were aimed at driving people away from their settlements: houses were burned, crops destroyed, cattle seized and people abducted and enslaved. The enlargement of Arab cattle herds was not the primary motive: Dinka cattle taken in these raids were often sold on the Omdurman market, frequently for the export meat trade. In southern Blue Nile militia attacks were prompted to forestall potential support for the SPLA. The SPLA, too, attacked civilian settlements of those groups from which militias were recruited, but on a far smaller scale than government forces.

The net effect of these activities was massive population displacement. In some cases individual families as well as groups of people moved into more secure areas near their original homes, but distant from the scene of fighting. In other cases large groups of people moved out of the war zone altogether, such as the Dinka of Abyei and northern Bahr al-Ghazal moving to sites in Kordofan, Darfur, or Khartoum, the movement of refugees into neighbouring countries, or the SPLA-organized movement of people into refugee camps in Ethiopia prior to 1991. Others sought refuge in government-held towns in the South.

Attacks on civilians were declining by 1988 as the SPLA gained control of more territory and began wooing government-militias to its side, but the eruption of inter-factional fighting between Southern movements since 1991 intensified such attacks at the same time that it focused them more narrowly on certain regions. As in the earlier period of the war concentrations of civilians become significant targets, especially in the areas of Jonglei, Lakes and northern Bahr al-Ghazal.

The objectives of raiding altered slightly. Asset-stripping was still a method of asset transfer. Livestock looted by Arab PDF units continued to enter the national (and even international) economy through trade to Omdurman. It now also became a currency between the government and its southern guerrilla allies, who exchanged cattle with regular army garrisons in exchange for resupplies of weapons and ammunition. Allied southern commanders also used their access to looted cattle and regular cattle markets to build up their own independent economic bases. Relief items continued to be secured for armed forces, either through the oversupply of relief to unassessed populations in government garrisons or the semi-standard twenty percent 'tax' the SPLA surreptitiously extracted on items supplied for civilian use. But in addition to this the *destruction* of relief items and relief centres became an objective of raiding as a tactic to accelerate labour flight.

Asset Stripping & Labour Flight

The case of northern Bahr al-Ghazal highlights the issue of access and illustrates the complexity of food aid in relation to food security.¹¹ It also reveals differences in relief perceptions and strategies, continuing from the pre-OLS emergency. Agencies acting in the relief operations for people displaced from northern Bahr al-Ghazal prior to 1989 approached the emergency as a natural catastrophe which could be alleviated

¹¹ The following is based on Ataul Karim, *et al*, *Operation Lifeline Sudan*, chapter 6.

by the provision of food and the establishment of relief and feeding centres. The relief solution was measured in the metric tonnes of inputs. The displaced Dinka viewed the nature of their problem, and therefore its solution, differently. To them the purpose of relief was to enable them to return to their homes and reinvest in their subsistence economy.¹² The same resolution was forcefully stated by Dinka who remained in northern Bahr al-Ghazal and were interviewed after the first year of OLS.¹³ Despite the recommendations made at that time OLS failed to provide agricultural support to northern Bahr al-Ghazal, very largely because of the flight ban on the area imposed by Khartoum in 1990-2. When OLS did gain access to the area in 1992-3 it gave initial priority to food inputs, and only gradually came around to the Dinka way of thinking. In the displaced centres accessed by OLS Northern Sector, however, the size of the food ration continued to be a major preoccupation and a matter of debate.

Despite the fact that the discovery of the conditions in northern Bahr al-Ghazal in 1987-8 was one of the factors which led to the creation of OLS, OLS never accessed that area properly, whether by road, rail or air. The effect was that the people of rural northern Bahr al-Ghazal, though seriously affected by the war, did not receive the relief food that even OLS assessments suggested they needed.

What has happened is that the population of the region has continued to circulate both north into Kordofan and Darfur, and south into other parts of Bahr al-Ghazal and Lakes, seeking the alternatives of wage labour, relief distributions and the subsistence economy as circumstances allow. The combination of these strategies has allowed for a modest recovery of the local subsistence economy at different times, recoveries which prompted further government intervention, either through direct raiding or indirect restrictions on relief operations.

¹² Keen, *Benefits of Famine*, chapter 5.

¹³ UN/OLS, *An Investigation into Production Capacity*, p. 58.

The intermittent truce between the SPLA and Misiriyya and Rizaiqat groups along the border which in 1990-6 allowed for freer movement between northern Bahr al-Ghazal and neighbouring regions; thus allowing people to circulate between their homes and relief centres and agricultural schemes in government-held areas. A government ban on relief flights in 1990-2 certainly helped to accelerate labour exodus at that time. With the resumption of relief deliveries late in 1992 people began returning from Darfur, Kordofan and Khartoum, and there were even some Misiriyya migrants who came to receive relief food. With a further decentralization of relief distribution centres and a continued return of labour there was a modest recovery in agricultural output throughout 1994-5. As small as OLS food and food production interventions were, their real effect was to keep the household labour force intact, reduce the amount of time spent on gathering alternative sources of food, and reinforce networks of kinship exchange and exchange between nearby communities. Of course, it did all this at the expense of labour intensive schemes in the North.

There were also commercial exchanges, despite the war, centred on a few markets. The northern Bahr al-Ghazal markets are important cattle auction centres, but people also buy grain from Misiriyya herders and traders. Commerce between northern Bahr al-Ghazal and Kordofan contributes to local household economy in a number of ways: in the buying and selling of cattle and grain, in the sale of handicrafts such as grass mats, in the hiring out of labour. A similar pattern of trade between Wau and neighbouring SPLA held areas, with sugar, medicine, clothes and soap going out in return for livestock, grain, honey, charcoal and firewood existed before 1998. The networks of Bahr al-Ghazal linked up with a further SPLA-protected livestock export market to Uganda. It is these cross-border informal markets in livestock and other tradable items, along with more orthodox exports like timber and coffee which form the foundation of the economy in the SPLA areas.

In 1994-5 the activities of various government militias and PDF units in northern Bahr al-Ghazal and along the railway line to Wau were timed to cause the maximum disruption to dry season cattle movements and late dry season/early wet season clearing and planting cycles. Standing crops were torched and markets were attacked. Relief supplies were seized or destroyed shortly after delivery. This pattern of disruption intensified following the 1996 Peace Charter and the 1997 internal peace agreement between the government and various dissident Southern groups. In 1998 the battlefield rapprochement between the SPLA and the renegade commander, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, culminated in simultaneous SPLA attacks on Wau and Gogrial. Following SPLA advances throughout Bahr al-Ghazal in February 1998, the government again introduced a ban on relief flights to the area. With a new influx of people out of government towns into the rural areas a famine crisis was announced by the international media in April 1998.

The prevailing natural disaster model of famine relief among donors was one reason why many donor governments at first failed to appreciate that the immediate causes of widespread hunger in Bahr al-Ghazal were manmade. Many were slow to recognize the link between the explosion of fighting around Wau, the expanded retaliatory raids by PDF units along the railway (the 'relief' artery), the massive exodus of people released from Wau and its surrounding 'peace villages' into SPLA-controlled territory, and the spread of famine and food shortages throughout much of rural Bahr al-Ghazal. The reflex calls for 'all sides' to stop fighting implied an even blame for the events of 1998, ignoring, once again, the meshing of the government's military and economic strategies and the intended consequences of years of access denial and resource targeting by government forces.

As in the early 1980s, so now the people of northern Bahr al-Ghazal have become vulnerable not because of their poverty, but because of their economic resources. Government military activity, co-ordinated as it has been with increasing

restrictions on relief access, is designed to undermine, if not halt, OLS support to the rural economy of northern Bahr al-Ghazal. There has been renewed labour out-migration and displacement.¹⁴

Population displacement on a large scale has become a major feature of the war. It is not an incidental outcome of the fighting but is one of its objectives; it involves not just the removal of whole groups and individuals from their home areas, but the incorporation of those populations either into competing armies, or into a captive labour force. The renewal of slave-raiding has been one aspect of that captive labour force which has received widespread international publicity. We deal here with another, less well-publicized form of captured labour, one which has featured in the relief and development policies of the government.

The fate of the war displaced in the northern Sudan is one of the most important relief issues in the Sudan, but it is one that has been ignored by the UN and international agencies. This is largely so because the scope of OLS Northern Sector's coverage is determined by agreements negotiated with the government, defining the areas OLS can access; it is not based on overall needs. War-displaced populations in Khartoum were excluded from OLS assessments until 1994, and even after that date populations living in unofficial settlements continued to be excluded. The Nuba Mountains were excluded from formal assessment until 1996, when UNICEF and WFP began using OLS resources only in those government-controlled areas they were allowed to enter. Agricultural labourers in schemes from the southern borderlands of the northern Sudan through to the eastern Sudan do not even figure on the relief horizon, though many are in fact part of the war-displaced population.¹⁵

¹⁴ For an account of the 1998 famine, see Human Rights Watch, *Famine in Sudan, 1998: The Human Rights Causes* (Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, 1999). For continued Dinka displacement, see Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*, chapter 9.

¹⁵ For a fuller discussion of relief issues concerning war displaced in the northern Sudan, on which this section is based, see Ataul Karim, *et al*, *Operation Lifeline Sudan*, chapters 4 & 7, and Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*, chapters 8 & 9.

There are common issues affecting the displaced populations throughout government-held areas, whether in the 'Transition Zone', the 'peace villages' of the South, or surrounding the Three Towns. There is a lack of secure land tenure, legal protection and political entitlements, at the same time as there has been a reduction of relief entitlements through externally-imposed 'self-sufficiency' programmes.

Around the Three Towns the war-displaced are physically separated from the city population. They have no right of residence in Khartoum, no right to own land, and no right to construct permanent shelters. By 1994 there were an estimated 800,000 displaced around Khartoum. The government periodically demolished informal settlements and forcibly relocated inhabitants to temporary camps on the outskirts. UNDP, the lead agency in OLS Northern Sector, accepted the government's programme for the displaced around Khartoum as a programme of development and urban renewal. In 1989 it committed itself to helping to integrate large numbers of displaced into the mainstream development process of the country. In the second year of OLS, UNDP further committed the UN to helping the government find 'durable solutions' for the displaced, and finding funding for large scale programmes. Since 1989 government policy has been to resettle war-displaced on 'production' sites, using them as an expanded labour pool in 'areas of production' in Upper Nile, Bahr al-Ghazal, Darfur, Kordofan and Central State.

The development agenda of the Sudan government with regard to war-affected populations is directly linked to its military strategy. In 1990 it explicitly stated that the return of displaced to agricultural production sites would safeguard the armed forces. Since then it has created displaced camps in the Nuba Mountains and around Wau which enabled the government to secure its military position in those areas. UNDP, UNICEF and WFP have supported rehabilitation and development programmes in these militarized areas.

UN OLS agencies have tended to see displacement and food insecurity as transitory problems, and there has been much concern expressed about relief aid creating 'aid dependence'. There has been a systematic compromise of relief entitlements for the displaced. The Dinka in the Wau peace camps before 1998, already made destitute by war, were kept on short rations and had no secure tenure over the land on which they were settled; thus becoming a pool of low-paid wage labourers for the commercial development of mechanized agricultural schemes in the area. This pattern was repeated further north. A number of means have been used to ensure ready labour on commercial projects around Al-Da'ain: the diversion of up to fifty percent of relief food to the host communities, local merchants and government officials; the bonding of sharecroppers to farm owners through indebtedness; and the reduction of food aid itself during labour intensive periods of the agricultural year as a means of getting displaced Dinka to work on commercial farms.¹⁶

By the end of the twentieth century displaced Southerners and Nuba camped in the Transition Zone found themselves caught in a complex web of clientage and indebtedness, with a diminishing entitlement to relief. The displaced have now achieved a 'double utility': as cheap labour to be exploited, and as subordinate clients to be 'managed and manipulated' to attract outside resources. The practical result of nearly two decades of international aid has been to reinforce the subordination of displaced Southerners in the political economy of the Sudan, at the same time that it has reinforced the control exerted by dominant commercial and political groups.¹⁷

Peace through Development?

Khartoum was acutely aware that the international embargo on development aid had substantially reduced the Sudan's receipts of official development assistance: down from \$1907 million in 1985 to \$127 million in 1993/4. It was keen to resume

¹⁶ Ataul Karim, *et al*, *Operation Lifeline Sudan*, p.204.

¹⁷ Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*, pp. 205, 209, 230.

development aid relations, not only for financial reasons, but to re-establish its legitimacy within the international community. In 1992 the Peace & Development Foundation was established to address rehabilitation and development needs in areas retaken in the South. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) also signaled new government priorities: the revival and expansion of agricultural economy as part of a comprehensive social programme which included relocating the displaced and promoting Islamic NGOs. The RRC characterized traditional subsistence agriculture and pastoralism as inefficient, wasteful and harmful to the environment. It proposed instead an expansion of mechanized agriculture to increase the productive potential of the whole population. A new and expanded social welfare policy (with new ministries of social welfare created in the federal states) was geared to the expansion of mechanized agriculture.

This initiative spoke directly to then current aid thinking, particularly represented by the UNDP in Khartoum, which viewed conflict as arising from poverty and underdevelopment. The UN agencies willingly embraced the strategy of linking rehabilitation, development and peace. There followed a considerable blurring of humanitarian relief and development programmes in the Northern Sector, with a general failure to recognize that relief for conflict-affected populations arises from the impact of war, not from structural food deficits. Programmes for self-sufficiency were aimed at taking the war-displaced 'out of the beggar mentality'.¹⁸ Khartoum's restrictions on relief activity through a manipulation of development ideology were given force through a succession of laws which effectively transferred the ownership of OLS Northern Sector to the government.

The development language deployed by the government in relief matters has been echoed chillingly in the exploitation of its oil reserves. There had been an economic impact from the Sudan's international isolation, especially in the oil

¹⁸ Karim, *et al*, *Operation Lifeline Sudan*, p.100.

industry. Khartoum needed to bring in investors who were unaffected by legal prohibitions in their own countries, or uninfluenced by public condemnations. Its earliest investors in oil exploitation came from Canada (then in the process of creating its own oil industry, independent from US-based firms), China and Muslim Malaysia, but as momentum gathered towards oil production in the late 1990s other Middle Eastern and European countries, including Russia, became involved.

Oil exploitation had been made possible by clearing the oil fields of their civilian population through the activities of the Sudanese armed forces and Baqqara militias from Southern Kordofan, and then securing the areas through the alliance with the Nuer break-away factions of the SPLA. Once installed, the Sudanese military has used the oil company roads and airfields to attack civilian settlements within a widening security radius. The war in the oil fields has received wide publicity, partly because it disrupted relief operations, and partly because it precipitated the collapse of the Sudan government's 'peace from within'. There have been a succession of reports into human rights violations in the oil fields, documenting in considerable detail the violent escalation of fighting, as well as the contribution of oil revenues to the Sudan government's war effort.¹⁹

The reaction of companies and governments to this evidence is instructive in its repetition of the relief and development debate: the formulation of policy is divorced from any evidence coming from the field, and the policy of 'constructive engagement' is employed as a shield against criticism. Talisman, the main Canadian company involved, have talked up the development spin-offs of their work, and embodied their commitment to 'constructive engagement' in a 'community

¹⁹ Leonardo Franco, Special Rapporteur of the Commission of Human Rights, 'Situation of human rights in the Sudan' (UN Commission on Human Rights, A/54/467, 14 October 1999); John Harker, *Human Security in Sudan: The Report of a Canadian Assessment Mission* (Ottawa: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000); Peter Verney, *Raising the Stakes: Oil and Conflict in Sudan* (Hebden Bridge: Sudan Update, 2000); Amnesty International, *Sudan: The Human Price of Oil* (London: Amnesty International, 2000); Christian Aid, *The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan* (London, Christian Aid, 2001); Human Rights Watch, *Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights Abuses* (Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, forthcoming).

development strategy'.²⁰ This repeats the line previously employed by some relief and development agencies operating out of Khartoum that underdevelopment is the root cause of the war, and that development will bring peace. Talisman resisted all calls for a public denunciation of attacks on civilians until it could no longer credibly deny such attacks were taking place. The cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains established by the Danforth peace initiative has led to increased fighting in the oil fields and public verification of helicopter gunship attacks on civilian targets. Following one such attack both the US and Canadian governments condemned the attack outright (the British government merely expressed 'concern'), and a class action suit was filed against both Talisman and the Sudan government in New York. It was only then that Talisman produced a public letter of condemnation.

Like the government, the SPLA has adopted the slogan 'peace through development', but it sees this as an elaboration of civil administration, making the SPLA-controlled areas, if not self-sufficient, at least sustainable in their own economy. This encompasses the encouragement of private entrepreneurs and the redistribution of local surpluses to areas of deficit through commerce. But beyond the rehabilitation of local economies, the SPLA has not offered an explicit general defense of local land tenure systems. Unlike the government, it has no radical blueprint for the future.

The war effort requires financing, and like other civil wars, this one offers a number of opportunities for the 'informal economy' to flourish, even if on semi-formal terms. The Sudanese war is not like Angola, where government and rebels each have access to their own valuable exportable mineral resources.²¹ The South's underlying wealth in oil and water only becomes so when exploited through government agreements. Nor is the war like Sierra Leone, where government, rebels,

²⁰ Talisman (Greater Nile) B.V., 'Community Development strategy – 2001'.

²¹ Tony Hodges, *Angola from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001).

and individuals can survive through equal access to a highly exportable resource like diamonds.²² But like these, and other civil wars, the unregulated trade of a 'collapsed state' (in this case, the collapsed state of the southern Sudan) does provide income for movements as well as individuals.

The southern Sudan borders other areas in Africa where not only does the 'informal economy' flourish, it is often virtually the only economy. Gold is the only precious metal that the SPLA has to export, but there are other raw materials which have been exported through SPLA-protected or controlled trade. Livestock (especially cattle to Uganda) is a major source of income. Coffee and timber have also gone out, while manufactured commodities of various sorts come in. The SPLA can behave like a government in setting up bilateral relations, as when it ceded the Ilemi Triangle in the far southeastern corner of the Sudan to Kenya. In negotiating on behalf of the Movement its leaders are also able to strike deals of their own. The South's war economy is now based on a variety of exports into the informal economies of its neighbors, the income of which is divided between the Movement, its leaders and local people in a disproportionate percentage. Part of the current crisis of confidence in SPLA leadership is the perception that the leaders spend too much time outside of the South seeing to their personal business ventures.

This is a highly individualized economic policy to confront the regime's more sophisticated and thorough control the North's economy. If the SPLA is unable to protect and maintain the rural civilian population in their home territories, provide education and training for future generations, or to effectively threaten the oil fields, it can present no sustained threat to the Northern development plan.

Neither relief nor development are neutral: both are enmeshed in politics, whether or not international humanitarian agencies, or oil companies, recognize the

²² Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996).

political complexity confronting them. There is no evidence that any relief operation has helped to shorten the conflict, but competition for relief resources has certainly directed it into new arenas. The control Khartoum has exerted over both development and relief agendas as meant that international agencies operating in the government sector have assisted in the creation of what Mark Duffield calls 'cheap and desocialised labour'. He sees no prospect for change in the Sudan's violent political economy and predicts that 'peace will probably accelerate the commercial exploitation of the South by the North', ending in the South's 'incorporation as an annex of cheap labour and resources for Northern-controlled projects and enterprises.'²³

This is a sobering prospect, not only for humanitarian agencies, but for anyone seeking to bring about a negotiated end to the war. US Senator John Danforth, on being appointed President Bush's special envoy on the Sudan in 2001, immediately focused on the technicalities of relief in the 'confidence-building' measures he set to lead to peace negotiations. His report to the President in April 2002 re-emphasized the importance of those measures, and also proposed the distribution of oil revenues to 'further the cause of peace in the Sudan'.²⁴ Equating both humanitarian relief and development with a peace process is problematic, as the US ought to have learned in Somalia, but more so in the Sudan where the government has successfully restricted relief agencies to purely technical activity, divorcing them from the broader issues of rights and justice, which must figure in any peace process. Having already captured the relief effort, Khartoum will continue to work for the subjugation of Southern labour and Southern resources. It has already managed to co-opt oil companies and many development agencies in this endeavour. It remains to be seen how completely it will co-opt the peace mediators.

²³ Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*, pp.208, 255.

²⁴ John C. Danforth, 'Report to the President of the United States on the Outlook for Peace in Sudan', 26 April 2002.