Anti-Americanism in Sudan

By Albrecht Hofheinz

1. On the term anti-Americanism

The term anti-Americanism is understood as a bundle of feelings, attitudes, opinions, and actions, which, in varying intensity expresses a negative or rejecting position toward the United States as a political, economic, and cultural actor. Anti-Americanism manifests itself in diffuse and in reflecting forms. Often, though not always, the tendency to generalize evolves into a rhetoric merely referring to “the Americans.” That may go hand in hand with a rhetorical differentiation between “the American government” and “the American people.” It is important to stress that anti-Americanism – as an attitude and as a factor impacting behavior and action – is not an unchangeable attitude. Instead, it hinges upon political, economic, and cultural aspects, meaning it can be altered. Also, it is crucial to point out that “anti-Americanism” is often a label applied from the outside, breaking down complex attitudes into simple patterns. That way, the accusation of “anti-Americanism” can solidify the hostile image just as much as actual anti-American attitudes can.

2. Country-specific causes of anti-Americanism

Anti-Americanism in Sudan is fueled by ideology, and the United States’ concrete political, economic, and military actions in Sudan and surrounding regions. The reasons pertaining to ideology are older than “policy-” or “issue-oriented” anti-Americanism. Issue-oriented anti-Americanism tends to turn virulent more often. The differentiation between ideological and issue-oriented causes of anti-Americanism, of course, only makes sense from an analytical point of view. In practice, different causes overlap.¹

¹To differentiate between the causes for anti-Americanism see: Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Donald B. Smith, “Anti-Americanism in the Third World,” in Orbis (Philadelphia, 1984): 593-614. How specifically national anti-Americanism in Sudan is, is a question only to be answered in comparison with other case studies. Surely, country-specific factors and characteristics do exist; they will be examined here more closely. But which causes, bearers, and expressions that are found in Sudan and elsewhere are transnational and thus point at more than just structural parallels? Here, we should consider, among other things, transnational political networks and the growing influence of transnational media.
In Sudan, ideologically triggered anti-Americanism evolves from leftist and from Islamist traditions. The Left, which, compared to other Arab countries, was very strong in Sudan until 1971, has lost influence since then, up until the mid-1990s. During that time span, public support increasingly shifted toward influential Islamist players. Being in opposition to the repressive Islamist regime that rose to power in 1989, the Left broadened its forum again. Still, it gained just little influence outside intellectual circles or Sudanese living in exile.

In Sudan itself, many members of the Left joined the government camp during the 1990s, or they sought a *modus vivendi* with the regime. In part, they contributed to a strengthening of “anti-Imperialist” rhetoric, though “anti-Imperialism” already played an important role earlier in Islamist positions. In addition, Islamists often emphasize the fight against “foreign ideas” (al-afkar al-dakhila, translated literally: Thoughts of intruders). Islamists do not view these ideas in isolation, but, instead, perceive them in the context of a “cultural attack” (ghazu thaqafi, corresponding with the Persian *tahajjom-e farhangi*) to undermine the “authentic” Islamic world of thought and to eventually destroy it. At the same time, this is not so much an anti-American position, but rather a decided anti-Western stance aimed at everything foreign.

The rejection of “anything foreign” and anti-Imperialist positions merge in the accusation that the imperialistic world power United States was trying to destroy the “authentically Islamic” “civilizing project” (al-mashru’ al-hadari) that the Sudanese government has been pursuing since 1989. This “civilizing project” aims to reshape the state and society, and this process is based on its own views of a comprehensive Islamic society.

How strongly such positions are presented, however, depends on the U.S. measures specifically targeting Sudan. In addition, these reactions need to be seen in the context of domestic political conflicts and regional aspects that have amplified the U.S. measures. A look at the frequently changing development of Sudanese-U.S. relations is crucial for understanding the dynamics of anti-Americanism in this African country.

### 2.1. The Sudanese-American relations: a historical perspective

Following Sudan’s independence in 1956, the United States was among the first countries to offer the young state economic and technical help. In Sudan, U.S. aid was controversial, also because of party-political reasons: Following the then common arguments, leftist voices criticized that American “help” would threaten the
The conservative military government under Abbud (1958-1964) tried to avoid a clear-cut separation of camps, but within the movement of the non-aligned nations it sided with the West. The United States, meanwhile, increased its economic and technical help, while also trying to improve the framework for private investors and the marketing of U.S. goods.

After the toppling of Abbud’s regime in 1964 through a broad peoples’ alliance, relations cooled. After the Israeli-Arab war in 1967, Sudan ended its diplomatic relations with the United States and Great Britain. Instead, the government under Muhammad Ahmad Mahjub received extensive military, technical and economic support from the Soviet Union between 1968 and 1971. That equipment served as the backbone of the Sudanese army until the 1980s.

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2 Jayli Abd al-Rahman, al-Ma’una al-amrikiya tuhaddidu al-Sudan (The American aid threatens the independence of Sudan) (s.l., 1958). Some background: “The parliamentary regime introduced plans to expand the country’s education, economic, and transportation sectors. To achieve these goals, Khartoum needed foreign economic and technical assistance, to which the United States made an early commitment. Conversations between the two governments had begun in mid-1957, and the parliament ratified a United States aid agreement in July 1958. Washington hoped this agreement would reduce Sudan’s excessive reliance on a one-crop (cotton) economy and would facilitate the development of the country’s transportation and communications infrastructure. (…) Another issue that divided the parliament concerned Sudanese-United States relations. In March 1958, [prime minister Abdallah] Khalil signed a technical assistance agreement with the United States. When he presented the pact to parliament for ratification, he discovered that the NUP wanted to use the issue to defeat the Umma-PDP coalition and that many PDP delegates opposed the agreement. Nevertheless, the Umma, with the support of some PDP and South Sudanese delegates, managed to obtain approval of the agreement.” Helen Metz (ed.), Sudan: a country study (Washington, D.C., 1992). Available from the World Wide Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+sd0033).


4 “Although the Soviet Union had concluded a US$100 million to US$150 million arms agreement with Sudan in August 1968, which included T-55 tanks, armored personnel carriers, and aircraft, the nation failed to deliver any equipment to Khartoum by May 1969. During this period, Sudan obtained some Soviet-manufactured weapons from Egypt, most of which went to the Sudanese air force. By the end of 1969, however, the Soviet Union had shipped unknown quantities of 85mm antiaircraft guns, sixteen MiG-21s, and five Antonov-24 transport aircraft. Over the next two years, the Soviet Union delivered an impressive array of equipment to Sudan, including T-54, T-55, T-56, and T-59 tanks; and BTR-40 and BTR-152 light armored vehicles.” Metz (1992), loc. cit. (footnote 2). Available from the World Wide Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+sd0038).
Backed by the labor unions and Sudan’s Communist Party, the military government under Nimeiri pursued a very Nasser-type, socialist, pro-Soviet course between 1969 and 1971. Following a failed attempt by the Communist Party to assume lone governmental control, Nimeiri removed the Communists and followed Egypt’s President Sadat and his policy of opening to the West and to Western investment. That policy included the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1972. As a consequence, Sudan was the only Arab state that did not end diplomatic relations with Egypt following the Egypt-Israeli peace settlement in 1979. The United States, in turn, rewarded Sudan with generous loans. Following the end of the 1972 civil war, it generated a short-lived boom but also led to extensive state debt, which still troubles the country today. During the 1970s, many Sudanese began studying in the United States; Great Britain had been the primary destination of foreign students earlier. Also, the United States emerged as one of Sudan’s most important trading partners. The U.S. government continued its effort to establish investment security and to develop the now peaceful South Sudan.

In 1977, the limits to develop the country on borrowed cash became increasingly obvious. While the United States responded to the deteriorating economic situation by pushing for conversion of debt programs, and economic aid (since 1976) and emergency aid (1984/1985), Nimeiri tried to expand his power base by moving toward the large traditional parties and the Islamists. The Islamist influence on the government, growing increasingly stronger until 1985, did not prevent Nimeiri from supporting the United States, despite mounting public resistance. The government viewed this alliance as strategically important, especially because Sudan bordered on Libya and Ethiopia, which turned pro-Soviet 1974. Starting 1976, the U.S. support also included military aid, which skyrocketed from $5 million to $100 million by 1982. That was two thirds of overall U.S. military aid in sub-Saharan Africa and more aid than any other sub-Saharan state received (in addition to that funding, Sudan received another $160 million in economic aid in 1982 alone). In return, the United States was permitted to use Sudanese harbors and airports for its military forces.

In addition to Sudan’s strategic relevance for the United States, U.S. oil interests in Sudan also played a key role. In 1975, the U.S. company Chevron received a drilling license for South Sudan; in 1979/1980 the first significant discoveries were made, showing that Sudan holds key resources of top-quality oil. In the following arguments surrounding the political-economic control over the oil resources – which

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5 In parts of Sudan, the famine of 1984/1985 was dubbed “Reagan’s famine,” though in the positive sense: it related to the United States’ import of grain.

6 The reserves were estimated to be about three to five billion barrel (2003).
eventually led to a second civil war – *Chevron* sided with the central government and signed an agreement that did not include any shares of the oil revenues for the autonomous South.

“Chevron played an important role in bolstering US support for Nimeiri, and the high level of American financial and military support may well have been one of the factors that made Nimeiri feel he could afford to provoke the South.”

That’s how the second civil war started in 1983, when an armed rebellion of South Sudanese – organized as SPLM or SPLA (Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement/Army) and dedicated to socialist ideology – sought allies in the Soviet camp and targeted primarily major American and Western projects in the South. During a SPLA attack on the *Chevron* base camp in Robkona in February 1984, three oil company employees were taken hostage and later killed. *Chevron* then terminated all work in Sudan. Another attack, targeting the French company CCI, killed 11 employees in November 1983. That attack had halted work on the Joinglei channel which was supposed to up the quota of Nile water for Egypt and North Sudan.

Following the outbreak of the armed conflict, U.S. military aid decreased rapidly. Still, due to strategic interests, the United States remained as the Sudanese government’s most important arms supplier until 1989.

After the Nimeiri government was toppled, in April 1985, the Sudanese government distanced itself from the United States. Especially Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi sought closer ties to Libya, at the time one of the main opponents of Western and U.S. policy. Consequently, U.S. economic support decreased and trade volumes shrunk. Under the Reagan administration, though, the Sudanese

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government, for strategic reasons, was still the largest recipient of U.S. aid among the sub-Sahara nations. Rebel-controlled regions in the South Sudan, in contrast, did not even receive humanitarian aid under President Reagan. That changed between 1989 and 1993 under the government of Reagan’s successor, President George Bush Sr. In early 1989, the U.S. Congress – under the header *Politics of Hunger and War and Famine* – for the first time discussed the famine in South Sudan. Peace and Relief in the 1990s was supposed to counter those problems. U.S. foreign policy took on a new task which has grown in importance since and still is increasingly crucial today: peace mediation.

### 2.2. The Islamist regime and the United States

In June 1989, a military coup helped an Islamist government into power. The coup was led by Islamist officers under Hasan al-Bashir who joined in with activists of the National Islamic Front (NIF) headed by Hasan al-Turabi. For half a year, the United States tried to enter into talks with this new government. But when all efforts failed, the United States in March 1990 terminated all remaining military and economic help for the Khartoum-based government. During the 1990s, relations

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13 Like all other parties, the NIF was officially dissolved in 1989; its networks were not impacted by that, however, and despite early denials, Turabi later admitted to being involved in the military coup led by Hasan al-Bashir.


15 Originally, the United States had allocated aid of $74.4 million in 1989 (including military aid of a little less than $1 million). In January 1989, this was reduced, however, when Sudan fell behind paying interest (Brooke Amendment of the foreign Operations Appropriations Act). Not until March 1990 did the U.S. government finally confirm that all non-humanitarian aid had been terminated. It did so in the wake of a law mandating that states whose elected governments were toppled by a military coup cannot receive
consistently deteriorated. After the Sudan sided with Iraq in the second Gulf War, the United States revoked the Most Favored Nation Tariff from Sudan on April 25, 1991.16 With the decay of the Soviet Union and the rise of government in Ethiopia that was comparatively pro-American in its foreign policy (May 1991), Sudan’s strategic importance decreased.

Between 1991 and 1994, the NIF government rigorously attempted to form an alliance network of Islamist nations and anti-American states and movements. To realize this goal, the NIF government maintained close political military, and economic ties with Iran, Iraq, and North Yemen. Also, Sudan allegedly served as refuge and training ground for more than 5,000 militant, Islamist and Palestinian fighters from many countries in the region (former Afghanistan warriors and new recruits).17

The rapid deterioration of relations between Sudan and the United States went hand in hand with fears on both sides. The Sudanese government in 1993 was increasingly concerned about the United States stance toward Sudan. It feared, the United States could use humanitarian aid like in Somalia as an excuse for military intervention in South Sudan. The United States, on the other hand, in 1993, placed Sudan on its list of state sponsors of terrorism. In addition, it reduced its personnel at the U.S. embassy.18 Officially, at least, the NIF came across as unfazed. Turabi declared that the U.S. list was, in fact, an “honorary list.”19 At the same time, the Sudanese government launched a charm offensive against Arab and European states, which garnered some success, at first in France and later in Germany as well.20

Still, relations with the United States grew worse. Following the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak in July 1995 in Addis Ababa – staged by such aid. Still, humanitarian aid continued: Since 1989, the United States has spent $1.2 billion on emergency aid in North and South Sudan.

18 Sudan was the last state that the United States government put on this list, following Iraq, Cuba, Libya, North Korea, and Syria. Among the organizations that Sudan supported, according to U.S. accusations, were Hamas, the Pakistani Islamic Jihad, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Egyptian Jama’a Islamiya, and Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda.
20 On the ideological dimension of this attempt, see: Hasan al-Turabi, al-Hiwar ma’a al-gharb: utuhat harakat al-islam (Dialog with the West: The proposal by the movement of Islam) (Khartoum, 1994).
Egyptian Islamists who came from Sudan – lobbyists supporting the South Sudanese cause built an increasing momentum and growing backing in the United States. This coalition unified the rightist-Christian camp and human rights activists, whose discourse also gained some following among the U.S. administration. In February 1996, then, the remaining staff of the U.S. embassy in Khartoum was pulled out. And because of a lack of support in solving the assassination attempt on the Egyptian President Mubarak, diplomatic sanctions handed down by the UN Security Council took effect in May 1996. These sanctions also limited the freedom of Sudanese government officials abroad. The outside pressure was one reason why Osama bin Laden left Sudan a few weeks later. Additionally, the activities of many militant organizations were scaled back in 1996.

Tensions heightened again in 1997. Through USAID, the U.S. government began providing developmental aid for the SPLA-controlled regions. Later, there was even indirect military aid for the SPLA (via neighboring states). In November 1997, the United States added its own economic sanctions, in addition to the UN-mandated diplomatic sanctions. The U.S. justified this move by declaring Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism and also citing the Islamist regime’s “religious policy of persecution.” Sudanese government assets were frozen, and the provision of credits through American banks as well as all trade relations with Sudan were now prohibited. 21

In December 1997, U.S. foreign secretary Madeline Albright publicly declared that her government was aiming to isolate the Sudanese government and to limit its ability to support terrorist organizations. The symbolic climax of these tensions came

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21 United States Congress, H.R. 2431, to establish an Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring, to provide for the Imposition of Sanctions against countries engaged in a pattern of religious persecution, and for other purposes: Markup before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Fifth Congress, First Session, September 18, 1997 (Washington, D.C., 1998); United States President, National emergency with respect to Sudan: Message from the President of the United States transmitting his declaration that the policies of the government of Sudan constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States and to declare a national emergency to deal with the threat, Pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1703(B) (Washington, D.C., 1997). See: Meghan L. O’Sullivan, Shrewd sanctions: statecraft and state sponsors of terrorism (Washington, D.C., 2003). At that time, about 5% of Sudan’s imports hailed from the United States. For gum arabic, a substance that is used as a stabilizer especially in producing soft drinks, candy and newspapers, an exception was made to the sanctions a few months later. That happened in light of pressure from American lobbyists. At the time, gum arabic accounted for 20% of Sudan’s annual export revenue, being the most important export product of the country. Gum arabic accounted for 85% of all Sudanese exports to the United States.
on August 20, 1998, when the United States destroyed a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum (al-Shifa) by launching a cruise missile, while also bombing Osama bin Laden’s training camps in Afghanistan, the latter serving as redemption for the bombing attacks against the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. The United States had linked the al-Shifa factory to bin Laden (and the Iraq), believing that it was used to produce chemical weapons. Later, the U.S. government could not – or did not want to – prove that allegation litigable, earning the administration some scrutiny in the international public.

On the other hand, Sudan’s relations with Egypt – with a few setbacks – improved gradually since late 1997. That was due to an end to armed attacks of Islamist groups in Egypt following the strike against tourists in Luxor, in November 1997, and Egypt’s successful efforts to arrange a cooperation of all Arab states in the fight against terrorism. In May 1999, the Sudanese government signed the Arab Convention for Combating Terrorism, which the Arab League had passed on April 22, 1998. 1999 was supposed to mark a year of change. The government sought a balance with the northern opposition parties, which were allowed to constitute again officially since January of that year. In September 1999, Sudan began exporting mineral oil. At the same time, an open power struggle between Hasan al-Turabi and President al-Bashir and between the civil and the military wing erupted, a dispute that Turabi lost in December 1999. Turabi’s defeat made it easier for foreign investors to argue that Sudan had changed its policy and that investments in the oil sector no longer should be seen as support for a state sponsor of terrorism. Asian and European companies had already been doing business in Sudan for some time. U.S. companies, whose hands were tied as a result of the sanctions, now increasingly pushed for the sanctions to be lifted.

Starting in March 2000, the U.S. administration increasingly responded to Sudanese offers to cooperate that had been pending for years: It sent several delegations of anti-terrorism experts (of the State Department, CIA and FBI) to Khartoum with the task of monitoring different groups that the United States viewed as terrorists. Also, the U.S. embassy was gradually

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23 Global Trade Watch, “The corporate coalition behind the ‘Africa Growth and Opportunity Act’,” (February 1, 1999). Available from World Wide Web: (www.citizen.org/trade/africa/house_fight/articles.cfm?ID=7687). In August 1996, Sudan was not yet included in the American sanctions, which banned business with state sponsors of terrorism, because the Occidental Petroleum Corporation was seeking a business deal with Sudan. The agreement failed, and one year later, the economic sanctions were imposed.
reopened. The change in government – from Bill Clinton to George Bush Jr. – in January 2001 made this process easier. Even though the U.S. administration under Bush extended the economic sanctions, it also strengthened the growing effort for a new direction in America’s Sudan policy, a trend that got underway when oil exports began. Lobbyists backing the South Sudanese cause were alarmed and tried to push for a law in Congress that would force the U.S. government into a hard stance toward the administration in Khartoum. The following one and a half years were marked by the Bush administration’s attempts to find a position that would balance oil interests and the interests of the South Sudanese lobbyists. Special envoys were deployed to ascertain the possibility of improving the humanitarian situation and to find a way out of the stagnant peace talks. In August 2001, the United States concluded that Sudan no longer supported the type of terrorists groups that were responsible for the assassination attempt on the Egyptian president. That, in turn, cleared the way for lifting the UN sanctions (effective September 27, 2001), a move that other members of the UN Security Council had demanded for some time, including France. Protests by lobbyists backing the South Sudanese cause failed.

The United States, however, upheld its economic sanctions in order to still maintain some form of leverage regarding Sudan’s compliance with human rights, possible support of select terrorist groups through the Sudanese regime, and the demand for peace talks with the South Sudanese.

Summary

Anti-Americanism in Sudan is primarily a reaction to specific U.S. measures impacting this African nation. These measures are viewed in the context of domestic political conflicts and, at times, amplified through regional issues. In these imbalanced Sudanese-American relations, the United States usually were in control of things. In form of a recurring pattern, the Sudanese government over the years has shown strong outbursts of anti-Americanism (i.e., primarily in verbal form), the

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24 In response, Sudan re-opened its embassy in Washington, D.C. It had been closed 1998 in the wake of the bombing of the Shifa factory.


26 On May 3, 2001, President Bush named Andrew Natsios of the USAID U.S. Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan. Since June 2001, Natsios is backed by the Sudan Task Force, which also supports the U.S. Special Envoy for Peace to Sudan, former senator John Danforth, who was appointed on September 6, 2001.

same goes for the press or the man on the street. Over the years, this happened regularly, and it typically marked a response to official U.S. actions and statements perceived or portrayed as measures against Sudan or the Sudanese people. Such outbursts are quickly and just as regularly followed by Sudanese advances, intended to improve the relations with the United States.  

However, these relatively short-term and measure-related expressions of anti-Americanism are rooted in a broad scepticism toward the United States’ political and economic intentions in the region. This skepticism is fueled by “experiences” as well as different, secular or Islamic, ideological sources.

Oil, Israel and stability in strategically important regions – those are the three main interests of American policy in the Middle East and North Africa, and the same applies to Sudan. Over the years, the domestic policy of the respective Sudanese governments and their legitimacy wasn’t nearly as important to the United States as Khartoum’s foreign policy. Until 1989, the United States, therefore, supported a Sudan that was, for the most part, on the “Western” side, despite a few setbacks. Since the decay of the Soviet Union and the Islamists’ rise to power in Khartoum, the United States’ main concern is that Sudan ends its support for groups that threaten the stability and security of the pro-Western states in the region. To restrict this support, the United States consistently upped the pressure on the Sudanese government in the 1990s. Each newly imposed U.S. measure triggered severe Sudanese reactions. That, in turn, was followed by attempts to normalize relations. On these grounds, both countries entered the world after September 11, 2001.

3. Bearers of anti-Americanism

Islamist groups, in different shapes and form, are currently the main bearers of anti-American and anti-Western attitudes. First and foremost, the government – since 1989 led by the National Islamic Front (NIF) – needs to be mentioned in that regard: Throughout the 1990s, it repeatedly expressed anti-American statements or actions.


Often, that happened in reaction to certain U.S. measures, and from a propagandistic point of view, it also diverted attention from the government’s domestic problems. The government used anti-American rhetoric for legitimizing purposes. Such efforts had little success among the population, where the government, for the most part, is not popular.

In addition to this issue-oriented and also instrumental anti-Americanism, parts of the Sudanese government – especially Hasan al-Turabi – were driven by ideological reasons to support different armed opposition groups from other states in the region over the years. For this purpose, Turabi, in late 1990, formed a Khartoum-based umbrella organization, the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC). The occasion for this move was the consolidation of U.S. and Western forces in the Persian Gulf following the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990. Viewing them as enemies of Islam, the PAIC’s goal was to resist these kind of (or similar) powers. Its name was programmatic: It vowed to promote an Arab-Islamic solidarity of peoples’ with the governments in the region that had become henchmen of the imperialistic West. Turabi became the first general secretary of PAIC, and his first deputy was the foreign minister to be, Mustafa Uthman Isma’il (as a leading figure of the charm offensive launched in the 1990s, he earned the name “Mr. Smile”). Under the PAIC umbrella, many organizations that the United States viewed as terrorist came together, including Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and the Egyptian Jama’a Islamiya.

Many Arab warriors of the Afghanistan war could not – or refused – to return to their homelands after the war, as they faced persecution there. Consequently, they took advantage of the Visa freedom that the Sudanese government had implemented for Arabs, allowing them to find a new home in the African country.

In December 1991, Osama bin Laden and his followers also settled in Khartoum. He invested in numerous agricultural and street construction projects, employing his own supporters, and losing a lot of money over the years because the Sudanese government did not meet the payments bin Laden was set to receive. In addition, the supporters, whose number was believed to be at least 5,000 in 1994, received military training in camps of the Sudanese Popular Defense Forces (PDF), a paramilitary unit. In addition to supporting the regular army, this unit is in charge of mobilizing the population and solidifying the Islamist idea in the state and in society. It is believed that bin Laden supported Turabi and his movement financially.

Until 1996, the PAIC was Turabi’s key platform for public self-portrayal, and the groups under the PAIC umbrella generated the most important (and, at times, also the most violent) impulses of anti-Americanism in Sudan in the 1990s. After the UN imposed diplomatic sanctions and after the forced departure of bin Laden in
May 1996, the PAIC’s influence dwindled. In January 2000, directly after Turabi had lost his power struggle with President Bashir, the Sudanese government revoked the PAIC’s authorization. By gradually re-opening the embassies and carefully cooperating in the realm of intelligence and security, Sudan’s government made the first marked improvements in its relations with the United States in ten years.

Since 2000, the former National Islamic Front has been divided into two wings: the National Congress (NC), which backs the government and does not question the army’s leading role within the state, and the Popular National Congress (PNC), formed by Turabi after he was removed from power. The PNC more strongly represents the civil wing of the NIF. Since 2000, the PNC has joined forces with different, once condemned alliance partners such as the SPLM/A and the northern Sudanese opposition alliance National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Regarding its stance toward the United States and its new Sudan initiatives, the PNC balanced recognition and criticism, a fact that needs to be viewed as moderately positive, considering the party’s history. Critics are warning, however, that this is sheer opportunism.

Within the Islamist spectrum, finally, the segments of the Muslim Brotherhood (though not very important in terms of numbers) need to be mentioned. In the 1960s, they opposed Turabi: They envisaged a threat for the Muslim brothers’ actual religious message of renewal because Turabi was giving preference to his political work and striving to share power. After 1999, the Muslim Brotherhood constituted as a political party, and its leader, Sadiq Abdallah Abd al-Majid, has repeatedly uttered positions that assume an American-Jewish global conspiracy. In formulating anti-American positions, the heirs of the old Left still played a certain role, in addition to the Islamists. Many former Communists such as Ghazi Salah al-Din or former functionaries of the Sudanese Socialist Union (Nimeiri’s unity party) joined the NIF and did not only induce their anti-Imperialistic ideas into the Islamist movement, but also their experience in organizing the masses (students, youths, workers, women, professional associations). These organizations played a key role in staging demonstrations and university teach-ins, where the NIF likes to demonstrate the “broad resistance of the people against the American policy.”

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30 That same year, Turabi was named parliamentary spokesmen and gained a new platform there.


32 For example, in his weekly newspaper columns, he joined the calls for boycotting Pepsi after the start of the second Intifada. The name, he claimed, was an abbreviation for “Pay Every Penny to Save Israel.” At the time, this was a widely discussed topic in many Arab states. Cited according to Hisham Abdel Mageed in Sudan-L@listserv.cc.emory.edu (January 12, 2002).
The organized remains of the Sudanese Communist Party – in addition to the NIF and the completely irrelevant Baath party, the only party that is also a bearer of pronounced anti-Americanism – currently acts only from its exile. It plays somewhat of a role within the North Sudanese opposition alliance, National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and holds onto its old anti-American rhetoric, which is consistently fueled, among other factors, by U.S. support for Israel. For example, the Sudanese Communist Party, in August 2001, participated in a call for “a strike against U.S. interests” in the region. That does not change the fact that some of its members have been living in exile in the United States for years.

The large and still influential traditional North Sudanese parties, the Umma party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) show no pronounced anti-American profile. As a governmental party, the Umma party under Sadiq al-Mahdi more strongly distanced itself from the United States in the late 1960s and in the late 1980s than its frequent coalition partner, the DUP. In all, though, – as reflected by the positions that these parties assumed in internal and external opposition – the anti-American statements that occasionally surface in these circles strongly hinge upon the political situation.

Things are similar, by the way, with the SPLM/A and other South Sudanese groups and parties. Early on, the SPLM/A was oriented on Marxism in its ideology and was closely connected to the Soviet camp. That, however, was mainly due to its opposition to the government in Khartoum, which the United States supported for strategic reasons until 1989. Along with the changing political situation, the SPLM/A’s rhetoric also shifted during the 1990s. In the meantime, the organization strongly banks on support through rightist and Christian circles in the United States and Europe.

Summary

Anti-Americanism is no “inherent disposition,” neither among northern nor among South Sudanese. Instead, it depends on the respective interests of political groups. While the Left was a bearer of influential anti-Americanism until the 1970s, the Islamist movement – embodied by Hasan al-Turabi’s NIF, - gained steam in the

34 Starting in 1989, many representatives of the Sudanese opposition in exile supported the tough stance toward the Islamist regime. “The Americans are really aware of the situation in Sudan and I think they are right,” said a prominent representative of the DUP, Sidahmed Hussein in early 2001. “This regime cannot be improved, it must be removed.” Alistair Lyon, “Sudan looks back in anger at Clinton,” Reuters (January 20, 2001).
1980s. Anti-imperialist, anti-American and anti-Western positions merged in a call for guarding against “what is foreign” while returning to “what is our own.” Following the Islamist rise to power in 1989, ideology-based anti-Americanism materialized in the forming of the PAIC, which rigorously took action against American interests in the region. Finally, U.S. pressure ended this policy. The Sudanese government, in the 1990s the driving force behind anti-Americanism in Sudan, has been putting great effort into improving relations with the United States since 1999. However, that’s not necessarily out of affinity but out of self-interest.

4. Expressions of anti-Americanism

The most crucial point of dispute between the United States and Sudan concerned this African country serving as a refuge for former, primarily Arab, Afghanistan war veterans (mujahedeen), between 1990 and 1993. These “mujahedeen” could not – or refused to – return to their homelands following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. New recruits joined these Afghanistan fighters living in Sudan. The United States consequently declared Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism in 1993. There is some merit to the argument that without Sudan serving as safe haven and Osama bin Laden’s financial backing the militant Islamist fighters would have been scattered, unable to regroup with the same force they had before. In addition to these Afghanistan fighters, many militant Near East and African opposition movements opened liaison offices in Khartoum, many of which were sponsored by Turabi’s PAIC.

At the same time, it shouldn’t be overlooked that the primary focus of these Islamist fighters was not the United States but, instead, the hated regimes in their respective home countries, with the conflicts in Bosnia (1992-1995) and in Chechnya (1994-1996) also factoring into that equation soon after. The most well-known operation launched from Sudan was the botched assassination attempt by the Egyptian Jama’a Islamiya on Egyptian President Mubarak in Addis-Abeba in July 1995. Other fighters trained in Sudanese camps were linked to actions in the neighboring states of Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Chad, as well as in Somalia. There were also accusations from Libya, Tunesia, Algeria and Morocco that Sudan was supporting Islamist opposition movements in those countries.

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Still, not even the United States government claimed that the Sudanese government was directly involved in any anti-American attacks. In 1993, two Washington-based Sudanese embassy employees were suspected of being involved in the attack on the World Trade Center in New York. Both were removed from Washington, with one of them allegedly expelled. Still, there was never an official charge, and in 1996 the coordinator for anti-terrorism measures in the U.S. foreign ministry concluded after thorough investigations that there were no signs of any states sponsoring the attack.

What role Sudan played within the network of militant Islamists will be difficult to determine as long as this topic is discussed on the basis of rumors and accusations and not on the basis of openly relayed facts. Since early 1995, Sudan has repeatedly offered both the U.S. and the British secret service to examine the intelligence files on Osama bin Laden and his followers, and on his financial and economic connections. In 1996, the Sudanese were even willing to turn over bin Laden, as they did in a similar move in 1994, when they handed the terrorist “Carlos” to French authorities. Until 1999, the United States rejected all those offers, allegedly because they did not have enough litigable evidence against bin Laden and because they did not trust the intentions of the Sudanese government. Even the U.S. ambassador residing in Khartoum between 1992 and 1995 viewed this mistrust by the U.S. government with suspicion. In his memoirs, he carefully raises the question whether some of the radical measures employed by the U.S. government were driven primarily by a generally negative image of Sudan and not so much by clean and clear-cut intelligence information. This question is particularly crucial because anti-American attitudes in Sudan first and foremost manifest themselves in reaction to American measures. This means a U.S. policy perceived as less aggressively anti-Sudanese and less anti-Islamic would probably have led to fewer anti-American outbursts in Sudan.

The low degree of anti-American violence in Sudan is remarkable. Despite all tensions and all rhetoric on both sides, there have been just two anti-American attacks against persons in North Sudan, 30 and 17 years ago, respectively, and both

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attacks were launched by non-Sudanese. In 1973, Palestinians – members of the organization Black September – took hostage the U.S. ambassador, his deputy, and a Belgian diplomat, later killing them. One victim reportedly said “as long as I am in Sudan, I will never be in danger,” an assertion that nearly all foreigners living in the country share, including the Americans.

The second direct and fatal attack against a U.S. interest occurred at the beginning of the second civil war, in February 1984. The SPLA staged the attack in South Sudan, taking hostage and then killing three American employees of the oil company Chevron (all this after warning of the attack). With this move, the SPLA wanted to force Chevron to stop its explorations for oil. And, in fact, Chevron did pull out of Sudan following the attack. Then, on April 16, 1986, a staff member of the U.S. embassy in Khartoum was shot at, probably by Libyan agents in revenge for the U.S. military strike against Libya the day before. For six months, the United States reduced its personnel at the embassy. Another anti-Western attack, by Palestinians in May 1988, should be noted as well: Members of Abu Nidal’s Fatah/Revolutionary Command stormed into the Acropole Hotel and the Sudan Club in Khartoum carrying grenades and machine guns. They killed eight people, including five Britons, and injured 21 people, including five Americans. The five assailants were captured and sentenced to death. Americans also were among the victims in hostage-takings in South Sudan in 1996, though these did not directly target the United States, at least not primarily. Instead, foreigners from the West were taken hostage in order to extort benefits for the group.

Still, anti-American demonstrations occur again and again. Since 1989, the Sudanese government or the different NIF-affiliated groups have organized these demonstrations in the wake of U.S. government measures that, from the Sudanese point of view, targeted Sudan or the Islamic world. Of course, these events employ the usual means of expressing anti-Americanism, such as voicing anti-American slogans, burning the American flag or a puppet symbolizing the U.S. president.

More extensive acts of violence are rather uncommon. Demonstrations erupted in Khartoum only directly after the start of the U.S. attack on Afghanistan, in October 2001. “Thousands” of demonstrators tried to storm into the U.S. embassy, though

40 David A. Kom, Assassination in Khartoum (Bloomington, 1993).
41 Before breaking with Arafat, Abu Nidal in 1969 was representative of the Fatah in Khartoum.
42 In August 1996, the SPLA took hostage six missionaries in Mapurdi, including one American. They were released eleven days later. In November 1996, Kerobino Kwanyin Bol, at the time a warlord hostile to the SPLA, detained three members of the International Committee of the Red Cross, including one American. He accused them of transporting weapons for the SPLA. They were released, however, after one month.

the police prevented that from happening. In October 2002, “5,000” demonstrators peacefully protested against the United States’ policy in front of the U.S. embassy. On January 27, 2003, “more than 10,000” Sudanese protested in Khartoum against the looming U.S. attack on Iraq. They shouted slogans such as “Down, down USA, we will not be ruled by the CIA,” “Shame upon you Arabs of the dollar,” and “We will not be humiliated and will not obey the Americans.” A memorandum presented to the U.S. embassy lamented that U.S. foreign policy “has come into the hands of a group of new imperialists who represent the far-right extremist churchmen and Zionists who support the Zionist state in its continued occupation of the Arab Palestinian territories,” before adding that “The aggression targets not only Iraq but all the Arab and Islamic nations under the pretext of liberating the Islamic world and thus brings about a new era of colonialism to suppress the peoples of the region.”

Calls for boycotts are purely demonstrative in nature. For example, a few days after the United States imposed its trade sanctions, Turabi said Sudan would no longer export gum arabic the United States, and he called on the population to boycott American goods. But at the time, the import of gum arabic was covered by the U.S. sanctions anyway, and American goods could not be exported to Sudan. After the U.S. government made an exception to that rule for gum arabic – in the wake of pressure from soft drink producers and the newspaper industry, voices urging such boycotts fell silent in Sudan. Similarly symbolic calls for boycotts against real or alleged American and Jewish companies resurfaced in Sudan – and in other Arab and Islamic nations – following the begin of the second Palestinian Intifada in late 2000.

Also in the wake of specific American measures, in particular, and depending on the overall political situation, harsh anti-American statements are uttered in Sudan here and there, especially by the government. However, that is bound to change again down the road.

43 “Sudanese clerics demonstrate against attacks on Afghanistan,” AFP (October 9, 2001).
44 “More than 10,000 Sudanese protest war threats against Iraq,” AFP (January 27, 2001). In the wake of this anti-American sentiment following heightening tensions in Iraq, another case should be noted: that of a Sudanese who was arrested in June 2002 for “telephone terror” aimed at the U.S. embassy. See: “Sudanese arrested for disturbing US embassy,” AFP (June 20, 2002).
45 “Sudan launches counter-sanction on US,” Xinhua (November 11, 1997).
In fact, one could call this a well-rehearsed scheme: American measures provoke outraged Sudanese protests, before some conciliatory signs follow.\textsuperscript{46} However, the Islamists as well as the traditional Islamic parties in North Sudan accuse the United States of

- pursuing international hegemony, thereby disrespecting the self-determination of other countries, peoples, and cultures;
- supporting separatist aspirations in South Sudan and external enemies of Sudan;
- applying a double standard in the entire region: this is becoming especially obvious in the unequal treatment of Israel and Iraq.\textsuperscript{47}

Depending on the ideological positions, there are different nuances and levels to these accusations. Many Muslims see a generally anti-Islamic focus in U.S. policy. It is a widespread belief that the U.S. administration created a new enemy – “Islam” or “the Islamic World” – following the fall of the Soviet Union. The Sudanese Islamist government accuses the United States of undermining its “civilizing project” (al-mashru’ al-hadari), that is, the attempt to reshape Sudan’s society and state in accordance with the Islamists comprehensive concept of state and society.\textsuperscript{48}

The anti-American manifestations serve the expression of anger and consist of counter-propaganda aimed at the outside. Internally, they are intended to divert attention from the government’s own domestic policy problems by rallying the Sudanese people against the outside enemy. In the end, though, the government’s most important goal is to ensure its own economic and political survival by mixing threats and signs of goodwill, without the United States or any other outside power getting involved in “domestic issues” of Sudan. In pursuing such a policy, the government repeatedly states that it is not succumbing to such pressure, and it loudly protests against such outside force. In practice, however, it adjusts its actions, thus coming across as somewhat opportunistic. This means that – despite all rhetoric – the Sudanese government is, in fact, pragmatic in its actions. Examples include its willingness to limit and even terminate its support for militant foreign Islamists, its rather reluctant reaction to the bombing of the Shifa factory in 1998 (Sudan filed a

\textsuperscript{46} See: numerous examples in the memoirs of U.S. ambassador Petterson (1999), loc. cit. (footnote 19).

\textsuperscript{47} These accusations have inner-Sudanese reasons but they are also increasingly influenced by transnational media coverage, especially the Qatari TV station al-Jazira.

charge at the UN, but did not pursue it). And there are other examples: The Sudanese politicians are always quick to point out that their country is seeking better relations with the United States and would welcome détente and cooperation – if the United States takes a step toward Sudan, and if Sudan does not get the feeling of being directed by the United States.\textsuperscript{49} Such statements often reflect irritation with the United States and its reluctance to honor the Sudanese willingness to cooperate. Even though the Sudanese government had met the United States’ demands in the fight against terrorists – a fact which the United States acknowledged in August 2002 – the U.S. administration still had not removed Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, claim these critics. Also, the United States was still upholding its economic sanctions against Sudan. Statements like that of Sadiq Bakhit Abdallah, the former public relations consultant of President Bashir, reflect the widespread opinion among the regime’s supporters: “We have satisfied everything the Americans were asking for and they are still not happy.” Saiyid al-Khatib, director of the Center for Strategic Studies in Khartoum combines criticism and the Sudanese willingness to overcome the differences in a more subtle, diplomatic way, thus reflecting the prevailing stance of the regime:

“We don’t know how much Americans are willing to reshape their policies toward Sudan (...) the United States has legitimate concerns but they also exert political pressure to try to change regimes they dislike. People here are willing to discuss their genuine concerns, especially now that Turabi’s influence is gone.”\textsuperscript{50}

In its rhetoric, the Sudanese government is also always looking to address an anti-American potential that is broader than the Islamist movement. Followers of the large traditional parties also frequently criticize U.S. policy, as do members of the Left, human rights activists and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The one element that the Sudanese government and the opposition share in that context is a fundamental skepticism toward the U.S. intentions in the region, paired with experience-related fear of American pressure. Despite some slightly differing

\textsuperscript{49} A prominent example was Bashir’s first speech following his reelection as President in January 2001, in which he declared: “We have no interest in seeing relations with the U.S. tense, but the Clinton administration persisted in its hostility and has committed many mistakes against us (...). However, we will not blame the new administration for the sins of the old one. We are receiving Bush with an open heart and will exert all efforts to improve relations and convince the new administration that the conceptions of its predecessor regarding Sudan were not right.” Lyon (2001), loc. cit. (footnote 34).

\textsuperscript{50} Idem.
nuances, leftist and Islamist elites are on the same page when it comes to demanding fairness in international relations and urging the United States to stop applying the double standard. Many Sudanese viewed the structural adjustment measures, initiated by the IMF and the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s, as American-Western economic Imperialism51, a stance that still has followers in leftist circles today. At the forefront of leftist frustration nowadays is the fact that the United States supports dictatorial regimes in the region. In addition, the Left demands that the United States finally honor its promise to instill freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

As a matter of fact, freedom is one of the major ideals that the people of Sudan still associate with the United States, despite all negative experiences with U.S. policy. This does not just refer to individual freedom: besides other “Western” states such as the Netherlands, Canada or Australia, the United States remains as one of the “dream destinations” of Sudanese migrants seeking better standard of living and greater economic, social, individual, and political freedom.

Technological progress, the material culture, and the consumption possibilities in the United States provide additional attraction for many Sudanese outside the elites. Anti-Americanism cannot be grasped if the dialectic of attraction and frustration is ignored.

Summary

Many Sudanese share a basic skepticism toward America’s hegemonic intentions, in the country and in the region. That applies to conservative, to Islamist, and to leftist circles. Islamists – in other words, since 1989 “the government” – believe that the United States threatens the Islamic world’s independence. In addition, they believe that the United States wants to very actively undermine the project to create establish an Islamic order of state and society. As a result, Islamists try to defend themselves against such attempts using all means at their disposal. Between 1990 and 1995, that included support for militant, and especially Islamist groups from neighboring countries labeled as terrorist by the United States and Israel. In their criticism of the United States, secular intellectuals particularly lament the U.S.’ failure to honor its democratic promises. For many people of North Sudan, the United States’ practically unconditional support for Israel represents a permanent source of aggravation. What attitude prevails at a given time primarily hinges upon the situation in domestic policy, and it also depends on the global political situation. Depending on the

situation, the state government and the opposition, and North and South Sudanese try to adjust openness or hard stances toward the United States, also considering their interests at that given time. In all, anti-American violence is rare, as anti-Americanism manifests itself more in rhetoric and sentiment than in practice.

5. The potential for anti-American mobilization

By stressing its cooperation in the “fight against terror,” Sudan’s government tried to use September 11, 2001 to boost its international image. The government continued its cooperation with American security authorities and arrested a few suspicious people.\footnote{Jonathan Wright, “Sudan arrests extremists, says ready to help,” Reuters, (September 28, 2001).} But this strategy was only partly successful. The U.S. government continued to pursue the policy of carefully opening itself for cooperation, which it had introduced one and a half years earlier. It also praised some positive developments in Sudan, increased its active engagement, and upheld its sanctions as leverage.\footnote{In November 2001 – in connection with the annual extension of economic sanctions – the U.S. government expressed its concern over “Sudan’s growing interest to develop bio weapons program,” \textit{AFP} (November 20, 2001). On May 2002, the report by the U.S. foreign ministry, “Patterns of Global Terrorism,” recognized in its conclusion: “Sudan and Libya seem closest to understanding what they must do to get out of the terrorism business, and each has taken measures pointing it in the right direction.” At the same time, however, the report re-emphasized the accusations that Sudan served as a refuge for “international terrorist groups,” especially for logistical and other supporting efforts. These groups supposedly included al Qaeda, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad or Hamas. Available from the World Wide Web: \url{http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/02052101.htm}.} In the wake of the mission by special envoy John Danforth, there was a ceasefire in the Nuba mountains, in January 2002. American pressure strongly contributed to stronger progress in the peace negotiations between the Sudanese state government and the SPLM/A in the Kenyan city of Machakos, in summer 2002. Since November 2002, former U.S. soldiers have been heading a \textit{Civilian Protection Monitoring Team}, which monitors violations of the ceasefire in the Nuba mountains and in South Sudan.

In order to uphold its pressure on the Sudanese government to push for a peace agreement, President Bush in October 2002 signed the \textit{Sudan Peace Act}. Should the Sudanese government fail to agree to a compromise, the United States is threatening to push for harsh UN sanctions after six months that would severely hit Sudan’s

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economy, military and oil processing. At the same time, the United States promised direct aid of $300 million for the SPLA-controlled areas between 2003 and 2005, which represents a clear broadening in the support for the SPLA. The current dynamic between the Sudan and the United States, therefore, is only to a small extent impacted by the September 11 fallout, even from the U.S. perspective: The United States took the key steps toward opening up to Sudan prior to September 11, 2001. From Sudan’s perspective, the U.S. role in the peace talks held in Kenya plays the crucial role. While the SPLM/A keeps banking on U.S. support, the Sudanese government is trying to buy time, hoping for a more permanent Western engagement in the oil sector, and, finally, for a deal that will help the leadership stay in power.

Even though the negotiations have been accompanied by harsh rhetoric since mid-2002 and always teeter on the brink of failure, and even though it is uncertain whether a sound peace agreement will be reached, the outlook has never been as promising in the history of the second civil war. Since both sides recognize the key role the United States is playing in the talks, they employ established means (ranging from rhetorical outbursts to practical cooperation) to push the United States into a position that aids their respective cause. Ideology plays no major role here, neither for the Sudanese government nor for the SPLM/A. On both sides, the decision-makers are primarily driven by their own interests.

This means that the mobilization potential for anti-American rhetoric, attitudes, and actions only in the short-term shifted, compared to older, long-term trends since September 11, 2001. While the Khartoum government went to great lengths to be seen on the “right side” internationally in the “fight against terror” following the attacks on September 11, the South Sudanese tried to portray the Islamist regime as the “Taliban of Africa.” When it became clear that the United States would have other priorities than launching a direct strike against Sudan (a scenario the government feared and the SPLM/A was hoping for) and when the United States was strongly criticized in the Islamic world (and Europe) for its military-focused and widely unilateral approach, the dynamics in the different positions returned to their status before 1999.

Specifically, this means:


- The Sudanese government still uses harsh words if it disagrees with a U.S. government decision. Following a well-established pattern, the Sudanese government then employs a more conciliatory tone soon after.
- The government’s reaction to open criticism from the outside is feisty. Soon after, however, the government will change its stance again.56
- Islamist followers – in the state leadership and in Hasan al-Turabi’s camp – can be mobilized for anti-American demonstrations, depending on the situation.
- When in doubt, the government tries to adjust to the world-political dynamic, trying to avoid that it stands on the “wrong side” in the “fight against terror,” as was the case the in 1990/91.57
- A broad majority of the North Sudanese public is critical of U.S. policy in the region. Several Sudanese and international components factor into this position: for example, a lack of understanding for the U.S. sanctions, and the accusation of supporting terrorism. Also, among the older generation, there is the bitter recollection of U.S. support for the hated military dictator Nimeiri. Finally, there is moral outrage and anger, fueled also through transnational media, that the United States treats states differently and that there’s a contradiction in the U.S. rhetoric and practice regarding its position on democracy and freedom. The most frequently cited example is the virtually unconditional U.S. support for Israel’s policy toward the Palestinians in contrast to the war mongering in Iraq.
- If it is opportune to do so, the government will try to exploit this sentiment in order to procure greater legitimacy but also to threaten the United States with “pressure on the street.”
- In the mid- and long-term, however, the practical, domestic political and economic considerations will guide the government’s action.

56 Examples include the rejection of criticism by the European Union of the death penalty against highwaymen – a little later, the verdict was suspended; the verbal fights that accompanied the fall and re-conquering of Torit in fall 2002; the threat to resume peace talks only with a completely defeated SPLA; the total rejection of talking about conflict regions located outside the old borders of southern Sudan during the peace negotiations – a stance that was given up in mid-March 2003.
57 Africa Confidential reports that the Sudanese government had offered the U.S. administration information proving a connection between Iraq and al Qaeda. “Sudan/Iraq: Bum steer,” in Africa Confidential (London; March 7, 2003): Vol. 44, No. 5.
toward the United States. Oil and the peace talks are most important in that regard, but also the government’s mere survival. The Sudanese government wants the sanctions to be lifted, wants U.S. economic involvement in the oil sector, and a peace agreement that would allow it to stay in power even beyond the six-year transition deadline.

- A key aspect, however, is that there are factions within the military that reject a peace agreement because they fear a loss of political influence, financial support, and their posts as such. These factions could try to erode the agreement and attempt to mobilize anti-American potential.

- SPLM/A and the large North Sudanese opposition parties continue to have a completely pragmatic relationship with the United States, with these relations primarily oriented on their inner-Sudanese strategies. That also applies to the Umma party of Sadiq al-Mahdi, who, as prime minister, had accepted a deterioration of relations with the United States at the time (1986-1989).

- The majority of North Sudanese is not inclined to employ violence, and there is no uniform – and permanently effective – sentiment against American citizens or “Westerners” in Sudan. Compared to Yemen or Egypt, there were no widespread displays of sympathy for Osama bin Laden in Sudan following September 11. However, the U.S. attack on Iraq in March 2003 has somewhat strengthened the image of Osama bin Laden as the only person willing to square off with the hegemonic world power.\(^{58}\)

- The Islamist as well as the leftist side repeatedly emphasize that they were not opposed to the American peoples or American citizens per se but to the U.S. policy in the region. In this context, they often stress that Americans themselves were creating this ghost that is anti-Americanism, and that the Americans simply do not understand the reasons for rejection faced in North Africa and the Middle East. A typical example is the reaction by a prominent Islamist participant in the electronic discussion list Sudan-L to the U.S. announcement to produce advertising spots explaining Muslims that the United States respected Islam:

\(^{58}\) On March 22, 2003 – two days after the American-British invasion of Iraq – “hundreds” (i.e., comparatively few) of students protested in front of the U.S. embassy in Khartoum; some of them shouted slogans such as “Strike, strike, bin Laden.” One demonstrator was killed by a misguided police bullet. “One killed in Sudanese anti-war demo,” AFP, (March 22, 2003).
“They still don’t get it! The problem is not with the American society or the American people. The problem is with the unfair and double-standard foreign policy of the US government in the Middle East. No commercial can fix that. Just fix the policy and the attitude.”

Some Sudanese from the Islamist spectrum are being recruited for militant anti-American objectives. Direct anti-American attacks through Sudanese Islamists inside Sudan are not known, only abroad. For example, in June 2002, the Saudi police arrested a Sudanese under the suspicion that he fired a missile at an American military plane on the Prince-Sultan airforce base. At least since the end of the 1990s, it is improbable that such attacks are directed from inside Sudan. Within Sudan, the security level for foreigners is still above average in relative terms and compared to other nations. Still, anti-American attacks within Sudan cannot be ruled out if domestic political tensions increase or as a reaction to U.S. military action in the Islamic world.

**Summary**

September 11, 2001 played a smaller role in anti-American mobilization potential than domestic disputes within Sudan. The 1990s, especially the first half of the 1990s, marked the zenith of political mass mobilization with signs of anti-Americanism. This period demonstrated what anti-Americanism in Sudan means and what its limitations for political action are. The new, global-political alignments in the wake of September 11, 2001 are included in domestic Sudanese strategies, where peace talks, oil access, and the future of the Bashir regime are the most important topics of dispute. In practice, the position toward the United States primarily is oriented on how the political parties judge U.S. policy in this specific context. In addition, there is a broad base of voices that – fueled by transnational media – are critical of U.S. policy in the region. Based on previous experience,

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militant anti-American attacks in Sudan are less probable than in other countries of the region. However, such attacks cannot be ruled out if tensions in the region mount.

6. Overall assessment

There are no surveys on anti-Americanism in Sudan. Still, a lot points to the fact that the image of the United States is not substantially different here than in other Arab countries. A large part of the population holds a critical position toward the United States. First and foremost, that has political reasons. In addition, such positions also specifically cite U.S. political action toward Sudan, in the Middle East, and Africa in general. For the past 30 years, the main bearers of anti-American attitudes and actions in the region have been Islamist movements, socio-political heirs to the previously powerful Left in Sudan. Also, their discourse incorporated anti-Imperialist elements. The Left, which continues to exist in small, intellectual circles, is partly just as anti-American as the Islamists are. Still, they do not have great backing among the population. Anti-Americanism manifests itself especially in rhetorically-demonstrative form, and its virulence strongly depends on concrete U.S. measures, which are viewed in the context of their domestic political impact on Sudan.

Overall, the potential for violence is rather small, which does not rule out single attacks, however. Most Sudanese clearly differentiate between the policy of the U.S. government, on the one hand, and the Americans as a people and individuals, on the other hand. There is no principal hostile attitude toward Americans as individuals.

Also remarkable is the fact that Islamic organizations are not at all reluctant to be in contact with U.S.-based non-governmental organizations (such as CARE or ADRA). Finally, it is important to point out that the values of freedom and democracy are not generally rejected. On the contrary, a large part in anti-American sentiment has to do with the perception that the United States is paying lip service to these values in other countries, but often actually hinders the realization of freedom and democracy in practice.

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The potential for "anti-Western" orientation has to be viewed differently than anti-Americanism. While anti-Americanism is characterized through political aspects, anti-Western attitudes pertain to matters of culture. In terms of its political relevance, anti-Americanism should by no means be equated with anti-Western attitudes. On the contrary: The European Union and some of its member states, Germany, France, the Netherlands (all of which have their own embassies in Khartoum) are viewed as independent actors who do politics much differently than the United States. The Sudanese, especially the government, of course, like to exploit that fact, attempting to instrumentalize it for their own purposes. As a result, France, especially, has emerged as a precursor for an opening toward the regime, which is honored in Sudan but lamented by the opposition.

Cultural attitudes toward “the West” are not uniform. The view – that the West was successful technologically but also decadent, immoral, cold, and asocial – is a well-known stereotype promoted especially within the Islamic and Islamist realm. It is, however, difficult to ascertain how widespread this view really is. At any rate, it appears to be linked to media access and education, as it is rarely found among rural Sudanese.

On the other hand, a large part of the educated, urban youths is strongly interested in the cultural offering of Western cultural institutes. Until the early 1990s, that included the Khartoum-based American Center, and following the dissolution of the German Goethe Institute in the capital, in 1996, this interest focused on the French Cultural Center and the British Council. Many teenagers and young adults describe these centers as their “air to breathe,” and as the only accessible public areas which are not dominated by the guardians of Islamist morality. That’s why staunch Islamists waver in their view on these centers: on the one hand, they want to shut them down, on the other hand, they believe that the centers provide an outlet for youths.

There is no reluctance to consume Western goods. Businessmen supporting the Islamist movement made fortunes in the 1990s by marketing consumer goods produced in Saudi Arabia under a U.S. license. Due to the U.S. boycott, there is no McDonald's, Burger King, or Pizza Hut in Sudan. Nonetheless, a growing number of people visits the fast-food restaurants such as King Burger, Lucky Meal (sporting the same arched M that McDonald’s uses) or Pizza Hot, which all opened in the mid-1990s. There are countless other, similar examples. It is unknown, though, whether the calls for boycotting Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola had any visible effect in Sudan. Elsewhere, these calls led to substantial revenue plunges (e.g., reportedly 10 to 15%)

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63 For decades, both brands were produced in Sudan under national supervision after the two U.S. soft drink-makers granted Sudanese companies the license for production.
in Egypt). In Sudan, at any rate, such boycott calls were not reported and publicized with the same intensity.

As the virulence of anti-Americanism primarily evolves from domestic political developments, there is a chance in the mid-term to reduce anti-American positions. This chance can materialize if there is a peace agreement that is acceptable to all war parties, instead of being forced upon the parties. Domestic and foreign political stability, stronger democratic participation and growing economic prosperity for as many population groups as possible are also prerequisites for reducing anti-Americanism in Sudan.

An end to fighting in South Sudan would pave the way for U.S. involvement in the oil sector.64 If economic policy is conducted properly and if the resources are clearly used for the good of the South Sudanese, then that would boost the possibilities for securing the unity of the country. War lords, wartime profiteers, and other military with an interest in continuing the war would probably try to mobilize anti-American, anti-Imperialist and perhaps even anti-Zionist sentiment. However, if peace is widely accepted, such efforts would have little chance for broad success.

Of course, things would be different if the civil war wages on, or if domestic political tensions mount for other reasons. That could strengthen anti-American positions. The development in the Middle East will also have an impact. The widespread resentment against U.S. hegemonic policy65 will very likely gain steam. Depending on the development in global political issues, it may counter positive impulses generated by a possible peace agreement. Still, the Sudanese parties will continue to do what they have done in the past – despite all rhetoric, and that is to conduct Realpolitik driven by its respective interests or its view on what these interests should be.

American intransigence – or what is perceived as such – can be counter-productive in the short term. The most well-known example is the 1998 Shifa factory bombing, which widely was viewed as the best service the United States could have possibly provided to the National Islamic Front. In the wake of external pressure, the Sudanese are willing to stand together and to ignore their political differences for the time being. Still, experience has shown that only scattered increases in anti-American rhetoric are to be expected. In the long-term, that does not lead to stronger

64 This is, for example, what the information minister, Mahdi Ibrahim, told the International Crisis Group on July 2, 2001: “We wanted U.S. investment more than the others.” International Crisis Group, God, oil and country: changing the logic of war in Sudan (Brussels, 2002): 101. See also the online text: www.crisisweb.org/projects/africa/sudan/reports/A400534_28012002.pdf.
65 A response to the fact that the United States increasingly employs this approach to exert power since the decay of the Soviet Union, and especially after September 11, 2001.
anti-American feelings among the population, though it may provide “yet another” example to further cement the latent skepticism toward the U.S. administration’s policy concerning Sudan and the region.