

International Seminar on

Asian Countries and Sudan: Political and Economic Relations Organised by African Studies Association of India (ASA India), New Delhi & Danish Institute of International Studies 10-11 November, 2009

REPORT

On 10 November, 2009 African Studies Association of India (ASA India) and the Danish Institute of International Studies (DIIS) organised a conference on **Asian Countries and Sudan: Political and Economic Relations** at India International Centre, New Delhi. The event was organised to more closely engage Asian academics and research institutes on the peace process in Sudan. The former Foreign Secretary of India and Chairman of ASA, Mr. Shashank along with Sudan's ambassador to India, H. E. Khidir Haroun Ahmed inaugurated the conference. The Indian, Chinese and European scholars gave presentations revolving around India's historical and cultural relations with Sudan, China's diplomatic challenge in the Darfur crisis and Asia's demand for oil resources in Sudan.

Sudan's economy is officially growing as the oil fuelled economic boom largely centered in the northern countries amidst sanctions. China is the foremost external economic actor in Sudan today and leads the strong Asian thrust to Sudan's foreign economic relations. Taken as a category including not only China, India and Malaysia but also Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia and Taiwan, Asian countries have come to be the most important investors in Sudan, an increasingly significant source of Sudan's imports and a dominant feature of Sudan's export profile, largely through oil. This was very much evident in the paper of Daniel Large where he gave an overview about how India, China and Malaysia are working together in Sudan. The historical, diplomatic and cultural relations of India with Sudan was brought out in the papers of Prof. Ajay Dubey and Ruchita Beri. Apart from India, Malaysia has also developed a strong link with Sudan over the years. The Government of Sudan has maintained political ties with the Malaysian government in a relationship where Islam has been of primary importance in promoting economic relations which was very well argued in Roland Marchal's paper.

Over the past decade, in Sudan the declining economic role of the West has been counter-posed against an increase in Asian importance. The impact of sanctions on Western companies has been reinforced by the high-profile American-led divestment campaigns initiated during the war in Southern Sudan and reinvigorated over Darfur. Thus, Asian influence is growing at the time in Sudan which was brought out with facts and data by some of the scholars at the conference. These ties are expanding fast especially in the different sectors of the economy and are being broad based. The last day of the conference had a panel discussion on Asia and Sudan: New Engagement for Economic

Cooperation where views were presented from parts of Asia and Europe by the various scholars.

But some of the issues remain to be addressed: Is the current global economic crisis making such emerging south-south partnerships portent of new world architecture? On the other hand, are such ties just combinations of different factors playing out at the same time without significant ramifications in the future? There is however very little academic scrutiny and study of this phenomenon. Whatever work has been done is primarily in the understanding of the bilateral relationships between Asian countries and Sudan. There is, thus, a need to try to understand the emerging relationship between Sudan and Asian Countries in the broader and larger political and economic context.

Programme

10th November, 2009

Registration- 9.00 AM

Inaugural Session- 9.30 AM – 10.45 AM

Chair	Mr Shashank Former Foreign Secretary of India & Chairman ASA
Welcome	Prof Ajay Dubey ASA & JNU
Introduction of the Seminar	Luke Patey Danish Institute for International Studies
Address by Chief Guest	H. E. Mr Khidir Haroun Ahmed Ambassador of Sudan to India
Inaugural Address	Prof. Rajen Harshe Vice Chancellor Allahabad University & President ASA India
Chair remarks	Mr. Shashank
Vote of Thanks	Dr. J Moosa Jamia Milia Islamia

Session I: Global Engagement of Sudan and Asian Powers- 10.45 - 11.45 AM

Chair	Prof. Rajen Harshe Vice Chancellor Allahabad University & President ASA India
Prof. Peter Woodward Professor Emeritus, School of Politics and International Relations, University of Reading	<i>Foreign Relations of Sudan</i>
Prof. Atta El-Battahani Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Khartoum	<i>Some Reflections on the Political Dynamics of Sudan-Asian Relations</i>
Laura James	<i>Sudan's Economy: Asian Investment and</i>

British Scholar on Sudan	<i>Political Economy of Oil</i>
Discussant	<i>Dr. Nivedita Ray</i> <i>Fellow, CWAAS, SIS, JNU</i>

Tea -11.45 AM - 12.00

**Session II: Asian Powers and Sudan: Historical, Diplomatic and Cultural Relations-
12.00 - 1.00 PM**

Chair	Mr. Shashank
Prof Ajay Dubey ASA & JNU	<i>India and Sudan under Indo-African Relations</i>
Roland Marchal Research Fellow, Centre d'Etudes et de Relations Internationales, Sciences Po, Paris	<i>Malaysia and Sudan: From Islamist Students to Bourgeois Entrepreneurs</i>
Ms Ruchita Beri Research Officer, Institute for Defense and Security Analyses	<i>India and Sudan: Engagement under Peacekeeping Operations</i>
Discussant	<i>Ms. Sushmita Rajwar</i> <i>CWAAS, SIS, JNU</i>

Lunch - 1.00 PM– 2.00 PM

Session III: Asian Countries and Sudan: Economic Engagement- 2.00 – 3.15 PM

Chair	Prof. Gulshan Dietl Professor, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Dr. Wang Suolao Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Peking University	<i>China and Darfur</i>
Daniel Large Africa-Asia Centre, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London	<i>The Astonishing meets the fantastic Invasion: China, International Humanitarianism and the Political Economy of violence in Sudan</i>
Prof. S. N. Malakar Professor, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, SIS, JNU	<i>India and Sudan: Agricultural Cooperation</i>
Discussant	<i>Dr. Bijay Prathari, JMI &</i> <i>Mr. Jasobanta, CWAAS, SIS, JNU</i>

Tea- 3.15 PM - 3.30 PM

Session IV: Energy Resources and Asian Engagement- 3.30 PM – 5.15 PM

Chair	Prof. Dietrich Jung Professor, Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark
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Prof Aparajita Biswas Professor & Former Director, African Studies, Mumbai University	<i>India-Sudan Economic and Energy Cooperation</i>
Luke Patey Danish Institute for International Studies	<i>India Inc. Under Fire: ONGC Videsh and Western Activists in Sudan</i>
Leben Nelson Moro Centre for Peace and Development Studies, University of Juba	<i>Oil Development and Local Relations: Displacement, Environment & Resettlement</i>
Discussant	<i>Dr. Sandipani Dash</i>

11th November 2009

6.30 PM to 7.30 PM

Panel Discussion, Asia and Africa: New Engagement for Economic Cooperation

Chair: Mr. Shashank, Chairman, ASA and Former Foreign Secretary of India

China in Africa

Dr. Wang Suolao, Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Peking University

India in Africa

Prof. Ajay Dubey, General Secretary, ASA and Centre for West Asian and African Studies, SIS, JNU, New Delhi.

Japan in Africa

Dr. Roland Marchal, Research Fellow, Centre d'Etudes et de Relations Internationales, Paris

Concept Note

Sudan is uniquely situated as it stands at the crossroads of the Occident–Orient corridor along the Red Sea on the one hand while on the other acts as a bridge between Negroid African and the Arab world. It has, as a consequence, experienced many different historical processes and movements. Culturally Sudan is a rich mosaic of diversity with

plural linguistic and cultural ethos and a host of different *tariqas* (Sufi sects) not always living in harmony.

Sudan is now emerging from the shadow and developing into a vibrant economy and society. Though it gained independence nearly fifty year ago it has only recently begun negotiations for WTO membership in real earnest. The long internal civil strife and the difficulties of state formation and nation building are some of the constraints to development and growth. However after the discovery of oil these social conflicts have got complicated and accentuated.

On the other hand the Sudanese government has embarked on a fast paced industrialisation and development using its oil industry and revenue. It has achieved a projected GDP growth rate of 8.5 % in 2008 and is expected to sustain it in 2009. Although Sudan has been producer of oil and gas for a number of years it is considered to be vastly under-explored. The majority of proven reserves are located in the south in the Muglad and Melut basins. Due to civil conflict, oil exploration has been concentrated in the central and south-central regions of the country. According to the 2008 BP Statistical Energy Survey, Sudan had proved oil reserves of 6.614 billion barrels at the end of 2007 or 0.53 % of the world's reserves. Sudan produced an average of 457 thousand barrels of crude oil per day in 2007, 0.57% of the world total and a change of 38 % compared to 2006. The country is also rich in natural gas with reserves estimated at 3 trillion cubic feet (tcf).

The emergence of Sudan has coincided with a boom in international oil prices followed by the world economic crisis. Currently most major western economies are in recession and contracting. There are appearances of significant trends of shifting of global order and the evolution of a new global order on a more balanced and broadened basis. In this context the approach adopted by Sudan with regard to developing its economic ties is unique and significant. Sudan had consciously avoided developing very close ties with the West and gave preference to Asian countries especially with regard to the oil sector.

The ties with of Sudan with Asian countries though a long-standing friendship were primarily limited to formal and routine issues. However along with the emergence of Sudan and growth of its oil industry there is a parallel strengthening of ties with

different Asian countries such as China, India and Malaysia under the banner of south-south cooperation. These ties are expanding fast especially in the different sectors of the economy and are being broad based. Is the current global economic crisis makes such emerging south-south partnerships portent of new world architecture? On the other hand, are such ties just combinations of different factors playing out at the same time without significant ramifications in the future? There is however very little academic scrutiny and study of this phenomenon. Whatever work is being done is primarily in understanding the bilateral relationships between Asian countries and Sudan. There is, thus, a need to try to understand the emerging relationship between Sudan and Asian Countries in the broader and larger political and economic context.