

A Paramilitary Revolution: The Popular Defence Forces

By Jago Salmon



Copyright

Published in Switzerland by the Small Arms Survey

© Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva 2007

First published in December 2007

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the Small Arms Survey, or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Publications Manager, Small Arms Survey, at the address below.

Small Arms Survey
Graduate Institute of International Studies
47 Avenue Blanc, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Copyedited by Emily Walmsley

Typeset in Optima and Palatino by Richard Jones, Exile: Design & Editorial Services (rick@studioexile.com)

Printed by nbmedia in Geneva, Switzerland

ISBN 2-8288-0088-1

The Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey is an independent research project located at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. It serves as the principal source of public information on all aspects of small arms and as a resource centre for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and activists.

Established in 1999, the project is supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and by contributions from the Governments of Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK. The Survey is also grateful for past and current project-specific support received from Australia, Denmark, and New Zealand. Further funding has been provided by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Geneva International Academic Network, and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The Small Arms Survey collaborates with research institutes and NGOs in many countries, including Brazil, Canada, Georgia, Germany, India, Israel, Jordan, Norway, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Small Arms Survey
Graduate Institute of International Studies
47 Avenue Blanc, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Phone: +41 22 908 5777

Fax: +41 22 732 2738

Email: smallarm@hei.unige.ch

Web site: www.smallarmssurvey.org

The Human Security Baseline Assessment

The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a three-year research project (2005–08) administered by the Small Arms Survey. It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN Mission in Sudan, the UN Development Programme, and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely empirical research, the HSBA project works to support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), and arms control interventions to promote security.

The HSBA is being carried out by a multidisciplinary team of regional, security, and public health specialists. It reviews the spatial distribution of armed violence throughout Sudan and offers policy-relevant advice to redress insecurity.

HSBA Working Papers are timely and user-friendly reports on current research activities in English and Arabic. Future papers will focus on a variety of issues, including victimization and perceptions of security, armed groups, and local security arrangements. The project also generates a series of *Issue Briefs*.

The HSBA project is supported by Canada, the UK Government Global Conflict Prevention Pool, the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For more information contact:

Claire Mc Evoy
HSBA Project Coordinator
Small Arms Survey, 47 Avenue Blanc
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

E-mail: mcevoy@hei.unige.ch
Web site: www.smallarmssurvey.org/sudan

HSBA Working Paper series editor: Emile LeBrun

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	6
About the author	7
Abstract	8
I. Introduction	9
II. The origins of the Popular Defence Forces	12
III. Recruitment, training, and capabilities	24
IV. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement	28
V. Conclusion	33
Endnotes	34
Bibliography	36

Acronyms and abbreviations

DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
GoS	Government of Sudan
NCP	National Congress Party
NIF	National Islamic Front
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

About the author

Jago Salmon (jago.salmon@gmail.com) holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Humboldt University of Berlin and a MA in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of London. Over the past eight years he has worked and conducted research in Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen. From 2001 to 2005 he worked as a research associate with the 'Micropolitics of Armed Groups' research unit at Humboldt University in Berlin. His primary field of research has been the political sociology of armed conflict and complex emergencies. Since 2006 he has worked as a consultant for NGOs, donors, and UN agencies based in Khartoum.

Abstract

In late June 1989, Sudan's tumultuous third period of democratic governance was interrupted by a bloodless coup. Led by little-known, middle-ranking military officers, the coup's civilian base was Sudan's highly organized Islamist movement, under the leadership of Dr Hassan al-Turabi. Proclaiming a 'Revolution of National Salvation', the new regime instituted a radical transformation of the Sudanese state. Under policies of popular mobilization and cultural resurgence, state institutions were superimposed with Islamist inspired, parastatal organizations loyal to the party. Within the security sector, this translated into a rapid expansion of both parallel and irregular security forces. One of the key elements in this 'paramilitary revolution' was the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), formed as a legal entity by decree in November 1989. After the consolidation of the regime in 1992, the PDF became one of the primary instruments of Islamist political and popular mobilization, before declining with the fragmentation of the regime in 2000–01. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, the future of the PDF, and its relationship with the regular armed forces, has been contested. Still described as a force of *mujahideen* (fighters of the holy war), the PDF has continued to exist as a military and civilian network to mobilize militia auxiliaries throughout Sudan; it currently has active units in Darfur and the Transitional Areas. The PDF has been a primary instrument militarizing local grievances in the government's policies of divide and rule. Many of these grievances have not been addressed by the CPA and today they represent the real vectors of local insecurity and of future armed rebellion. In response to the stalled recovery process following the North–South civil war, disenfranchised ex-PDF are now evolving into new, potentially autonomous, armed groups. Significant progress towards recovery and a democratization of the control of the armed forces in Sudan is necessary if any process of real political democratization is to be successful. 📄

I. Introduction

Sudanese youth are fighting in the war zone, while other youths in the world are busy with discos and parties. We thank God that we have prepared these youths as the future of Sudan. God is Great. (Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, 11th anniversary speech to the Popular Defence Forces, June 2000)

The social and institutional character of the Sudanese state has undergone a radical transformation since the seizure of power by the National Salvation regime on 30 June 1989. The most enduring element of this self-proclaimed revolution has not been the Islamist ideology from which it drew inspiration, but the transfer of authority and resources from the state bureaucracy to parastatal organizations. As a result, the political system, broadly defined, has blurred the boundaries between state, economy, and society. Two years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the interference of the governing National Congress Party (NCP) is still felt throughout civil society, the private sector, and the state bureaucracy. Realigning executive power will require a redistribution of resources throughout the country, a renewal of participatory governance, and the reform of institutions distorted by decades of minority rule. Mapping the complex matrix of networks and institutions of this system is an essential first step if a just and sustainable peace is to be attained.

The repercussions of this system are especially important in the security sector. During the 1990s, under Islamist inspired policies of popular mobilization and cultural resurgence, both the police and the military had their authority diffused between paramilitary organizations, community forces, and client militias.¹ These forces reduced the fiscal burden of waging an extended war and facilitated the territorial extension of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) into remote areas. However, this strategy has left a legacy of grassroots militarization that today presents numerous obstacles—not least for the SAF itself—to the processes of post-conflict disarmament and security-sector reform.

One of the key institutions in this 'paramilitary revolution' is the Popular Defence Forces (PDF). Formed as a legal entity by decree in November 1989, the PDF has served simultaneously as a praetorian guard for a weak regime that distrusted the coup-prone military and as an umbrella institution supporting tribal militias in the west and south of the country. After the consolidation of the regime in 1992 the PDF became one of the primary instruments of Islamist political and popular mobilization, before declining substantially in the face of the escalating conflict between Dr Hassan al-Turabi and President Omar al-Bashir. Today, the PDF, still officially described as a force of *mujahideen* (fighters of the holy war), exists as a joint military and civilian network to mobilize, equip, and fund militia auxiliaries throughout North Sudan and, to a lesser degree, South Sudan. It also has active units in Darfur and the Transitional Areas.

Since the signing of the CPA in January 2005, the future of the PDF, and its relationship with the regular armed forces, has been contested. Although formally affiliated with the SAF by the protocols of the CPA, the PDF is an independent institution falling directly under the authority of the presidency. Evidence suggests that although the government has announced the ending of its active support to many PDF-assisted militias, many of the weapons distributed by the PDF have not been collected. Furthermore, questions have arisen about the organizational cohesion of the PDF.

Structured around a hierarchy of joint military and civilian coordinating committees, the PDF's boundaries with social groups have always been porous. Operational PDF units were often recruited from tribal groups by community leaders and inactive auxiliaries are extremely difficult to differentiate from armed civilians. Weak central coordination, and tensions between its political and military wings, means that the PDF at several times in its history has suffered from serious contradictions over its function, recruitment policies, and operations. For instance, although the PDF is best known for supplying arms to tribal militias in the rural periphery, it has also recruited from among the families of the highest circles of the NCP.²

This internal diversity of the PDF as well as its high level of political sensitivity makes any attempt at a comprehensive study impossible under current conditions. This paper instead provides a historical review of the PDF from 1989 until 2006, focusing on its emergence and evolution as a national institu-

tion. The objective is to provide a historical view of an organization that has remained vaguely defined, as well as an analysis of its role and capabilities since the signing of the CPA.

This account is built from a range of sources including interviews, primary and secondary literature, and direct observation. The final analysis is developed from comparisons with other paramilitary organizations and reflections on the different historical periods of the PDF itself. 📖

II. The origins of the Popular Defence Forces

The inspiration for the PDF lies in the history of Condominium Sudan (1899–1943), in which Sudan was under both British and Egyptian rule, and the Islamic rebellion against it. Condominium policies aimed at low-cost pacification, which relied on the mobilization of local levies to suppress dissent. The direct origins of the PDF, however, can be found in two more recent paramilitary forces: the tribal militia units recruited in western Sudan and the Transitional Areas during the mid-1980s; and the party militants and youth movements of the National Islamic Front (NIF).³ While the former provided the bulk of the PDF's fighting force, the latter formed the ideological core and defined the PDF's political impact in the urban centres of North Sudan.

The formulation of the 'Popular Defence' policy followed an attack on the village of al-Gardud in Kordofan state in July 1985, in which 60 people were killed.⁴ This village was populated by Misseriya Arabs—a semi-nomadic Baggara tribe with influential ties to the Transitional Military Council and the Umma party in Khartoum. Following the attack, a government delegation to the area led by Minister of Defence Major General Burma Fadlallah Nasir was presented with a choice by native administration leaders: either provide security for the Arab Baggara communities of South Darfur and South Kordofan, or these communities would request such guarantees from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and de facto join the rebellion.⁵ Unable to redeploy the demoralized and overstretched military from the South, the delegation made a decision—without the authorization of the national Constituent Assembly—to arm the Baggara. Truckloads of ammunition and light weapons, mostly AK-47s and G3 rifles, were distributed directly to members of allied tribes, specifically the Rizeigat and the Misseriya Humr, through native administrative structures and leaders.

Traditionally armed to defend cattle, the Baggara had already begun to purchase modern automatic weapons on the thriving Chad–Sudan cross-border arms market.⁶ Many had suffered heavy losses of cattle during the 1984–85

Sahelian drought, and banditry, cattle theft, and forced grazing on farmland was widespread. Some of the youngest and poorest of those affected had congregated in the urban centres of South Kordofan and South Darfur (Beck, 1998) and were willing to seek an income through violence (Johnson, 1988, p. 10). In late 1985, as well as providing arms to the tribes, to wealthy Arab traders, Umma Party agents, and military intelligence, officials began to recruit from among the destitute nomads to form offensive paramilitary units. By 1986 well-armed raiding parties of 500–1,000 men had begun systematically to strip the assets of the Ngok, Abiem, Malual, and Tuic Dinka populations of North Bahr El Ghazal, and forced their displacement into pro-government territories (Keen, 1994, pp. 98–100).

From the beginning, the distinction between tribal militias and government paramilitaries was blurred. While the militias were local formations, recruited through the native administration and operating in or around related communities, the paramilitaries, known as the *Murahileen*, were irregular mercenary formations integrated into the military chain of command and often alienated from tribal structures. Both were recruited from pro-government tribes and protected from prosecution by the government.

On 20 February 1989 SAF commander-in-chief General Fathi Ahmed Ali, issued an ultimatum signed by 150 senior officers that called on the government to give greater support to the regular armed forces. Implicit in this was a call to end support for the tribal militias. In response, Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi formed a four-man committee, including Major General Burma Fadlallah Nasir, charged with establishing the legal foundation for existing paramilitary units and their transformation into a national paramilitary force. The so-called Popular Defence Forces bill, recommended by the committee, was proposed to the Constituent Assembly but resoundingly rejected. On 10 June 1989, Foreign Minister Sid Ahmed al-Hussein led a newly formed 'peace task force' delegation into talks with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The legalization of the Popular Defence Forces

Three weeks later, on 30 June 1989, the government was toppled by a small group of middle-ranking officers. The leaders of this bloodless coup, led by

then Brigadier Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, declared a Revolution of National Salvation and a renewed commitment to the civil war. By 1 July, 28 army generals had been sacked, including the commander-in-chief, General Fathi Ahmed Ali. Bashir appointed himself head of state, prime minister, defence minister, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

In November, the National Salvation Regime revisited the previous government's draft bill and passed the 1989 Popular Defence Forces Act, formally establishing the PDF as an institution of the state. According to the Act, this new force was intended 'to train citizens on military and civil capabilities, to raise security awareness and military discipline among them, in order to act as a support force to the other regular ones on request' (Government of Sudan, 1989, Article 5). The PDF was operationally accountable to an SAF brigadier general, originally Brigadier Babiker Abd el-Mahmoud Hassan, and answerable directly to President Bashir. Recruitment was managed by a hierarchy of civilian PDF coordinators at national, state, local, and community level. The commander general dictated regulations covering remuneration, period of service, and recruitment procedures, as well as the annual intake of the forces. Underneath this central structure, however, the PDF became an increasingly decentralized network as it expanded in size.

The first PDF coordinator, Abu Giseissa,⁷ announced a target to enlist 100,000 fighters by the end of the first year. In late 1989 and early 1990 the existing militia and paramilitary groups in Bahr El Ghazal, South Darfur, and South Kordofan were formally absorbed into the PDF. In December 1989 the Misseriya militia of El-Muglad, and the Peace Army militia of the Fertit tribe in Wau, followed suit. Shortly afterwards, in March 1990, the Fursan militia of the Rizeigat tribe around ed-Daein, South Darfur, was also absorbed (Human Rights Watch, 1996, pp. 274–75). According to available sources, these units negotiated successfully to restrict their operations to the areas surrounding their migratory routes and many insisted on campaigning according to their seasonal agenda instead of following the army's strategic priorities. Furthermore, tribal leaders were recognized as PDF coordinators in a parallel hierarchy to the military and in some cases retained almost full autonomy over the men they had mobilized. Despite this the tribal PDF were granted equal treatment and the same benefits provided by military law to professional soldiers and

their dependents in case of war-related injury, disability, captivity, or death (Human Rights Watch, 1996, p. 276).

Despite the new legality of the PDF, the boundary between military and community forces remained as ambiguous as it had been before the coup. This ambiguity grew further as the NIF, dominated by the Islamist politician Dr Hassan al-Turabi, consolidated its power behind the National Salvation regime. Military offensives in Kordofan and Bahr El Ghazal often included regular SAF troops, PDF volunteers, and members of the existing Murahileen militias. This led to the widespread use during the 1990s of general terms such as mujahideen to describe units containing a mixture of forces affiliated to the government (International Eminent Persons Group, 2002, p. 27). Similarly to the *Janjaweed*—the general term used to describe the array of paramilitary and militia forces operational today in Darfur—the mujahideen's institutional complexity and confusing informality in rank makes it almost impossible to identify clear command and control structures. While the government defended its actions by emphasizing its limited military capability, the tribes justified the militias as their only means of self-defence (Salih, 1989, p. 68). This justification thus relegated responsibility for justice and accountability to local areas, by now embroiled in extensive ethnic and intercommunal warfare.

In February 1990 a confidential document written by the Government of Sudan (GoS) Subcommittee on Popular Defence reported on the tribal militias to a regional conference in El-Obeid. The report praised the militias for using guerrilla warfare-type tactics against the rebellion and claimed that the militias were responsible for repelling the rebels in the western area of Kordofan. The report also noted that the tribal forces often engaged in looting without regard to tactical objectives, deliberately misled the armed forces to achieve private objectives, and, most importantly, were 'fuelling tribal and racial hatred' (cited in Human Rights Watch, 1996, p. 277).

The PDF, however, was envisaged as something much larger than the tribal militias. The NIF had lobbied and raised money for a 'tribal belt' across Sudan to defend Arab and Islamic culture from the SPLA. But Dr Hassan al-Turabi had also long argued that Sudan's elite Islamist cadre needed to become a broad populist movement. Like other Islamist inspired revolutions in the Middle East, the power of the state was seen as the primary vehicle for achiev-

ing this goal. Influential members of the NIF not only emphasized the PDF's successes as an auxiliary to the armed forces, but also identified it as an authentic Islamic model of military organization—a citizen's army of volunteer mujahid prepared for frontline battle.⁸ In March 1990, 5,000 students from Khartoum's universities were enrolled into the al-Qitaina PDF training camp on the outskirts of Khartoum (Kok, 1993). Most were recruited from NIF party networks, university-based Islamic organizations, and NIF-affiliated youth associations such as Shebab al Watan (Youth of the Nation). These recruits formed one of the first urban units of the PDF. Whereas rural PDF units were tasked with halting SPLA advances into North Sudan, the main duty of the urban brigades was to protect the new regime from civil uprisings and, more importantly, from military interventions.⁹ In November 1990, PDF militia units in land cruisers were deployed across key areas in Khartoum and around the main military bases (Radio of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, 1990). Shortly after, regular SAF military units were redeployed out of the capital.

A year later, the NIF emerged from the shadows of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and took public control of government positions. An all-appointed Transitional National Assembly comprising many NIF politicians was formed in January 1992. The reshuffle announced the beginning of a wholesale Islamization of Sudan's institutions. Public companies replaced qualified and long-serving staff, including technical and medical personnel, with NIF cadres. A 'Shari'a High Supervisory Board over Banks and Financial Institutions' oversaw the imposition of Islamic banking practices. International NGOs were restricted and replaced by Islamic NGOs, some of which combined proselytizing with humanitarianism. At the same time, the new regime openly recommitted itself to the war in the South. By this point, however, the SAF's strategy against the SPLA had degraded into a low-cost and ineffective stand-off involving artillery, landmines, and proxy forces. Heavily demoralized and materially under-equipped, the SAF had clearly stated in 1989 that it no longer wished to fight a war that was openly opposed by civil society and many politicians.

The professional and experienced military officers who opposed the NIF began to be replaced by regime loyalists in 1990. Extensive purges of the regular armed forces were coupled with forced recruitment of military officers

into the PDF for re-education. By October 1993 the RCC had sacked 1,500 officers—just under one-third of the total officer corps—500 non-commissioned officers, and 11,000 rank and file soldiers (Flint, 1993a). In early 1995 another 227 officers were dismissed, including 57 brigadiers and generals (Lesch, 1998, pp. 134–35). Many others were quietly retired with promises of loans from the Islamic banking system. Those departing were replaced by young pro-NIF graduates from the military academy. Simultaneously, a massive expansion in PDF recruitment and training began in order to prepare the force to substitute for the regular military on the battlefield. This level of PDF mobilization was maintained from 1992 until roughly 1997. Continual recruitments into training camps and central PDF battalions were augmented by periodic campaigns for combat recruits, which were launched during large-scale military offensives.

Civilian PDF coordinators were appointed in urban and semi-urban neighbourhoods, at universities, and in all civil service departments throughout North Sudan. Training camps, supervised by pro-NIF military officers, undertook indoctrination using Islamic lectures, religious songs, and chants alongside basic military training. Lists of individuals, drawn up by both the PDF and the security forces, which identified those who were required to undergo training in the PDF, began to appear throughout Sudanese institutions.

Because of its local recruitment and training practices, the PDF became a heterogeneous organization that reflected its surrounding environment and contained multiple internal strands and tendencies. These can be divided into five levels according to their different military ability and training: (a) an elite section of units comparable to the Iranian *Pasdaran* (Islamic Revolution Guards), some of which reportedly received tank and artillery training;¹⁰ (b) students and other civilians forced into training in closed camps; (c) military officers and civil servants forced to go through PDF training as re-education and indoctrination; (d) localized rural militias supplied through regional and local PDF offices and committees; and (e) a dispersed network of informers.

In December 1991, President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani of Iran paid a four-day visit to Khartoum. He brought 157 officials, including military and security advisers. During this visit Iran and Sudan signed a military cooperation deal under which Iranian advisers would come to Sudan and Sudanese security forces would be sent to Iran for training. In 1992 the former head of the Iranian

Pasdaran in Lebanon, Hassan Azada, was posted to Khartoum, and training camps were reportedly established in Abu Rakim (Eastern State), Souyaa, and Um Barbita (South Kordofan) (Indian Ocean Newsletter, 1992). In 1993 the Pasdaran sent infantry, artillery, and logistics specialists to Sudan under the command of Rafic Doust of the 'Foundation of the Oppressed', reportedly to train and organize the PDF into a fighting force (Indian Ocean Newsletter, 1993a).

All male Sudanese citizens over the age of 16 and resident in the Sudan were required to attend training by the PDF. Initially it was promised that students would be permitted to finish their studies, but in 1994, faced with low recruitment numbers, foot dragging, and sporadic rebellion, this promise was rescinded. Students were unable to graduate from or enrol in university or high school without certification of PDF camp attendance. Most large companies, and all government institutions, required actual or potential employees to provide evidence of PDF training. Travel abroad was denied to those without it.

Although frontline combat in the PDF was voluntary, this began to be heavily promoted in the mosques, the education system, and through the media as the duty of all virtuous Muslims. In January 1992 the authorities declared the civil war to be a jihad. In the Nuba Mountains all rebels, many of whom were also Muslims, were ruled to be apostates, making it the duty of all Muslims to participate in their suppression. At PDF parades and at graduation ceremonies and celebrations held in urban centres, high-ranking members of the regime gave rallying speeches containing powerful Islamic discourses that celebrated 'martyrdom'. Government-controlled newspapers ran reports of PDF recruits with prophetic dreams, the sweet-smelling corpses of PDF martyrs, and supernatural help from animals (al-Mubarak, 2001, p. 87). A nightly television broadcast called *fi Sahat al-Fida* (In the Fields of Sacrifice) reported the miraculous feats of the PDF on the battlefield and celebrated its martyrs. The culmination of this symbolic drive was a massive military campaign, *Seif al Ubur* (The Summer Crossing), which committed a reported 40,000 PDF and regular army troops to South Kordofan alone (Bradbury, 1998, p. 465). By June 1993 it was estimated that PDF numbers matched Sudanese army numbers in the South, and many more were rotating through PDF battalions for shorter periods of time. In Kordofan, the commander of the PDF vowed to 'cleanse every stretch of territory sullied by the outlaws' (Flint, 1993b). Tens

of thousands of new PDF recruits from the tribes of North Kordofan were inducted by the government in a large public rally held in El-Obeid in May 1992. Meanwhile, tribal leaders were given Toyota pickups and houses by the government and were appointed *Amir al-jihad* in exchange for helping to mobilize recruits for the PDF. In October 1993 First Lieutenant Khalid Abdel Karim Salih, who was in charge of security in Kordofan from May 1992 to February 1993, announced that during a seven-month period the army and PDF had killed 60,000–70,000 Nuba (Suliman, 2002, p. 176). No fewer than 14 mosques were also confirmed destroyed, damaged, or looted in the Nuba Mountains between 1993 and 1997 (de Waal and Salaam, 2004, p. 73).

The weakening of the Popular Defence Forces

As a result of poor training and the promotion of martyrdom, urban PDF recruits made poor soldiers, and the number of casualties was high. An SAF soldier interviewed in Khartoum who had served in both the Nuba Mountains and the South described watching in horror as PDF volunteers were urged over the top of trenches they had spent two days digging to charge in 'human wave attacks' at dug-in SPLA machine gun positions.¹¹ Military officers and recruits have described high levels of casualties as a result of friendly fire, communication breakdowns, and cowardice by devout Islamic PDF recruits suddenly confronted with the brutal reality of war.¹² Most of the military personnel and police officials interviewed for this paper described tribal PDF recruits as little more than mercenaries who were interested in loot but rarely willing to enter into serious combat.

Campaigns against SPLA strongholds in 1992–93 and 1995 caused immense numbers of casualties among the poorly trained PDF. As a result, recruitment fell sharply. Meanwhile, the government's promotion of what it imagined was Islamic orthodoxy did not succeed in unifying the faithful so much as in alienating many devout and highly orthodox Muslims who did not adhere to the NIF's project. At the same time, the PDF's coercive recruitment and training practices angered most Sudanese. In 1997 a Sudanese newspaper claimed that of the 70,000 school leavers legally obliged to attend PDF training, large numbers had escaped conscription and only 4,000 had actually joined the PDF

fighting units (AFP, 1997). In January of that year recruitment numbers fell so low that the government closed Khartoum University and called on faculty members and students to help the war effort in the South. In April 1998 up to 260 secondary-school PDF conscripts who demanded permission to spend the important Islamic holiday *Eid al Adha* with their families were reportedly killed by security forces after breaking out of the Eilafoun training camp 25 kilometres from Khartoum (*Africa Confidential*, 1998). Shortly afterwards the government was forced to admit that it did not know the names of all the conscripts killed. This display of brutality against teenagers seeking to return home for an Islamic celebration sent shockwaves through Sudanese society. Another rebellion soon after at the same training camp led to the successful escape of 76 recruits (Suna News Agency, 1998). The Eilafoun massacre marked the beginning of the end for the PDF's mass recruitment strategy.

By 1998 the battleground failures of the PDF were just one aspect of a broader frustration at the interference of the NIF's ideological leaders in the day-to-day running of the state. In the SAF, professional officers had long held reservations about the PDF—privately agreeing with General Fathi Ahmed Ali of the SAF's Legitimate Command that the army could not be replaced 'by the kind of accelerated training courses being doled out to the peculiar mix of ideologically motivated volunteers, jobless and press-ganged students' (Indian Ocean Newsletter, 1993b). Furthermore, many others were concerned that the resources committed to the PDF were being directly diverted from the SAF, prioritizing an ideological project over re-equipping the professional army.¹³

Although jihad was never abandoned, the mass-recruitment of PDF battalions was quietly replaced by an emphasis on building the state's war-making capacity, using oil revenues and reinforcing the southern proxy militias maintained by the military intelligence apparatus. In 1997 Ali Karti—minister for justice and a supporter of the current second vice-president of the GoS, Ali Osman Taha—became the national PDF coordinator. He allowed the regular armed forces to take de facto control of internal appointments in the organization.¹⁴ In January 1997 President Bashir established a higher authority for mobilization, led by Major General Zubayr Muhammad Saleh, which reported directly to Bashir. This body stood above all existing organizations, including the PDF, in the local and national mobilization of popular forces (BBC Moni-

toring, 1997). In 1998 compulsory national service in the professional military was reinstated.

In December 1999 competition between the presidency and the secretariat of the NCP, which was under the control of Turabi, fractured the Islamist movement. In a decision made on 23 January 2000, the NCP Shura Council stripped Turabi of responsibility for the general mobilization of jihad and allocated it to the political system.¹⁵ The following May, Turabi was also suspended from his position as the NCP secretary-general after accusations that he was 'calling up officers and the mujahideen' to rise up against the regime (AFP, 2000). In July 2000 Bashir appointed ten senior military officers to the cabinet. Shortly after, according to the *Rai al-Amm* newspaper in Khartoum, Turabi warned of a third force emerging from either 'the armed forces or the street to fill the gap' (*Rai al-Amm*, 2000). Despite the tension between these factions, physical confrontations were limited: in June 2000 police broke up a pro-Turabi rally by the NIF Youth Union; in September Turabi's supporters rioted in a number of Sudanese towns; and in October pro-Turabi student demonstrators were accused by the government of opening fire on the police. The government's response was to round up Turabi's supporters and break-up the pro-Turabi cells. Despite Turabi's popularity among large parts of the Islamist movement, the PDF was not identified as an actor in any of these actions.

Following the split with Turabi, Ali Karti and Bashir were careful to renew their call for PDF volunteers and their support for the path of 'jihad and martyrdom'. But the PDF would no longer be an autonomous institution. In the words of Bashir, 'We are calling for freedom in Sudan, but those who think that freedom is a call to anarchy and abuse to the martyrs are under illusion' (Republic of Sudan Radio, 1999). Shortly after, in 2000, the commander of the PDF, Brigadier Muhammad al-Amin Karrar, announced the formation of a specially trained PDF unit, the *Awwabin* ('those who are obedient'¹⁶), recruited from volunteers from all provinces (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2000).

On 20 February 2001 Turabi's opposition Popular National Congress Party signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the SPLA, which promised the South the right to self-determination in Sudan in exchange for joint opposition to Bashir. Turabi was imprisoned the next day. His split from the regime is reported to have had a seismic effect on the recruitment of NIF cadre and PDF

Box 1 Estimating PDF membership

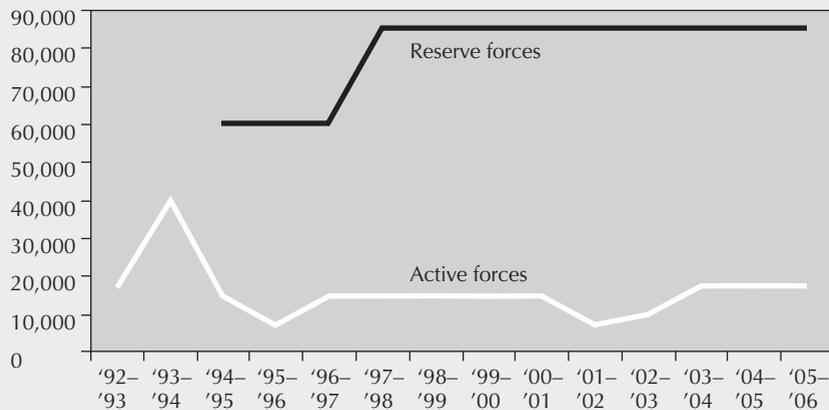
It is almost impossible to obtain reliable numbers for PDF membership. Available figures are frequently either estimates by external observers or dependent on single sources that are difficult to verify. As a result, numbers vary significantly and are often contradictory. The numbers provided in this chapter should not be taken as a statement of fact. They are a compilation of reported PDF numbers given in order to identify trends.

Although this reflects the limited information that is available on the PDF, it is also a reflection of the nature of paramilitary organizations in Sudan generally. PDF membership is by definition hard to define. Many recruits are involved in active service for only short periods, are recruited locally, and do not necessarily undergo centralized training. In addition, it is clear that even government officials were not aware of the number of PDF members in the 1990s. Several sources indicate that, chillingly, not even accurate PDF casualty numbers were maintained (for example, see Reuters, 1993). Finally, many PDF recruits, particularly in rural areas, left the organization without returning weapons, ammunition, or uniforms. In these areas the distinction between PDF recruits and members of other paramilitary organizations and tribal militias has historically been very blurred.¹⁸

Similarly, the location of PDF training camps is extremely difficult to identify. Many camps established in the 1990s are no longer operational having been disbanded since the CPA or after the decline in NIF influence over the PDF. It also seems that many PDF recruits are currently being trained inside existing military installations, making it impossible to distinguish between PDF training bases and military bases.

The only reliable open source for continuous accounting of active and reserve PDF membership is the annual *Military Balance* produced by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. The IISS compiles these numbers from a variety of sources, both internal and external to Sudan. Nonetheless, the figures are still estimates—for the reasons given above—and are presented here only to indicate trends in PDF recruitment.

Figure 1 Estimated active and reserve PDF members, 1992–2006



Source: *Military Balance* for relevant years, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London.

Note: Figures from 1992–93, 1993–94, and 1995–96 are averages of a range of numbers provided by the IISS.

troops. When Turabi, the sole globally recognized Islamist intellectual in the regime, made his separate peace with the SPLA, the credibility of the regime was thrown into question for many Islamists. In a secret letter of 2002 Ghazi Salah al-Din Attabani, the government's peace adviser, acknowledged that 'following the schism, the movement had lost its appeal to the students, women, and young professionals who had provided it with a steady stream of recruits for more than two decades' (ICG, 2003, p. 12). For the PDF, the effect was even more dangerous. Its casualties could no longer be clearly identified as martyrs who, having fallen doing their Islamic duty, were granted an elevated status in heaven. Now, instead, they were arguably only casualties in a political rather than religious war.¹⁷ The reduced legitimacy of the regime's Islamic appeal was further consolidated when several powerful tribal leaders, most notably the leaders of the Misseriya and the Rizeigat, began to discourage their youth from joining the militias.

Most Sudanese today perceive the PDF as a political rather than religious project and, moreover, as a project that contradicts the tolerant and diverse Islamic currents that constitute Sudanese religious life. This was particularly true of the intrusive symbolic propaganda surrounding it—none of which was indigenous to Sudan—such as the 'martyr's wedding', in which high officials and militiamen descended, uninvited, on the homes of individuals killed in combat to congratulate the family on the 'happiness God had conferred on them' (Hirst, 1997b). 🗨️

III. Recruitment, training, and capabilities

Article 11 of the Popular Defence Forces Act sets out conditions for those enlisting in the PDF. Recruits must be Sudanese nationals, over 16 years of age, physically fit, and have a record of good conduct. They are subject to military rules and courts, and may be exempt from service for medical, disciplinary, family, or security reasons.

A body known as ‘The Council of the Popular Defence Forces’ advises the commander-in-chief on all matters concerning the PDF. Specifically, this includes advice on the areas in which training camps should be established, the content of military training and education for PDF members, payment for members, and other issues relating to the Forces’ duties and activities (Government of Sudan, 1989, Article 10). Article 6 of the Act states that the functions of the PDF are to ‘assist the People’s Armed Forces and other regular forces whenever needed’, ‘contribute to the defence of the nation and help to deal with crises and public disasters’, and perform ‘any other task entrusted to them by the commander-in-chief himself or pursuant to a recommendation of the Council’.

The PDF is structured around a hierarchy of joint military and civilian coordinating committees, with local and state committees reporting to the national coordination council. These joint committees are formed of civilian PDF coordinators and military SAF officers, and are represented at the state security committees alongside police, military, and security commanders. Civilian PDF coordinators are responsible for the mobilization and selection of PDF volunteers according to recruitment targets established by the national and state committees. Once mobilized, the military command of active PDF units officially falls under the authority of the local SAF commanding officer. In practice, however, this division of military and mobilization roles is often opaque. The lowest ranks of the PDF’s coordination structure mesh closely with Sudan’s tribal administration system, and at the grass roots civilian coordinators are not paired with military commanders. As a result, tribal PDF recruits at this

level are able to operate autonomously of SAF command. This significantly weakens SAF authority over these recruits and has made the distinction between tribal and PDF forces extremely ambiguous.

PDF training has traditionally been held in closed residential camps established in urban and semi-urban areas or in existing military garrisons. Enlisted recruits receive 45–60 days of basic military and ideological training here. According to several PDF recruits, during the 1990s around half their time in the camps was dedicated to prayers, religious education, and lectures on the foundations of jihad. Military training was restricted to the use and maintenance of small arms and to basic military tactics. In some cases recruits have reportedly been selected to participate in more advanced artillery or tank training, though the number to have done so is unknown.

Among rural populations even the most basic training has often been dispensed with. Large numbers of tribal PDF are already accustomed to the use of small arms and some also have military experience in the SAF. A high-ranking commander described PDF training and selection during the 2004–05 investigation by the UN commission of inquiry into events in Darfur:

Training is done through central barracks and local barracks in each state. A person comes forward to volunteer. We first determine whether training is needed or not. We then do a security check and a medical check. We compose a list and give it to the military. This is done at both levels—Khartoum and state or local level. We give basic training (for example, on the use of weapons, discipline. . .), which can take two weeks or so, depending on the individual. (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, 2005, p. 28)

It is also widely believed that the PDF has recruited child soldiers, although this contravenes articles within the Popular Defence Forces Act. In an NGO survey conducted in 2000, PDF officials interviewed noted that although the minimum age of recruits was legally prescribed at 16 years old, confirmation of age was left to tribal leaders (El-Obeid, 2000, p. 15). In the same report, 50 per cent of the tribal leaders interviewed said that no stringent criteria were enforced to avoid child recruitment into the PDF. The overriding criterion used for selection was a readiness to come forward.

Training was obligatory for all eligible Sudanese until 1997, but recruitment for combat has been organized in periodic calls for volunteers through the use of radio stations, posters, megaphones on pick-up trucks, and television announcements, as well as at the end of every training camp. Nonetheless, ‘forced volunteering’ has been reported and there have been cases of PDF recruits taken directly from training camps to airports or to garrisons in combat areas. The number of such cases appears to have diminished significantly since the mid-1990s. While the elite battalions of the PDF serve for longer periods, most volunteers in the regular forces serve for three months, or a little more, before being rotated back to their place of residence to resume their previous employment or studies.

Interviews with trainees and research on the recruitment of PDF combatants from the Khartoum University training camps indicate that, on average, only around five per cent of trained recruits volunteered for combat in the South. According to a survey undertaken by a Sudanese researcher of 300 students at five universities, 25.3 per cent of those interviewed were willing to participate in ‘moderate Islamic action’, but only five per cent volunteered militant action, including in the PDF ‘Jihad Convoys’ (Khalafalla, 2004, p. 187).

For its first year of operations PDF logistics and supplies were provided directly by the regular army. As the PDF grew in size, however, it established an independent purchasing and supplies department in Khartoum, and was given an autonomous budget to be controlled by the commander general. The PDF’s access to military supplies is still believed to be controlled by an executive that is independent of the regular armed forces. Since the early 1990s an undefined proportion of the PDF’s budget has reportedly come from business interests and investments owned directly by the PDF and by Islamic organizations affiliated to it. According to the International Crisis Group, these companies can be divided into three groups. The first comprises companies through which NCP officials generate income using the names of NCP loyalists in order to disguise ownership. The second encompasses those run directly by the National Security Agency, and known in Sudan as *al-Sharikat al-Amniya* (security companies). The third category consists of companies affiliated with Islamic charities controlled by the NCP and directed to serve its political and security agendas (ICG, 2006, pp. 7–8).

During a privatization drive between 1992 and 1994, the Martyr’s Organization—an Islamic parastatal charity affiliated to the PDF—took possession of several profitable state-owned companies. In Damazin, Blue Nile province, agricultural land was set aside for the families of PDF veterans (de Waal and Salaam, 2004, p. 91). Other parastatal organizations, such as the Diwan al-Zakat, the Shari’a Support Fund, the Islamic Pious Endowments Organization, and the Social Solidarity Fund, were granted the right to collect religious *zakat* (alms) contributions that were then distributed to various Islamic projects, including the PDF (de Waal and Salaam, 2004, p. 92). Another, less important, source of funding is private donations to the PDF from devout individuals. While the bulk of these donations have come from wealthy individuals or corporations, significant symbolic value has been placed on the donations from poor Sudanese. Much lauded, for example, were the ‘Martyr’s Lunchboxes’ (the *zaad mujahid*, ‘ascetic’s charge’), which contained dry rations packed by devout women and sent to PDF volunteers at the front.

Since the 2000 split between Turabi and the presidency, it is believed that the decline in PDF recruitment has been matched by a decline in material donations. As a result, the PDF is probably more heavily dependent than before on its autonomous funding networks and the resources channelled to it by the inner circle of the NCP. In an appeal in 2004 the PDF coordinator Kamal al-Ibrahim requested ‘money and other types of assistance for the mujahideen’ from grand institutions and companies. A week later the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Tropical Diseases Hospital donated a convoy of food. 🍲

IV. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

On 4–5 December 2006 the PDF held its 17th anniversary celebration in al-Gadarif state. The main event was the graduation of 1,000 mujahid from the state's municipalities. This celebration met with strong opposition from SPLM officials. SPLM leader Deng Alor told *Al-Ayyam* newspaper that 'according to the clauses of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the PDF should be disbanded. Organizing celebrations for it is a clear violation of the agreement.' At the same time, Sulayman Hamid, of the opposition National Democratic Movement, questioned the minister of defence about the status of the PDF, observing that 'as the NCP finances the PDF and organizes celebrations where the highest-ranking state officials participate, it would be better to merge it with the armed forces' (*Al-Ayyam*, 2006). Despite these objections, and the undertakings made before the signing of the CPA, there is every indication at the time of writing that the PDF will not be dissolved in the near future. The PDF has been active in the conflict in three states of Darfur and is unlikely to be disbanded before the 2011 referendum on southern independence.

Despite the concerns mentioned above, at the end of 2006 the GoS gave the UN unit for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) the first indication of the numbers and categories of combatants who would enter into the first stages of demobilization in 2007. Of the total number of 55,000 given by the GoS, 17,000 were members of the PDF (Sudan UN DDR Newsletter, 2006, p. 1). This announcement officially began the practical implementation phase of the DDR Unit.

A second important issue emerging since the CPA is the involvement of tribal groups or communities previously affiliated with the PDF in tensions surrounding the distribution of benefits and representation. Underlying Sudan's many conflicts are basic issues of poverty, lack of development, and political marginalization that have not been resolved by the CPA. Particularly in the North, where the myth of an Arab and Islamic unity is crumbling more every day, ex-PDF elements are mobilizing as the result of their perceived margin-

alization from the recovery process and their exploitation by central government during the post-war period. The most important of these elements is the core constituency of the rural PDF in South Kordofan, where Misseriya nomads have become deeply disaffected with the national government and are active in the growing tensions along the border with South Darfur.

Darfur

In several candid interviews granted to Western media in July 2004, Janjaweed leader Musa Hilal described the PDF as one of several paramilitary structures, alongside the Border Intelligence Guards and the Central Police Reserve, that had recruited among the tribal groups of Darfur.¹⁹ While the Border Intelligence Guards appear to have recruited the militia forces most closely affiliated to the government's military strategy, the PDF has been active in recruiting tribal and auxiliary forces. Several hundred militiamen, widely identified as Janjaweed, accompany SAF strikes on rebel forces in trucks or on horseback or camels. They attack civilian villages along the route, loot cattle and possessions, burn houses, and sometimes kill, rape, or abduct those they catch. According to Amnesty International:

The inhabitants of the villages are almost without exception from ethnic groups identified as 'African', their ethnicity linking them to the [rebel] armed groups . . . The wanton burning of grain stores, harvest crops and homes, the looting of herds of cattle and sheep, appear to leave inhabitants no option but to flee without hope of return. (Amnesty International, 2006)

Following the attack on el-Fasher in 2003 the GoS withdrew police and regular forces to Darfur's urban areas and began selectively to recruit members of pro-government tribal groups into an array of paramilitary forces, including the PDF. As with previous conflicts, the PDF appears to have recruited tribal auxiliaries to restrict rebel movements and to provide support for SAF regular forces in rural areas. Many of these forces have been embroiled in brutal conflicts and land grabs with neighbouring tribes.

As with previous deployments of the PDF, the distinction between PDF and non-PDF forces is blurred. In March 2004 several hundred PDF members were

reportedly recruited in Nyala, South Darfur. These groups received weapons but little or no training (IRIN, 2004). The PDF has acted to recruit tribal forces in cooperation with tribal authorities as a means of patrolling tribal land and defending it from rebel interference (Sherwell, 2004; Vasagar, 2004). This activity appears to be at least partly differentiated from that of the Border Intelligence Guard, a mobile force that is marauding through Darfur in an uneasy alliance with the state. There is no doubt, however, that PDF recruits have participated in massive displacements of the population and been involved in war crimes against civilians. Ali Kushayb, whom the ICC is seeking to indict on charges of war crimes, has been identified as the PDF coordinator of Wadi Salih locality.

In 2004 the GoS stated that it would cut the official size of the PDF forces in Darfur by 30 per cent (AP, 2004). Joint Verification Missions organized by the UN have monitored the disarmament of 300 PDF members in Geneina, West Darfur, and 157 PDF members in Kass, South Darfur (UNSC, 2004, p. 5). PDF recruits handed over rifles, machine guns, and other light weapons in ceremonies observed by foreign dignitaries. The commander of the Kass unit was careful to stress that: 'We did not arm them for ethnic cleansing or genocide but so that they might maintain security and stability in their areas . . . There are no outlaws or Janjaweed among them' (El-Bagir, 2004).

South Sudan and the Transitional Areas

At present the number and locations of PDF units in the South are unclear. The SAF has pulled back from the southernmost states and, in most cases, their departure signalled the withdrawal of the PDF. In September 2006, for example, the PDF suspended all activity in the province of Equatoria because, according to its deputy coordinator general, there was a lack of cooperation from the authorities in the state and lack of a conducive environment (*Al-Intibaha*, 2006, p. 4). Although reports have indicated problems with the disarmament of southern PDF, in most cases these have turned out either to be members of communal militias, such as the White Army in Upper Nile,²⁰ or members of independent movements previously allied to the government, such as the South Sudan Defence Force.

The PDF is currently reported to have maintained a strong presence in oil-rich areas and the Transitional Areas, with large numbers of formal PDF troops concentrated in Raga (West Bahr El Ghazal) and Renk (Upper Nile). All government forces in these areas are reportedly reinforced by PDF troops. The majority of these are assumed to be reserve forces that can be rapidly mobilized in the event of any conflict (*The Economist*, 2006). Both areas are currently suffering from complex political and local tensions over the future demarcation of the boundary between North and South Sudan. PDF support in these areas comes largely from the Arab nomadic communities—the Misseriya in Renk and the Rizeigat in Raga—who enter these areas during their dry season migration. These groups are deeply suspicious of the demarcation of the boundary determined by the CPA.²¹ The PDF does not possess the organizational coherence to exert effective authority over the lowest ranks of civilian coordinators, who have largely been selected from the tribal leaders in each area. As a result, an indeterminate number of PDF units are believed to be controlled by local leaders and to be mobilized around local issues. These units represent a deeply destabilizing force in the Transitional Areas.

North Sudan

The PDF's lack of central authority over its grassroots recruits has created problems in North Sudan as well. As disillusionment with the CPA grows, ex-militia combatants risk becoming a serious, armed threat to stability and livelihoods. Since December 2006 a large body of ex-PDF members in South Kordofan have shown signs of unrest. The group, largely recruited from the Misseriya, accuses the government of breaking promises over the distribution of jobs and development aid—promises that were made in return for their participation in the militia. Although this group, reportedly named the 'Debad', does not represent the PDF, links between it and ex-PDF units of this area have been repeatedly stated. It is important to note, then, that this potentially well armed, politically connected group is not so much a legacy of the North–South conflict as a consequence of the failures of the recovery process. Since 2006 groups such as this one have maintained fluid and opaque relationships with both the SPLA and the SAF, and are now showing signs of operating

independently. Recent attacks by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) across the South Darfur border into the Abyei area have possibly been carried out with support from these forces, whose primary area of operations is focused on Debad town. They have a real capacity to disrupt the security provisions of the CPA unilaterally, and without the official support of either the NCP or the SPLA.

A second threat from the PDF in the North is interference of a more overtly political nature. Because of its extremely limited popular support, the NCP has become increasingly dependent for its survival on a small clique of security and ideological hardliners. This clique is sceptical about the CPA and vehemently rejects international involvement in a resolution of the Darfur war. Although a relatively small element of the security apparatus, this hardline group remains a mobilized force within the PDF cadre. In the summer of 2003, during the Naivasha negotiations between the GoS and the SPLM/A, the PDF publicly warned the government against abandoning Shari'a in the peace talks (*Al-Sahafa*, 2003). In late June 2006 the PDF organized a three-day march to demonstrate its willingness to fight any imposed UN mission in Sudan. One of the preconditions for political reform in Sudan is the genuine disbandment of the PDF or its full integration into the SAF. Such a step, however, is likely to provoke broad opposition from regime hardliners and the PDF cadre alike. Back in 2003 the PDF demonstrated in Khartoum following internationally reported rumours of its impending disbandment (DPA, 2003). Although this clique is unlikely to resort to violence, the danger of such a stance is that their opposition to democratic reform is steadily eroding the stability of the regime in Sudan, leading to overt tensions with both the moderate figures in the NCP and the SPLM members of the GoS. 📌

V. Conclusion

Unlike the early 1990s the PDF is no longer a praetorian force for the NCP. PDF concentrations remain operational in areas of active conflict, such as Darfur, but in most other regions they are inactive reserve forces.

The PDF remains a threat to the CPA, however, not as an active spoiler or military danger but as a physical legacy of the disastrous policies of the Islamist regime during the 1990s. Today, as a reserve force to the SAF, the regular battalions of the PDF can be relied on to follow the orders of Khartoum. But the PDF's involvement in the widespread distribution of weapons and military training to tribal militias, its mobilization of a militant Islamism opposed to Western involvement in national affairs, and its parastatal relationship that bridges the divide between the state and the NCP are all problems that must be addressed.

Most importantly, the PDF has been the primary institution responsible for the distribution of weapons to groups with local grievances in North Sudan. Many of these grievances have not been addressed by the CPA and today represent the real vectors of local insecurity and of future armed rebellion. If real political democratization is to be successful in this region, genuine progress towards recovery and democratization of the control of the armed forces is necessary. 📌

Endnotes

- 1 These other armed groups can be divided into three categories based on their level of integration into the strategic control of the central government. The first category consists of legally constituted paramilitary formations, such as the Popular Defence Forces, the Central Reserve Police, and the Border Intelligence Guards. The second consists of allied but autonomous armed groups created by political and ethnic factionalism in Sudan's rebel movements—for example, the South Sudan Defence Forces or the Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Minni Minawi. The third category consists of semi-autonomous communal militia that accept weaponry from the government but whose loyalties are local, for example, the Meidob forces of north-east Darfur
- 2 In February 1996 the younger brother of President Omar al-Bashir, Othman Hasan al-Bashir, was killed along with three other high-ranking mujahideen while fighting for the PDF in the battle for Labanok around Malakal. In 2000 Mohammed Ahmad Umar, after being dismissed as minister of labour, volunteered and died in the service of the PDF.
- 3 The notion and vocabulary of tribe in both administrative and anthropological usage in Sudan are political rather than cultural. The concept of tribe used throughout this paper refers to the *administrative* division of Sudan's population established originally by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium and maintained by successive governments after independence.
- 4 The formation of tribal militias during the 1980s was more widespread than the presentation here suggests. Militias were known to be operating among the Baggara (Misseriya and Rizeigat) of South Kordofan and South Darfur, the Fertit of Bahr El Ghazal, the Fur of South Darfur, the Rufa'a of White Nile, and the Toposa and Mandari in Equatoria. However, the actual numbers and origins of these militias are unclear, and therefore the focus here is on the Baggara militias, about which more information is available. Not all these militias have been allied with the government: the Fur militia, for example, was established to force Arab nomads onto new pastures in Darfur in the 1980s and 1990s, and was actively opposed by the government (Salih and Harir, 1994, p. 186).
- 5 Interview with Major General Burma Fadllallah Nasir, ex-lieutenant general and Umma party member, Khartoum, 21 February 2003.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Despite the importance of Abu Giseissa, the author could obtain almost no information on his background or subsequent actions. According to one interviewee, he was originally a professor at a Sudanese university. In September 1993 he became a leading government negotiator and shortly after died in an air crash in southern Sudan, together with his negotiating team. Some have speculated that Giseissa was killed because he had overstepped his mandate by signing a document with Lam Akol that promised self-determination to the South for the first time.
- 8 Interview with a high-ranking member of the Popular National Congress, Khartoum, 2 February 2003.
- 9 The 1989 coup was conducted by a small group of around 40 officers backed by 200–300 soldiers. It succeeded only by declaring that the seizure of power had been ordered by the high

command. The bulk of the army, despite its dissatisfaction with the status quo, was professionally inclined against an Islamist regime, and an estimated four further coup attempts took place in less than a year. Units were deployed to the Manshiyyah district (close to Dr Hassan al-Turabi's house), the Nuqtat Kawbar neighbourhood, the surrounding areas of the officer's club, and the Armed Forces' Kubri neighbourhood.

- 10 Interview with a high-ranking member of the Presidential Peace Advisory, Khartoum, 12 January 2003.
- 11 Interview with an ex-SAF private, Khartoum, 1 February 2002.
- 12 Interview with a retired SAF officer, Khartoum, 16 January 2003; interview with a PDF combat recruit, Khartoum, 28 January 2003.
- 13 For an interesting discussion of the relationship between the military and the PDF see Roland Marchal's (1995, pp. 25–29) excellent sociological analysis of the National Islamic Front regime.
- 14 Interview with a high-ranking member of the Popular National Congress, Khartoum, 2 February 2003.
- 15 Established in 1993, following the dissolution of the Revolutionary Command Council, the political system referred to here was one of the foundations of the NIF's power in Sudan. The NIF was technically dissolved alongside other political parties in 1989, but its networks and sympathizers permeated a so-called non-party direct democracy constructed around a pyramid of popular congresses and a semi-elected national assembly. As one astute journalist notes, this system, and the numerous parastatal organizations such as the PDF designed to duplicate and dominate official ones, have allowed the NIF, and today the NCP, to rule through an 'invisible masonry' that permeates state institutions and society (cf. Hirst, 1997).
- 16 Author's translation.
- 17 Interview with two ex-PDF student trainees, Khartoum, 4 January 2003.
- 18 Highly indicative of this problem is a dispute over the number of PDF personnel eligible for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). While the SAF has claimed that the PDF contains only 80,000 members eligible for the DDR scheme, the civilian coordinating body of the PDF has reportedly counted around three million members. Similarly, at the local level significant disagreements exist between SAF estimates of PDF weaponry and the PDF civilian coordination's estimates of weaponry. Interview with international expert Khartoum, 22 March 2007.
- 19 See, for example, Vasagar (2004) and Wax (2004).
- 20 For more on the White Army, see Young (2007a).
- 21 For an analysis of the tensions surrounding border demarcation, see Young (2007b).

Bibliography

- AFP (Agence France-Press). 1997. 'Deaths confirmed.' 23 October.
- . 2000. 'Sudanese leadership calls for calm after ruling party leader ousted.' 7 May.
- Africa Confidential*. 1998. 'Marking Time: The Government is Buying Time, the Opposition is Wasting it and the Human Costs are Mounting.' 1 May.
- Al-Ayyam* (Khartoum). 2006. 'SPLM brands PDF Anniversary Celebrations as a Violation of the Peace Agreement.' In United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), *Media Monitoring Report* of 14 November.
- Amnesty International. 2006. 'Sudan Government's Solution: Janjaweed Unleashed in Darfur.' 25 November. <<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR540782006?open&of=ENG-SDN>>.
- AP (Associated Press). 2004. 'Sudan to cut paramilitary forces in Darfur.' 23 August.
- El-Bagir, Nima. 2004. 'Rebels Abduct Children in Sudan's Darfur.' PANA Press. 28 August.
- BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) Monitoring, reporting Sudanese radio. 1997. 'President issues decree to establish mobilisation body.' BBC Monitoring oD1CED38EAC77695 of 26 January.
- Beck, Kurt. 1998. 'Tribesmen, Townspeople and the Struggle Over a Proper Lifestyle in Northern Kordofan.' In Endre Stiansen and Michael Kevane, eds. *Kordofan Invaded: Peripheral Incorporation and Social Transformation in Islamic Africa*. London: Brill.
- Bradbury, Mark. 1998. 'Sudan: International Responses to War in the Nuba Mountains.' *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 25, No. 77. September, pp. 463–74.
- DPA (Deutsche Press Agentur). 2003. 'PDF parades in Khartoum in favour of holy war.' 27 June.
- The Economist* (London). 2006. 'Glittering Towers in a War Zone.' 9 December.
- Flint, Julie. 1993a. 'Even if They Have to Beat Schoolboys Senseless the Rulers of Sudan Will Have Their New Society.' *Independent* (London). 2 May.
- . 1993b. 'Islam on the Warpath in North Africa.' *Guardian* (London). 24 April.
- Government of Sudan. 1989. Popular Defence Forces Act.
- Hirst, David. 1997. 'Behind the Veil of Sudan's Theocracy.' *Guardian* (London). 27 May.
- Human Rights Watch. 1996. *Behind the Red Line: Political Repression in Sudan*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- ICG (International Crisis Group). 2003. 'Sudan: Towards an Incomplete Peace.' *ICG Africa Report*, No. 73. December. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2416&l=1>>.
- . 2006. 'Getting the UN into Darfur.' *ICG Africa Briefing*, No. 43. October. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4442>>.
- Indian Ocean Newsletter* (Paris). 1992. 'Hezbollah Man For Sudan.' 13 June.
- . 1993a. 'Iranian Cooperation.' 6 February.
- . 1993b. 'Soldiers Out, Militiamen In.' 20 November.
- International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur. 2005. 'Report to the United Nations Secretary-General.' 25 January. <<http://www.ohchr.org/english/docs/darfurreport.doc>>.
- International Eminent Persons Group. 2002. 'Slavery, Abduction, and Forced Servitude.' Khartoum, 22 May. <<http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rpt/2002/10445.htm>>.
- International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). *Military Balance*. For years 1992–2006. London: IISS.
- Al-Intibaha* (Khartoum). 2006. 'PDF Suspends Activity in Equatoria.' In United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), *Media Monitoring Report* of 24 September.
- IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Network). 2004. 'Militias ravage Darfur in gangs of hundreds.' 10 March. <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=48990>>.
- Johnson, Douglas. 1988. 'The Southern Sudan.' Report No. 78. London: Minority Rights Group.
- Keen, David. 1994. *The Benefits of Famine: A Political-Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Khalafalla, Khalid. 2004. *Political Islam in Sudan: Political Opportunities and Mobilising Structures*. Ph.D. Philosophischen Fakultät, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn.
- Kok, Peter. 1993. 'Die Jihad Konzeption der Sudanesischen Armee zur Lösung des Bürgerkrieges.' *Wuqûf*, Vol. 7, No. 8, pp. 167–88.
- Lesch, Ann. 1998. *The Sudan: Contested National Identities*. Bloomington and Oxford: Indiana University Press and James Currey.
- Marchal, Roland. 1995. 'Éléments d'une Sociologie du Front National Islamique Soudanais.' *Les Etudes du CERI*. No. 5. Paris: Centres d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales.
- al-Mubarak, Khalid. 2001. *Turabi's 'Islamist' Venture: Failure and Implications*. Cairo: El Dar El-Thaqafia.
- El-Obeid, Hussain. 2000. *Small Arms Survey and Investigation of the Child Soldier*. Khartoum: Centre for Humanitarian Affairs Resource Management (CHARM).
- Radio of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. 1990. 'Rebels report army replaced by NIF militias.' 22 November. Central Intelligence Agency Foreign Broadcast Information Service. NES-90-226, 23 November.
- Rai al-Amm* (Khartoum). 2000. 'Ousted Speaker Turabi Warns Government of People Power.' 10 March. BBC Monitoring oE32B7B8911152AA of 10 March.
- Republic of Sudan Radio. 1999. 'President pledges to continue jihad, warns against anarchy.' 18 October. BBC Monitoring oE03178EAC6272AA of 18 October.
- Reuters. 1993. 'Big turnout in northern Sudan to fight in South.' 27 June.
- . 2004. 'Disarmed militiamen say they're not Janjaweed.' 27 August.
- Al-Sahafa* (Khartoum). 2003. 'Popular Defence Forces Warn Against Abandoning Shari'ah in Talks.' 27 June.
- Salih, Kamal. 1989. *The Kordofan Region of the Sudan, 1980–1985: A Case Study of the Problems of Regionalism*. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press.
- Salih, Mohamed and Sharif Harir. 1994. 'Tribal Militias: The Genesis of National Disintegration.' In Sharif Harir and Terje Tvedt, eds. *Short-cut to Decay: The Case of Sudan*. Uppsala: Nord Afrikainstitutet.
- Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London). 2000. 'President Bashir Comments on Jihad, Popular Defence Unit Set Up.' 27 January. BBC Monitoring oE248B8AE6A600CA of 27 January.
- Sherwell, Philip. 2004. 'Tribal Leader Accused Over Darfur Says He was Acting for Government.' *Sunday Telegraph* (London). 22 August.
- Sudan UN DDR Newsletter*. 2006. 'Joint Operation and Planning Workshop NSDDRC–SAF–UN DDR Unit.' December.
- Suliman, Mohammed. 2002. 'Resource Access, Identity, and Armed Conflict in the Nuba Mountains, Southern Sudan.' In Gunther Baechler et al., eds. *Transformation of Resource Conflicts: Approach and Instruments*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Suna News Agency. 1998. 'Sudan: Student conscripts riot at Aylafun military training camp.' 12 June. BBC Monitoring oD614F95C9B765F5 of 13 June.

- UNSC (United Nations Security Council). 2004. *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraphs 6 and 13 to 16 of Security Council Resolution 1556 (2004)*. S/2004/703 of 30 August. <<http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/1992470.html>>.
- Vasagar, Jeenan. 2004. 'Militia Chief Scorns Slaughter Charge.' *Guardian* (London). 16 July.
- de Waal, Alex and Abdel Salaam. 2004. *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Wax, Emily. 2004. 'In Sudan "a Big Sheik" Roams Free.' *Washington Post*. 18 July.
- Young, John. 2007a. *The White Army: An Introduction and Overview*. HSBA Working Paper No. 5. Geneva: Small Arms Survey.
- . 2007b. *Emerging North–South Tensions and the Prospects of a Return to War*. HSBA Working Paper No. 7. Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

HSBA publications

Sudan Issue Briefs

Number 1, September 2006

Persistent threats: widespread human insecurity in Lakes State, South Sudan, since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (also available in Arabic)

Number 2, October 2006

Armed groups in Sudan: the South Sudan Defence Forces in the aftermath of the Juba Declaration (also available in Arabic)

Number 3 (2nd edition), November 2006–February 2007

Anatomy of civilian disarmament in Jonglei State: recent experiences and implications (also available in Arabic)

Number 4, December 2006

No dialogue, no commitment: the perils of deadline diplomacy for Darfur (also available in Arabic)

Number 5, January 2007

A widening war around Sudan: the proliferation of armed groups in the Central African Republic (also available in Arabic and French)

Number 6, April 2007

The militarization of Sudan: a preliminary review of arms flows and holdings

Number 7, July 2007

Arms, oil, and Darfur: the evolution of relations between China and Sudan

Number 8, September 2007

Responses to pastoral wars: a review of violence reduction efforts in Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya

Sudan Working Papers

Number 1, November 2006

The South Sudan Defence Forces in the Wake of the Juba Declaration,

by John Young

Number 2, February 2007

Violence and Victimization in South Sudan: Lakes State in the Post-CPA period,

by Richard Garfield

Number 3, May 2007

The Eastern Front and the Struggle against Marginalization, by John Young

Number 4, May 2007

Border in Name Only: Arms Trafficking and Armed Groups at the DRC–Sudan Border,

by Joshua Marks

Number 5, June 2007

The White Army: An Introduction and Overview, by John Young

Number 6, July 2007

Divided They Fall: The Fragmentation of Darfur's Rebel Groups,

by Victor Tanner and Jérôme Tubiana

Number 7, July 2007

Emerging North–South Tensions and the Prospects for a Return to War,

by John Young

Number 8, September 2007

The Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan: A History and Overview,

by Mareike Schomerus

Number 9, November 2007

Armed Groups Along Sudan's Eastern Frontier: An Overview and Analysis,

by John Young

Small Arms Survey Occasional Papers

- 1 *Re-Armament in Sierra Leone: One Year After the Lomé Peace Agreement,* by Eric Berman, December 2000
- 2 *Removing Small Arms from Society: A Review of Weapons Collection and Destruction Programmes,* by Sami Faltas, Glenn McDonald, and Camilla Waszink, July 2001
- 3 *Legal Controls on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Asia,* by Katherine Kramer (with Nonviolence International Southeast Asia), July 2001
- 4 *Shining a Light on Small Arms Exports: The Record of State Transparency,* by Maria Haug, Martin Langvandslien, Lora Lumpe, and Nic Marsh (with NISAT), January 2002
- 5 *Stray Bullets: The Impact of Small Arms Misuse in Central America,* by William Godnick, with Robert Muggah and Camilla Waszink, November 2002
- 6 *Politics from the Barrel of a Gun: Small Arms Proliferation and Conflict in the Republic of Georgia,* by Spyros Demetriou, November 2002
- 7 *Making Global Public Policy: The Case of Small Arms and Light Weapons,* by Edward Laurance and Rachel Stohl, December 2002
- 8 *Small Arms in the Pacific,* by Philip Alpers and Conor Twyford, March 2003
- 9 *Demand, Stockpiles, and Social Controls: Small Arms in Yemen,* by Derek B. Miller, May 2003
- 10 *Beyond the Kalashnikov: Small Arms Production, Exports, and Stockpiles in the Russian Federation,* by Maxim Pyadushkin, with Maria Haug and Anna Matveeva, August 2003
- 11 *In the Shadow of a Cease-fire: The Impacts of Small Arms Availability and Misuse in Sri Lanka,* by Chris Smith, October 2003
- 12 *Small Arms in Kyrgyzstan: Post-revolutionary Proliferation,* by S. Neil MacFarlane and Stina Torjesen, March 2007, ISBN 2-8288-0076-8 (first printed as *Kyrgyzstan: A Small Arms Anomaly in Central Asia?*, by S. Neil MacFarlane and Stina Torjesen, February 2004)

- 13 *Small Arms and Light Weapons Production in Eastern, Central, and Southeast Europe*, by Yudit Kiss, October 2004, ISBN 2-8288-0057-1
- 14 *Securing Haiti's Transition: Reviewing Human Insecurity and the Prospects for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration*, by Robert Muggah, October 2005, updated, ISBN 2-8288-0066-0
- 15 *Silencing Guns: Local Perspectives on Small Arms and Armed Violence in Rural South Pacific Islands Communities*, edited by Emile LeBrun and Robert Muggah, June 2005, ISBN 2-8288-0064-4
- 16 *Behind a Veil of Secrecy: Military Small Arms and Light Weapons Production in Western Europe*, by Reinhilde Weidacher, November 2005, ISBN 2-8288-0065-2
- 17 *Tajikistan's Road to Stability: Reduction in Small Arms Proliferation and Remaining Challenges*, by Stina Torjesen, Christina Wille, and S. Neil MacFarlane, November 2005, ISBN 2-8288-0067-9
- 18 *Demanding Attention: Addressing the Dynamics of Small Arms Demand*, by David Atwood, Anne-Kathrin Glatz, and Robert Muggah, January 2006, ISBN 2-8288-0069-5
- 19 *A Guide to the US Small Arms Market, Industry, and Exports, 1998–2004*, by Tamar Gabelnick, Maria Haug, and Lora Lumpe, September 2006, ISBN 2-8288-0071-7

Small Arms Survey Special Reports

- 1 *Humanitarianism Under Threat: The Humanitarian Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons*, by Robert Muggah and Eric Berman, commissioned by the Reference Group on Small Arms of the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee, July 2001
- 2 *Small Arms Availability, Trade, and Impacts in the Republic of Congo*, by Spyros Demetriou, Robert Muggah, and Ian Biddle, commissioned by the International Organisation for Migration and the UN Development Programme, April 2002
- 3 *Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo*, by Anna Khakee and Nicolas Florquin, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme, June 2003
- 4 *A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-conflict Macedonia*, by Suzette R. Grillot, Wolf-Christian Paes, Hans Risser, and Shelly O. Stoneman, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme, and co-published by the Bonn International Center for Conversion, SEESAC in Belgrade, and the Small Arms Survey, June 2004, ISBN 2-8288-0056-3
- 5 *Gun-running in Papua New Guinea: From Arrows to Assault Weapons in the Southern Highlands*, by Philip Alpers, June 2005, ISBN 2-8288-0062-8
- 6 *La République Centrafricaine: Une étude de cas sur les armes légères et les conflits*, by Eric G. Berman, published with financial support from UNDP, July 2006, ISBN 2-8288-0073-3
- 7 *Small Arms in Burundi: Disarming the Civilian Population in Peacetime*, by Stéphanie Pézard and Nicolas Florquin, co-published with Ligue Iteka with support from UNDP–Burundi

Small Arms Survey Book Series

Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region, edited by Nicolas Florquin and Eric G. Berman, May 2005, ISBN 2-8288-0063-6

Armés mais désœuvrés: Groupes armés, armes légères et sécurité humaine dans la région de la CEDEAO, edited by Nicolas Florquin and Eric Berman, co-published with GRIP, March 2006, ISBN 2-87291-023-9

Targeting Ammunition: A Primer, edited by Stéphanie Pézard and Holger Anders, co-published with CICS, GRIP, SEESAC, and Viva Rio, June 2006, ISBN 2-8288-0072-5

No Refuge: The Crisis of Refugee Militarization in Africa, edited by Robert Muggah, co-published with BICC, published by Zed Books, July 2006, ISBN 1-84277-789-0