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Sudan: The Costs of Nonalignment



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An Intelligence Assessment

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Sudan: The Costs of Nonalignment



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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted] Office of
Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, with a
contribution from [redacted] Office of
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**Sudan: The Costs
of Nonalignment**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 15 February 1988
was used in this report.*

Sudanese Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi's shift from former President Nimeiri's pro-Western foreign policy to a nonaligned stance has had significant costs:

- Externally, Sudan's traditional backers have reduced their military and economic aid.
- Internally, the overall decline in foreign aid has given Sadiq's critics another issue to challenge his governance.

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Nonetheless, Sadiq almost certainly will persist in trying to pursue his independent foreign policy. He views a nonaligned, "good neighbor" policy as the best way to promote Sudan's security and his own survival. He feels a personal debt to Libyan leader Qadhafi and hopes to avoid turning him into an enemy, loathes the Egyptians, and wants to keep some distance from the United States. As aid from Sudan's traditional allies has diminished, Sadiq has sought assistance from Libya and Iran.

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Sadiq's nonaligned course will have adverse consequences for Sudan. Internal political divisions are likely to deepen. Foreign aid from moderate oil-producing Arabs will become more problematic. Libyan ambitions will threaten security in Khartoum and Sudan's sovereignty over the western Darfur Region. Iranian aid could transform political rivalries into armed disputes between party militias and is likely to stiffen the resolve of John Garang's anti-Islamic southern insurgent Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army to continue fighting.

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The destabilizing consequences of Sadiq's nonaligned policy will adversely affect US regional interests. A heightened Libyan and Iranian presence in Khartoum most likely will raise the security threat to US and allied diplomats there. That presence also stands a good chance of eliciting more African support for Garang's rebels and polarizing the Horn of Africa.

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If Sadiq is overthrown in the next year, there is a slightly better-than-even chance that a successor military regime would steer a more pro-Western course, at least initially. Sudan would press for more US aid, but, if disappointed in Western and moderate Arab support, Khartoum might intensify its overtures to regional radical governments for assistance. Through this whole process, US requests for cooperation in addressing the problems of drought and famine-stricken populations will get little attention from regional governments concerned primarily with surviving the various insurgencies and trying to impose their will on their neighbors.

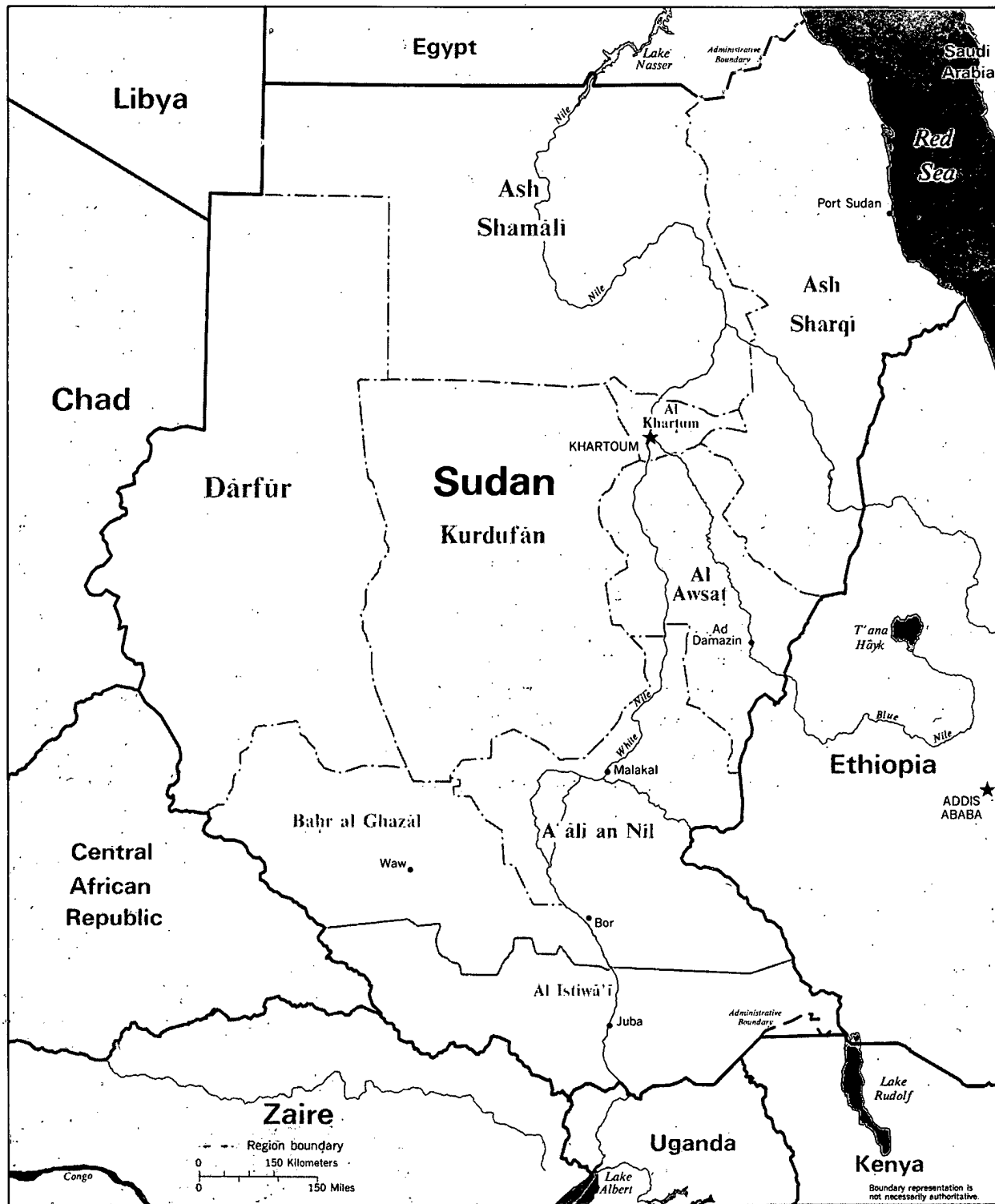
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Sudan: The Costs of Nonalignment

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Since the overthrow of Sudan's President Nimeiri in April 1985, his successors—the Transitional Military Council in 1985-86 and Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi since the 1986 election—have methodically changed longstanding Sudanese foreign policy positions:

- Instead of joining the United States and Egypt as a partner on regional security issues, Sadiq has sought security in “good neighbor” relations with all of the countries in the region.
- Instead of opposing regional radicals, Libya and Iran, Sadiq has accommodated them.
- Instead of depending on the United States and regional friends for aid, Sadiq has sought help from all camps.



Sadiq al-Mahdi

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Recasting the Nimeiri Legacy: Sadiq's Rationale

We believe Sadiq sees the departure from Nimeiri's main policy direction during his last eight years in power—aligning Sudan almost exclusively with the United States, Egypt, and other moderate Arabs—as a way to exploit popular antipathy toward Nimeiri. Sadiq claims publicly that Nimeiri, who ruled Sudan from May 1969 until April 1985, was overthrown not just because he became increasingly dictatorial, but because the Sudanese linked their mounting troubles to his foreign policies:



John Garang

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- Sudan's security deteriorated under Nimeiri. Libya's bombing raid on Omdurman, a section of the capital, in 1984 and the reemergence and successes of southern Sudanese insurgents—now called the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)—led by John Garang showed Nimeiri's weakness, despite military aid from the United States and Egypt.
- Sudan's economy deteriorated over the last decade of Nimeiri's rule. Nimeiri's imposition of austerity measures required by the International Monetary Fund brought regime-toppling demonstrators into the streets.

Sadiq appears to have concluded that, to the extent that Sudanese associate their problems with Nimeiri's failures, he could buy time for himself by disassociating the new government from the policies of the past.

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Sadiq's defense of his shift from Nimeiri's policies indicates he believes that a nonaligned approach best suits Sudan's strategic realities. In public, he has argued consistently that Sudan is too weak militarily—and its borders too long and porous—to afford enemies in neighboring states. Good relations with Libya and Egypt, for example, are preferable to good

Sadiq al-Mahdi: Personalized Foreign Policy

In our view, Sadiq al-Mahdi is a self-confident man who believes that he has a right to lead his clan, his sect, and his country. His Mahdi family lineage, indulgent early upbringing, and privileged education (degree with honors in economics from Oxford) have given him the sense that he is someone special. His meteoric rise in politics—he was elected to the Assembly as soon as he reached the minimum required age of 30 and became Prime Minister for the first time the next year—has reinforced that belief.

Intelligent, sophisticated, charming, and dynamic, according to US officials, Sadiq is adept at tailoring his tactics to suit his audience. He plays several important roles—leader of the Ansar sect, politician, head of the Umma Party, and modern intellectual—and focuses on first one and then another to appeal to different constituencies and win legitimacy as a leader. He has at various times allied himself with groups of almost every ideological orientation from the Communists to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Sadiq has a theoretical turn of mind and can expound at length on a wide range of historical and religious topics (he has written many books). Nevertheless, as a leader, he

articulates no coherent policy programs or strategies for furthering Sudan's interests. He demonstrates little persistence in pursuing the discrete policy goals he sets forth.

We believe Sadiq's frequently stated resentment of outside influence over Sudan reflects his position as a Third World leader.

. His complaints that Egyptian governments have historically tried to make Sudan subservient carry on the Mahdist tradition of his great grandfather, who fought against Egyptian (and British) domination. We believe that Sadiq's cultivation of relations with Mu'ammarr Qadhafi, for instance, reflects not only his policy of "good neighborliness" and personal gratitude for the political refuge provided by Qadhafi during the Nimeiri years, but also his sympathy for Qadhafi's defiance of a superpower. Although Sadiq does not behave like Qadhafi (or Khomeini), the Islamic radicals' confrontational policies appeal, we believe, to Sadiq

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relations with Egypt alone. A hostile Libya could subvert Sudan and renew aid to the southern Sudanese insurgents—Libya supplied money and arms to Garang's SPLM/A in 1984-85 in an effort to topple Nimeiri—at a time when Ethiopia appears determined to weaken Khartoum by increasing its aid to the Sudanese rebels. In any event, Sadiq's statements suggest he believes Egypt has done little to help Sudan overcome its security and financial problems.

Sadiq also argues that nonalignment and a "good neighbor" approach reduce the prospects for destabilizing internal conflict, as well as diversifying sources of needed foreign aid. Unlike Egypt, where the population is ethnically and linguistically homogeneous and supportive of a strong central authority, Sudan's population is diverse. The Sudanese are torn between allegiance to Khartoum and the desire for autonomy among many regional tribes, whose traditional lands

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**Sadiq al-Mahdi's Traditional Source of Support:
The Ansar**

The Ansar are those Sudanese Muslims whose political loyalty is historically rooted in allegiance to Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid Abdallah, the charismatic figure who in the 1880s proclaimed himself the Mahdi—the savior come to redeem Islam—and led a successful revolt against Egyptian hegemony. The revolt resulted in an independent Islamic state that lasted 13 years before being overthrown by British and Egyptian military intervention.

[redacted]

Ansar loyalty to the Mahdi—Sudan's rough equivalent of the United States' George Washington—has carried over to his male descendants. Sadiq is the Mahdi's great-grandson.

[redacted]

The Ansar are Sudan's largest Muslim sect, whose members are primarily concentrated in western Sudan, but with considerable representation in central Sudan and Khartoum. Their numerical strength gave an edge in the 1986 election to the sect's organized political party—the Umma Party, headed by Sadiq. According to an academic paper presented at a US Government-sponsored seminar on Sudan in October 1986, Ansar support for the Umma Party has shifted westward toward Sudan's border with Chad.

[redacted]

straddle Sudan's borders. Thus, for Sadiq to side unequivocally with Chad against Libya, for example, would invite clashes between pro-Chadian and pro-Libyan tribes in Sudan's Darfur Region, fuel the separatist demands of some groups there, and weaken the political base of his Ansar sect and Umma Party, which regard Darfur as a key stronghold.

[redacted]

Hard Choices

Civil War. Sadiq must solicit both dwindling aid from traditional allies and more significant deliveries from less reliable partners to meet the needs of the Sudanese military in the civil war. The southern Sudanese rebellion against northern Muslim domination, which has intensified during Sadiq's tenure, is draining the

economy, halting development, and threatening to split the country. We believe that abrogation of Islamic law—the most potent symbol for the southern rebels of northern domination—would boost the chances for a negotiated settlement. But it almost certainly would spark violent opposition from the influential National Islamic Front, upset traditional Arab aid donors, and perhaps dangerously weaken Sadiq's Muslim credentials.

[redacted]

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Economic Crisis. A near prostrate economy forces Sadiq to search constantly for enough foreign oil and financial aid to meet growing domestic demand for goods and services. His dilemma is how to attract enough aid to keep the northern economy afloat without incurring exorbitant domestic costs. Sadiq has tried to extract aid from both "radicals" like Libya and "moderates" such as the Saudis, only to offend the one as he pays the price for aid from the other. Saudi aid, for example, has dwindled as Sadiq has made statements designed to reassure the "radicals." Although the economy continues to stagnate under statist economic policies, Sudan's rulers hesitate to adopt austerity measures prescribed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank that might incite regime-threatening riots.

[redacted]

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Internal Opposition. Sadiq's search for new and more supportive allies abroad, despite the attendant risks, reflects political weakness at home. He lacks not only staunch backing from the armed forces, but also the willingness of key civilian parties to join a nonpartisan approach to resolving Sudan's problems. US academic specialists on Sudan point out that intense partisan rivalry is the norm among Sudan's 30-odd recognized civilian parties.¹ The civilians' difficulty in reaching consensus reflects the lack of a commonly recognized external threat and the persistent tendency of northern Muslim politicians to undermine one another as they struggle to share power among themselves and with their southern, non-Muslim countrymen.

[redacted]

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Groping for a New Direction

In backing away from Sudan's external alignments under Nimeiri, in seeking new friends in the radical camp, and in underrating the importance of better relations with his African neighbors, we believe Sadiq has launched the country on a new and potentially dangerous course. His foreign policy has emerged as an amalgam of conflicting elements as he has responded erratically to regional and internal events. Nevertheless, the main themes of Sadiq's foreign policy have taken shape. [redacted]

Seeking "Dealignment." In his clearest departure from the policies of the Nimeiri era, Sadiq has sought to considerably loosen Sudan's ties to the United States and Egypt. He has:

- Consistently played down Sudan's military cooperation with Washington. In early 1987, without consulting the Sudanese General Staff, Sadiq ordered the withdrawal from Port Sudan—at an unspecified future date—of US equipment that had been prepositioned for use by the United States in the event of US military involvement in the Persian Gulf. He has refused to allow joint military maneuvers with US troops—a reversal of Sudan's cooperation in the Bright Star exercises under Nimeiri.
- In late 1987, following the visit of the US CENTCOM commander, Sadiq portrayed the talks publicly as nothing more than part of a policy of dialogue with both superpowers.
- Played up normal relations with Moscow. In late 1986 Sadiq visited the Soviet Union, appearing to make a point of doing so before he visited the United States. Since then, he has not publicly differed with the Soviets on any issue. [redacted]

Sadiq doubts the US commitment to his political survival, in our view. Since visiting Washington in October 1986, he has asked for military and economic aid on a scale approaching that given to Nimeiri—about \$187 million in 1985. Nevertheless, despite his insistence that he represents one of the few democratically elected governments in Africa and the Middle East, Sadiq has seen US economic assistance to Sudan dwindle. Military assistance also has plummeted. [redacted]

Hosni Mubarak [redacted]



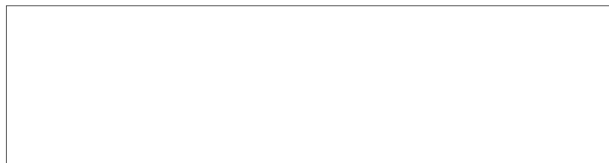
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From Sadiq's perspective, Washington has not shown the will to help counter what he considers Sudan's greatest security threat—Ethiopia's growing military support for Garang's southern Sudanese rebels. In contrast, Sadiq almost certainly believes Moscow—Addis Ababa's military and economic patron—has the leverage. Sadiq's one big effort in 1986 to coax Soviet leaders into coercing Ethiopia to ease pressure on Sudan failed, but he may still hope that, if he continues to avoid the close relationship with Washington that Nimeiri nurtured, he can eventually enlist Soviet help with the Ethiopian-Sudanese insurgent problem. [redacted]

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Defying Egypt. A legacy of personal distrust bedevils Sadiq's relations with Cairo. He has no great love for the Egyptians, nor they for him. We believe he remains angry that Egyptian forces helped Nimeiri crush a rebellion in 1970 by the Ansar sect. Sadiq chafes at what he considers the continuing condescending Egyptian attitude toward the Sudanese.



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Since his election in 1986, Sadiq seems to have gone out of his way to trumpet his government's independence from Egypt. He visited farflung capitals—including Moscow and Washington—before visiting Cairo. He later declared void the Egyptian-Sudanese

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mutual defense treaty—agreed upon by President Nimeiri as a symbol of strong bilateral ties. He has insisted upon a vague Brotherhood Treaty, which, he says, expresses more accurately the relationship between Sudanese and Egyptians. He has increasingly dealt with Libyan leader Qadhafi without consulting Cairo. Sadiq's contacts with the Egyptians suggest he does not want an open break, but his behavior indicates his determination to shift the relationship toward one of correct but not especially close ties. [redacted]

Accommodating the Libyans. Sudan's interim Transitional Military Council in 1985 reversed President Nimeiri's policy of hostility toward Qadhafi and initiated more cordial relations. Since his election in 1986, Sadiq has gone further. He has:

- Refused to condemn Tripoli's international adventurism and terrorism.
- Actively sought Libyan economic and military assistance.
- Accepted a large Libyan People's Bureau in Khartoum. [redacted]
- Acquiesced to a limited Libyan presence in western Sudan's Darfur Region, even though that presence causes him security problems. [redacted]

We believe that several factors account for Sadiq's accommodation to Qadhafi's activism. On a personal level, Sadiq probably feels indebted to the Libyan leader. Qadhafi gave Sadiq asylum during the latter's several exiles between 1970 and 1978 and offered military assistance when Sadiq tried to overthrow Nimeiri in 1976. [redacted]

[redacted] In contrast to Egypt's President Mubarak, Qadhafi apparently is a leader with whom Sadiq feels comfortable doing business. [redacted]

We believe that Sadiq is well aware of Qadhafi's ability to help or hurt him:

- On one hand, press and Embassy reports suggest that Sadiq sees Qadhafi as a source of important oil and military aid, made all the more important to Sudan because of the decline of traditional donor

assistance. Libyan largess [redacted] [redacted] has risen since Nimeiri's ouster.

- On the other hand, Sadiq almost certainly believes Qadhafi can be dangerous. The Libyan bombing of a radio station in Omdurman in 1984 and Qadhafi's decision to offer money and military supplies to John Garang's rebels are reminders to Sadiq of Qadhafi's treachery. He almost certainly reasons that an angered Qadhafi could do the same to him. We believe Sadiq knows that Libyan officials in Khartoum have sought and encouraged disgruntled Sudanese military officers to plot against him, and he probably believes the Libyans will redouble their efforts if he arouses Qadhafi's ire. [redacted]

Sadiq certainly knows from experiences in mid-to-late 1987 that the Libyans can give Khartoum security and political headaches with impunity in western Sudan. Because Sudan lacks a credible counterforce—a strong Army, Air Force, or intelligence network—and because Sadiq resists “begging” Egyptian help, he apparently believes he must rely on personal diplomacy to hold Libyan hostility at bay. [redacted]

Courting the Iranians. Since taking office, Sadiq has:

- Avoided condemning Iran's role in the Persian Gulf hostilities while offering to mediate between Iran and Iraq.
- Welcomed an Iranian Embassy staff in Khartoum, [redacted]

- Taken at best an ambiguous position on issues such as Iranian involvement in the disturbances at Mecca during the Hajj in August 1987, at high cost to Sudan's relations with the Saudis. [redacted]

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In our view, Sadiq's immediate objective is to get economic aid from Iran. Since his visit to Tehran in December 1986, he has sought from Iran mainly a reliable supply of oil and easy terms of trade. By befriending the Iranians at a time when most other Arabs are hostile to Tehran, Sadiq probably hopes to gain their aid more easily. [redacted]

We believe that friendship toward both Iran and Iraq advances Sadiq's broader objectives. On the basis of numerous public statements, we believe Sadiq hopes to emulate Sudanese leaders of the 1950s and 1960s. Their reputations as mediators in regional disputes made potential foreign donors willing to "buy" their services and deflected domestic criticism from the leader who gained regional recognition as a "statesman." Although Baghdad and Tehran have declined his mediation offers, the Oxford-trained, staunchly Sunni Muslim Sadiq probably still considers himself best suited to bridge the gap between modernist Iraq and theocratic Iran. [redacted]

Underrating the Africans. Sadiq's dealings with Sudan's eastern and central African neighbors are consistent with those of Sudan's two previous regimes but, we believe, more dangerous for Sudan's stability. Like his predecessors—Nimeiri and the interim military government—Sadiq wants to halt or retard support for Garang's SPLM/A from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Zaire, and Chad. As the insurgency drags into its fifth year with no end in sight, Sadiq's coalition government suffers a continuing paralysis in dealing with issues that might prevent a rise in black African support for the SPLM/A. [redacted]

Throughout his tenure in office, Sadiq has taken a largely belligerent tone toward Ethiopia, citing Ethiopian support for Garang's rebels. In our view, he has allowed openings for constructive dialogue between the two states to slip away. Most recently, an Egyptian initiative to start talks between Sadiq and Ethiopian President Mengistu foundered early this year with each side challenging the good faith of the other. Proposals for a cessation of each side's support to insurgencies across their border have not been realized. [redacted]

Sadiq's Uneasy Coalition Government

The coalition government formed in May 1986 under Umma Party and Ansar sect leader Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi—the third Sudanese effort since independence in 1956 to build a parliamentary democracy—is inherently weak. Deep-rooted party and personal rivalries among Sudan's civilian elites make it a daunting task for political leaders to agree on domestic and foreign policies and implement them. [redacted]

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The election in April 1986 put the Umma Party on top and the Democratic Unionist Party in second place. The Democratic Unionist Party is led by the heads of the Mirghani family, whose main support lies in the Khatmiyyah sect, traditionally the pro-Egyptian adversaries of the Mahdi family. [redacted]

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In third place came the extreme religious right National Islamic Front, headed by Hasan al-Turabi, Sadiq's political nemesis and brother-in-law. Turabi, according to his statements since the 1986 election, seeks to weaken and eventually do away with the political control in the Muslim north of the Mahdi and Mirghani families. [redacted]

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Because neither Sadiq's Umma Party nor the Mirghanis' Democratic Unionist Party had the electoral clout to rule alone, they decided to govern together. Their cooperation, however, is plagued by squabbles over key ministry posts, the proper direction of Sudan's foreign policy, and the control of the state's intelligence services. As a result, the coalition has taken little time or effort to forge a united front to tackle festering domestic and foreign issues. [redacted]

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To curtail *Kenya's* extension of nonlethal aid and diplomatic backing to the SPLM/A, we believe that Sadiq must change the prevailing perception in Nairobi that the Sudanese civil war is a conflict between an oppressed black Christian minority and an oppressive Muslim majority. Sadiq has largely failed to do this. He is reluctant to abrogate Islamic law in the south, and, in our view, he has not made the diplomatic effort to explain his position to Kenyan President Moi.

In dealing with *Zaire* and its limited aid for the SPLM/A, Sadiq has proved unable or unwilling to allay concerns in Kinshasa about Sudan's relations with Libya. President Mobutu's main concern is that a weak and divided Sudan serves as a conduit for Libyan aid to Zairean rebels. Because Sadiq cannot point to a reduction in positive Libyan-Sudanese interactions—indeed, there has been an increase—Mobutu has an incentive to give the SPLM/A at least token military aid to keep his options open in Sudan.

Sadiq's dilemma with *Chadian* President Habre is to allay suspicion that Khartoum tolerates a Libyan military presence in western Sudan—a militarily and, for Sadiq, politically unfeasible undertaking. Sadiq may be resigned to the idea that Sudan cannot control Libyan or Chadian forces traversing western Sudan and may simply hope that a major Libyan-Chadian clash does not occur on Sudanese soil. In any event, we believe Sadiq has shown undue nonchalance about the prospect that Chad will give limited military assistance to the SPLM/A, allowing it to open another front against Sudanese Government forces in western Sudan.

Chadian assistance to the Sudanese insurgents would be unlikely to result in effective cross-border attacks from Chad for some time, if at all, but Habre apparently is determined to raise the costs of Sadiq's "good neighbor" policy toward Tripoli.

Consequences of Sadiq's Policies

Sadiq's efforts to pursue a nonaligned course are likely to result in major political costs. Two years of nonalignment have failed to attract enough foreign aid to overcome the southern rebellion or Sudan's economic stagnation. Grumbling among military and

civilian elements is rising over their perception that Sudan's nonalignment is impeding aid from Nimeiri's old friends—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United States—without attracting compensatory aid from the USSR, Eastern Europe, Libya, and Iran. Moreover, in our judgment, Sadiq's persistent accommodation of Libyan and Iranian activism will bring the Prime Minister far more headaches than benefits.

No Payoff From the Superpowers. Sadiq's attempts to enlist Soviet support by putting distance between himself and the United States probably will continue to end in disappointment. Eliciting Soviet pressure on Ethiopia—and indirectly on the SPLM/A—to reduce hostilities against Khartoum will remain Sadiq's main objective in dealing with the Soviets, but Moscow is unlikely to oblige. From Moscow's perspective, such coercion risks alienating Ethiopian President Mengistu, whose friendship buttresses the Soviets' strategic position in the Horn of Africa and the Persian Gulf. Moreover, from Moscow's perspective, it probably makes little sense to support a Sudanese leader who shows no commitment to the Soviet Union and whose domestic troubles make his tenure uncertain.

Egypt Alienated. Sadiq's sour relations with Egyptian leaders are more likely to hurt him than help him. Given a perceptible rise in Ethiopian hostility, in Sudanese rebel boldness, and in the potential for Libyan-Chadian-Sudanese conflict in Sudan's Darfur Region, key internal groups seem to agree that it is a bad time to be at odds with Egypt. Those groups—the armed forces; Sadiq's coalition partner, the Democratic Unionist Party; and the opposition National Islamic Front—will denounce Sadiq for extremely poor judgment in alienating Egypt if the external security threat to Sudan increases.

We believe Egyptian disenchantment with Sadiq is mounting. From Cairo's perspective, Sadiq is a weak and indecisive third-rate politician, according to Embassy reports. To his discredit with the paternalistic Egyptians, Sadiq has dared to challenge Egypt's traditionally close relationship with Sudan and has

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blatantly flirted with Egypt's Libyan and Iranian enemies. According to US Embassy officials in Cairo, most Egyptian leaders do not care if Sadiq falls, assume his political demise will occur in the not too distant future, and are working to strengthen contacts with key groups who may influence Sudan's foreign policy course following his tenure. [redacted]

Heightened Internal Divisions. Several groups whose support Sadiq needs to survive view his Libyan-Iranian policy as a potential disaster and will blame Sadiq for any foreign policy failures. [redacted]

[redacted]

Even if Libya and Iran expand assistance to Sadiq, an increased Libyan and Iranian presence in Sudan most likely will give Sadiq's civilian rivals an issue to exploit. National Islamic Front leader Hasan al-Turabi, Sadiq's archrival, probably agrees with the long-term soundness of a nonconfrontational approach toward Libya. He also probably sees utility in keeping a channel open to Tehran, an Islamic fellow traveler—albeit a radical one. Nonetheless, he probably will denounce Sadiq for Libyan and Iranian infringement on Sudan's sovereignty because, in our view, he wants to undermine Sadiq and win the support of the military. [redacted]

We expect that the Mirghani family, traditional rivals of the Mahdi family and beleaguered leaders of the faction-ridden Democratic Unionist Party, will continue to vigorously oppose Sadiq's acceptance of Libyan and Iranian inroads in Sudan. Challenged by a pro-Libyan element for party leadership, the staunchly pro-Egyptian Mirghanis probably stake their hopes for overcoming the intraparty rivalry and remaining a

key player in Sudan on the support of Cairo. For that support, Egypt wants—and almost certainly will get—the Mirghanis to resist greater influence in Sudan of Egypt's regional adversaries. [redacted]

A continuing clash between Sadiq's accommodation toward Egypt's regional enemies and the Mirghanis' opposition to that course almost certainly will deepen the public perception of the government as incurably fractious. The argument of National Islamic Front leaders—that Sudan's rule by the dynastic Mahdi and Mirghani families should end—probably will gain credence among students, businessmen, and trade union members who want clear direction from their government and programs for future prosperity. [redacted]

Sadiq might face a widening schism within his own Umma Party and Ansar sect if the Libyans continue to entrench themselves in the Darfur Region. In early 1987 Libya's distribution of arms to tribes hostile to Ansar-Umma members raised the latter's cry that they were unprotected. Local Umma representatives of the Darfur constituency, fearful of losing support, threatened that, if Sadiq did not halt the Libyan intrusion, they would fight him within the party. At that time Sadiq temporarily got the Libyans to withdraw, but the prospects are strong that he will face the same problem again. [redacted]

An energetic pursuit by Sadiq of close relations with Iran, in our judgment, would multiply his internal political problems. Symbolically, the Arab world agreed in November 1987 to condemn Iran. To the degree that Sadiq ignores this development, we believe that northern Sudanese sentiment will coalesce against him. We speculate that most northern Sudanese, who are Muslim and identify with the Arab world, want to join the Arab political mainstream—including the consensus against Iran. The Sudanese want not just material aid from the Arabs, but external political and religious support when dealing with a civil war that drains them economically and threatens to tear their country apart. [redacted]

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Diminished Foreign Assistance. In our view, Sadiq's continuing attempts to get aid from all camps will spur an already perceptible decline in assistance from oil-rich moderate Arabs. Saudi aid—traditionally a major component of Sudan's foreign assistance—dropped from nearly \$300 million in 1986 to some \$100 million in 1987, according to estimates drawn from US Embassy reports. Although the Saudis have lowered their foreign aid region-wide because of their reduced oil revenues in the mid-1980s, Saudi aid to Sudan has dropped conspicuously, according to US Embassy officials in Riyadh. The Saudis disapprove of Sadiq's courtship of Iran and Libya when the Iranian threat to Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states has increased markedly. [redacted]

The attitude of the Saudis and other Arab leaders in the Gulf toward Sadiq's nonalignment policy has soured—and probably will continue to be negative—as long as the Iranian threat persists. In the first half of 1987 the Saudis expressed alarm to US officials at the prospect of an emerging ring of pro-Soviet governments stretching from Libya, through Sudan, to Ethiopia. To thwart that development, the Saudis argued the need to buttress Sadiq in his fight against Ethiopia's avowed Communist President Mengistu and his client, SPLM/A leader John Garang, whom the Saudis suspected of being a "latent" Communist. [redacted]

In the second half of 1987, the immediate strategic threat from Iran evidently replaced the long-term Communist threat in Saudi thinking, and Riyadh is now trying to press Sadiq to reassess his ties to Iran by threatening to withhold future aid. The chances that Saudi aid will be restored to past levels are further reduced because Riyadh insists that Khartoum mend fences with Cairo. [redacted]

Mounting Internal Security Threats. In our judgment, Sadiq's nonaligned policies are heightening the immediate threats to Sudan's internal security. We believe Libya and Iran are determined to enlist supporters in Khartoum so that they can foster sympathy for their respective causes and, on order, attack US and moderate Arab diplomats, as well as subvert a Khartoum regime that Tripoli or Tehran deems too

pro-Western. Sadiq, in our view, lacks the security resources to keep the Libyans and Iranians in check. [redacted]

[redacted] Any Sudanese effort to substantially curtail Libyan activities in Darfur that are aimed at undermining the Government of Chad may prompt Qadhafi to step up subversive measures against Sadiq. [redacted]

[redacted] The Libyans, we believe, continue to seek sympathizers in the Sudanese military. Even though the Libyan-backed Sudan Revolutionary Committees have proved a disappointing instrument for agitation in Khartoum, Tripoli has not abandoned them. [redacted]

[redacted] Iranians in Khartoum are courting favorable media treatment and are trying to establish a cultural center, despite Khartoum's ban on such activity. [redacted]

Long-Term Threats to Stability. In our view, Libya's designs on western Sudan and Iran's plans to train Ansar militias threaten Sudan's long-term stability. [redacted]

Libyan actions since Nimeiri's ouster suggest that Tripoli wants strong influence—if not control—in western Sudan's Darfur Region. Sadiq has been unable or unwilling, or both, to counter Libyan encroachments. With a stronghold in Darfur, Libya would have a permanent base on Chad's eastern border from which to attack Chadian forces who oppose Libya's claims and ambitions there. In addition, Qadhafi's desire to integrate Libya and Sudan economically and politically—and thereby weaken

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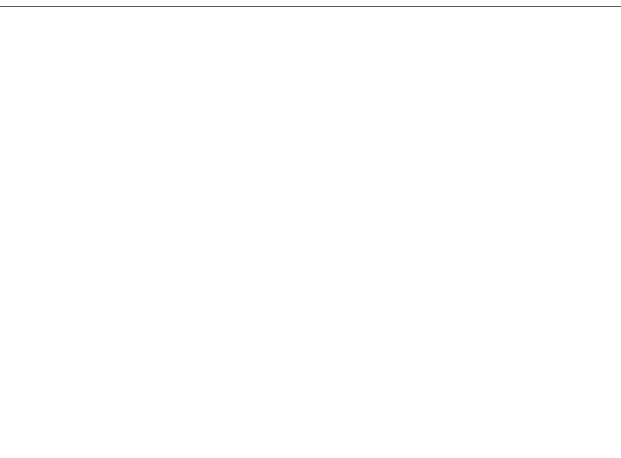
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Egypt's influence in Sudan—would get a boost. Finally, Qadhafi probably views a Libyan presence in Darfur as a useful lever to prevent Sudan's return to a hardline anti-Libyan policy. [redacted]

Under the guise of improving roads, airfields, and agricultural production, the Libyans have increased their presence in Darfur. The Governor of Darfur and the Governor of Libya's Al Kufra Municipality, which borders Darfur, agreed in July 1987 to undertake joint development projects, [redacted]

[redacted] although Khartoum considers the agreement invalid. Meanwhile, Sudan's approximately 2,000 military personnel in the west—required to police an area larger than Japan—find it almost impossible to prevent Libyan troops and Libyan-backed Chadian rebels from entering the region. [redacted]



[redacted] Iranian military assistance to Sadiq's Ansar sect might easily offend top Sudanese military officers who, in our view, still consider themselves custodians of the Sudanese state—not just guardians of a particular regime. A multiparty scramble for arms—and the attendant threat to civil order—might prompt senior officers to intervene in government before divisive pressures among civilians threatened cohesion within the military itself. [redacted]

Prospects for Change

Sadiq's continuing determination to alter the foreign policy course undertaken during the Nimeiri era, his conviction that nonalignment best serves Sudan's

interests, and his blind spots regarding Libya and Iran suggest there is little prospect of basic change in the policies he has adopted in his two years in office.

Despite mounting short- and long-term costs, Sadiq appears unpersuaded of the merits of shifting course. [redacted]

Nevertheless, Sadiq could gradually—or even abruptly—end his friendly stance toward Libya and Iran in 1988. He might conclude that the domestic political costs of staying on good terms with Qadhafi and the mullahs had started to outweigh the military and economic aid he was getting from them. Such a policy change would indicate that he believed the civilian clamor against him from virtually all quarters was intensifying and that the Sudanese military was on the verge of overthrowing him. [redacted]

Indicators of a shift in Sudanese policy—from least to most abrupt—would include the following:

- *Toward Libya*—Sadiq publicly criticizes Qadhafi's regional policies, urging accommodation between Libya and Chad. He halts official Sudanese visits to Tripoli.
- He proclaims Libyans a security threat in Khartoum and in Sudan's Darfur Region.
- Sadiq orders the expulsion from Sudan of Libyan diplomats, intelligence officers, and military personnel.
- *Toward Iran*—Sadiq publicly condemns Iran's insistence on continuing the war with Iraq. He halts official Iranian visits to Khartoum.
- Sadiq orders a security clampdown on Iranians in Khartoum, publicly denouncing incidents where Iranians are caught recruiting in the capital.
- Sadiq orders the expulsion of some Iranians. [redacted]

If Sadiq ended his good neighbor policy toward Libya and Iran, the odds are strong that Tripoli would try to cause serious trouble for him. Qadhafi, shifting to a view of Sadiq as an enemy almost as heinous as Nimeiri, might cut off military aid to Sadiq, renew military support to the southern Sudanese rebels, and step up subversive activity in Khartoum, particularly within the Sudanese military. Iran probably would

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seek contacts with anti-Sadiq groups, but its preoccupation with the Iran-Iraq war and other Persian Gulf issues probably would limit its willingness to support subversive activities. [redacted]



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Marked change in Sudanese policies on other fronts—toward the superpowers, Egypt, or the African states—appears less likely. Sadiq's antipathy toward the Egyptians and his resistance to close alignment with the United States probably are too deeply rooted to allow for a significant change in attitude. His northern Muslim constituency—together with his role as leader of a northern Muslim religious sect—makes a major shift in his attitude toward black Africa equally unlikely. [redacted]

Nonetheless, Sudan's new rulers might easily resume a search for aid from any quarter if pro-Western regional governments, the United States, and European democracies failed to supply the assistance they believed was necessary to counter Sudan's multiple security threats and to offset economic hardships that could revive regime-threatening protests in Khartoum. [redacted]

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Implications for the United States

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Alternative Scenario: What if Sadiq Is Overthrown?

If Sudanese military officers depose Sadiq, it probably will happen largely—though not exclusively—because Sudanese demands for commodities and military equipment outpaced the foreign aid that Sadiq attracted. Shortages in basic commodities will have become acute and, combined perhaps with Sadiq's expansion of austerity measures, will have led to widening, sustained civilian protest demonstrations. Shortages in military hardware, combined perhaps with significant battlefield defeats in the south and more humiliations in the west, will have turned military commanders in Khartoum decisively against Sadiq's continued rule. [redacted]

The consequences of Sadiq's nonaligned policy adversely affect US regional interests. A heightened Libyan and Iranian presence in Khartoum most likely will raise the security threat to US and allied diplomats there. That presence, moreover, stands a good chance of eliciting more African support for southern Sudanese rebels and polarizing the Horn of Africa. [redacted]

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If Sadiq is overthrown in the next year, there is a slightly better-than-even chance that a successor regime would steer a more pro-Western course, at least initially. Sudan would continue to press for more US aid, but, if it failed to get what it believes it needed from the West and "moderate" Arabs, it might turn again to regional radical governments for assistance. [redacted]

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Sudan's new rulers—mostly military officers but perhaps some civilians—most likely would alter Sadiq's nonaligned policy in several respects. First, we expect they would take steps to regain strong Egyptian support for Khartoum, which would include a reduction in amicable interactions with Libya. The General Staff usually does not share Sadiq's cold attitude toward the Egyptians and [redacted]

Through this whole process, US requests for cooperation in addressing the problems of drought and famine-stricken populations will get little attention from regional governments concerned primarily with surviving the various insurgencies and trying to impose their will on their neighbors. [redacted]

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[redacted] would prefer arms from Cairo to those from Tripoli. [redacted]

Second, we expect the new rulers would play up more to the Saudis and other "moderate" Persian Gulf states than to Iran. [redacted]

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