

# **INTENDED AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF AID**

## **The Case of Sudan**

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*"Royal authority exists through the army, the army through money, money through taxes, taxes through cultivation, cultivation through justice ....."*  
Exhortation from Sultan of Darfur's Tax Demand (O'Fahey, 1980)

## **Changes in the Aid Agenda**

Over the years, the emphasis has shifted and three major phases of development aid can be identified, each reflecting a reaction to experience in the preceding phase:

1. The Investment Phase (1960 - 1975): Based on the successful experience of Marshall Aid to post-war Europe, substantial capital funds were made available to developing countries in the belief that shortage of capital was the major limiting factor;
2. The Adjustment Phase (1976 - 1990): Poor results with investment projects in the earlier phase led to the realisation that inappropriate macro-economic policies and structural aspects of the national economies could block development. Increasing emphasis was therefore placed on conditionality and on persuading governments to adopt incentive economic policies;
3. The Governance Phase (Current): Governments of developing countries proved surprisingly good at resisting or evading conditionality and few structural adjustment programmes were successful. This, added to increasing concerns over corruption and injustice, led to an emphasis on Capacity Building, to enable Government implement programmes more effectively, on Governance and on support to Civil Society; in order to establish such institutions of accountability as would give Government

the incentive to do its job properly and monitor its performance in doing so.

The fundamental of aid, that large volumes of capital funds will promote development, remained unchanged; each phase merely added a new layer of sophistication to the prescription. In the later phases, however, the political function became increasingly dominant: the use of aid funds as a lever to force governments to carry out economic and political reform was seen to be at least as important as the provision of investment capital.

Developments in Sudan between independence and 1990 illustrate very clearly why these changes of emphasis occurred; demonstrating both extremes of economic mismanagement as well as civil war and general insecurity. This does not, however, guarantee that the new aid framework will be any more effective than the old. The central purpose of this paper is to consider that question in the light of events in Sudan.

## **The Sudan Case**

In 1983, Sudan was receiving US \$35 per capita in aid, compared with \$19 for the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa. By 1989, arrears in debt repayments to the IMF alone were over US \$1 billion. Total debt was many times greater. The civil war between the north and south of the country flared up again in 1983 and even now, 15 years later, there seems little or no hope of a settlement. Even within the muslim north of the country, political change seemed always to mean no change. Whatever the regime the state appeared to lack all capacity to deal with any one of the problems facing it. A series of natural disasters such as drought and flood only highlighted this incapacity. There was a stark contrast with the high hopes at independence in 1956, when the Sudan's political problems were obvious but the economy was strong and government revenues were both high and more broadly based than most other African countries. "Few who had witnessed the Sudan's independence had predicted an easy future, but few too had foreseen such a grim one." (Daly, 1991)

Following the coup of 1989, by all reports, the situation continues to be grim, both economically and politically, but there is little sign that the Sudanese opposition based in the old democratic parties has the capacity to overthrow the regime and what may be termed the military Islamic Government of Omar el Bashir is at least proving more durable than any of its

elected predecessors; although this may reflect in part continued support from richer Islamic countries.

Most donors ended their development programmes in the Sudan in the early 1990's, as relations with the international community worsened. This paper concentrates, therefore, on the main aid-giving period, prior to 1990.

## ***Structural Adjustment***

By the end of the 1980's the evidence of economic mis-management in Sudan was overwhelming. At least the first premise of Structural Adjustment, that there was a clear failure of policy, had to be accepted. On the other hand a series of adjustment programmes sponsored by the IMF failed abjectly.

Parallel World Bank programmes to develop the economic capacity of the Sudan had equally little effect. Public Investment and Agricultural Rehabilitation Programmes were designed to reinvigorate the export production sectors of the economy and government's revenues from those sectors but this substantial new investment in the productive sectors did nothing to halt the decline in exports and government revenues. By 1985/86, current revenues were down to 8 per cent of GDP, only half of government's current expenditure and "far lower than in most other low income countries." (ILO, 1987) Added to which, these investments had the significant side-effect of further undermining government's control over its recurrent expenditure.

For the Sudanese economy, the outcome was wholly at odds with the rhetoric of both sides of the debate on Structural Adjustment. Far from it being a major turning point - towards reform and a return to growth for its proponents or towards misery and inequity according to its critics - Structural Adjustment was little more than a rearrangement of trends that had been underway since before independence: growing but increasingly ineffective public investment, repeated failures to control staff and other recurrent costs, a steady reduction in the quality of government services, only partly offset by a wider coverage, and a steady decline in government revenues.

The only difference between the three post-independence periods was in the way in which these trends were financed. Between 1956 and 1970, expanding investment and consumption were financed partly out of overseas lending but principally by reducing the surpluses of the last decade of the Condominium; surpluses which included Government reserves and the profits of the productive economy. Taxation did not keep up with increasingly ambitious government services. Prices for commercial operations fell behind costs. The labour force or, on the irrigation schemes the tenants, were able

to force larger and larger distributions in their favour. The elite inevitably sought and gained compensation for their losses from these redistributions. In 1973, just as the scope for squeezing any more out of these surpluses was exhausted, the rise of OPEC led to a major influx of investment funds directed at turning the Sudan into the breadbasket of the Arab world. Finally in 1978, when the more commercially minded investors of the breadbasket period lost patience with lack of results, concessional funds provided under Structural Adjustment programmes took their place and so prolonged the process once again.

### ***Ungoverned or Ungovernable?***

One of the most disorientating things for an outsider working inside the Sudanese government system is the lack of any evident urgency when facing the extraordinary chaos and lack of control. Individually, most of those involved in government know full well the extent to which the system has crumbled. Many can discuss in detail what is happening and why. The overwhelming consensus clearly is, however, that nothing can be done about it and aid financed initiatives to tackle policy problems rarely have an impact on central issues such as budgeting and control. Instead they are used as coordinators of aid-financed programmes and as a means to attract more aid. Even the most glaring of problems are only ever tackled when donor finance is provided and it soon becomes clear that there is no sincere intention to tackle the problem identified, merely a sincere desire for the foreign funds.

In short, Government lacks either the capacity or the will, or both, to implement development programmes effectively; the Sudan is suffering a crisis of Governance as well economic collapse.

And, just as the economic trends were well established from the earliest years of independence, so it was in the political sphere as well. Relatively frequent shifts between democratic, parliamentary government and differing forms of military dictatorship/one party rule served mainly to conceal a considerable degree of continuity in the ruling elite. Under the military regime of Numeiri, for example, both the "son of the spiritual leader of the National Unionist Party" and three members of the Islamic Charter Front, the Muslim Brothers' political party, were on the board of the same corporation. (Kameir & Kursany, 198?) In the democratic coalition government formed in May 1988, there were eighteen ministers who "had served as national or regional ministers under Numeiri." There were only twenty-five ministers altogether. "Northern Sudan's healing social relations at the elite level once

more assured that there was little by way of a purge in most ministries, and it soon became clear (after the 1985 coup) that a general return to the old corrupt ways was taking place." (Woodward, 1990) Perhaps the epitome of this continuity is the fact that Hasan al Turabi, leader of the Muslim Brothers and eminence grise to the current regime, is brother-in-law to Sadiq al Mahdi, the dominant figure in the democratic opposition.

Some argue that the colonial legacy of divide and rule has irrevocably distorted Sudanese society. Others lay the blame on the creation at independence an 'overdeveloped' and 'soft' Third World state. Yet a third view is that the Numeiri era, "transformed an inert party system into one of Africa's longer running personal, clientilistic regimes." (Woodward, 1990)

Whatever the cause, one feature is evident; that patronage in the Sudan is not the prerogative of a small, all-powerful elite who are exploiting a position of unchallenged political power to their own benefit. On the contrary, patronage is the only way of maintaining a very weak form of political power that depends almost entirely on appeasement: the elite is appeased through the allocation of commodity aid, import licenses and the like, the modern sector workforce is appeased through continued wage drift and the general public is appeased, albeit less generously, through subsidies.

This patronage depends almost entirely on foreign money. As early as 1976 it was stated that "The state, although not the subsistence sector of the economy, is dependent on outside support for survival." (J. Waterbury quoted in Woodward, 1990) By 1985/86, commodity alone aid was to finance half the total budget deficit. (ILO, 1987) The Sudan had moved full circle from the early years of the Condominium, when the state was equally dependent on external finance, from Egypt, for its survival.

What the state could not do, however, accept the reforms on which the foreign money was supposed to be conditional. To have done so would have destroyed the patronage system. The exchange rate was only one example of government's unwillingness, inability even, to implement the adjustment programme: "maintaining a multiple exchange rate system plays an important role in deciding who is to enjoy privileged access to such resources." (Brown, 1990)

## **Adjustment or Reform?**

In 1986, the real value of the minimum wage in Sudan was only 16 per cent of what it had been in 1970. (ILO, 1987) Driven by the growing poverty of

Sudan and drawn by the wealth of OPEC, every Sudanese dreamt of migration. And, because they are hard-working, skilled, pleasant, Arabic-speaking Muslims, the Sudanese were in demand. In 1986 it was estimated that two thirds of the professional and skilled workforce was overseas: predominantly in the oil exporting states of the Arabian peninsula. (ILO, 1987) There have been various estimates of the total number of Sudanese nationals working abroad: 45,000 in 1979 up to 200,000 or even 500,000 by 1983. In the mid-1980s, 350,000 was a conservative estimate. And the result was that "Sudan's recorded and unrecorded remittances together would have been sufficient to support three times the value of officially recorded imports." (Brown, 1990)

These estimates, raise a whole flock of questions about what was happening in the Sudanese economy. Why, if those vast sums were remitted, could Sudan not pay for its imports and why was the supply of imports so restricted? Why was the real value of the Sudanese pound under constant pressure? Why did inflation continue to run at high levels? Why did government revenues continue to decline? According to Brown, the answer lay in grossly distorted markets that allowed the extraction of rents which were then lost in capital flight such that Sudan was a net exporter of capital. (Brown, 1990) The extraordinary nature of this conclusion bears underlining; it is that the biggest debtor of the international community in Africa, the country with the largest single outstanding debt to the IMF, was in fact a net exporter of capital.

The first major IMF sponsored adjustment package was initiated in 1978 and devaluation was a central element, the principal justification being that Sudanese exports, principally agricultural, were not competitive at the existing exchange rate; a devaluation from \$2.5/£s1 to \$2.0/£s was needed in 1978 to put the exchange rate "at the margin of competitiveness of medium staple cotton and rainfed sorghum." (Nashishibi quoted in Ali Ed, 1985)

In the preceding years, however, at least two groups had concluded, independently, that devaluation was not justified. The first of these was the ILO which analysed the pronounced anti-export bias, in effect an anti-agriculture bias, of the exchange rate system and the market control and licensing regulations in force. This bias was not, however, the critical dimension. Sudanese industry was performing little better than agriculture, if at all, and here too the barrier was administrative; the tendency to allocate foreign exchange to yet more investment, persistent utility and infrastructure breakdowns, ex-factory price controls and licensing restrictions all eroded the

apparent incentives. In reality, it was the commercial sector that benefitted. "Weak control of wholesale and retail prices has not only left the commercial sector with excessive profits but by fostering the illusion of control distracted attention away from the rich premia being earned in trade." (ILO, 1976)

One conclusion was, therefore, that devaluation would be "no substitute for fiscal reform." The other key conclusion concerned management. The policy structure was not so much incorrect of itself as ineptly run. To be successful the existing system required "a well elaborated plan, a pervasive and rapid information-monitoring system and a co-ordinated decision-making process. None of these conditions is met to any significant degree by the present administrative structure in the Sudan." (ILO, 1976)

Independently of the ILO, Sudanese academics resisting the IMF package took a very similar view. "The Sudanese economy, despite the distortions that characterise it, is not suffering from a fundamental disequilibrium as the IMF/IBRD proposals purport to show. The Sudanese economy, we believe, is rather suffering from a crisis of economic management." Government's own Consultative Panel to the Minister of Finance recommended that cotton taxes should be reduced, and that Government expenditure, especially wages and salaries in parastatals, should be cut. Instead of devaluation, import duties should be raised, which would allow a measure of selectivity. Lastly and most surprisingly of all, development expenditure should be cut as "there are already clear signs that the rate at which new development projects are contracted and executed is by far greater than the economy can absorb." (Quoted in Ali Ed, 1985)

In many respects, the disagreement was one of emphasis not of fundamental analysis. All parties would have agreed on three out of four points:

- that fiscal reform was required;
- that administrative deregulation was essential;
- that a competitive real exchange rate would have to be set, although the level might be debatable.

The fourth point was, however, crucial:

- that substantial capital aid would be necessary to rehabilitate and expand economic infrastructure and finance restructuring.

The Sudanese were explicitly against it while the IMF/IBRD group were bound to present it as part of their standard package for two reasons: because capital aid is the IBRD's very *raison d'être* and because it is the only lever these external bodies can use to put pressure on government to reform.

Because of their financial lever, the IMF/IBRD proved stronger in the debate but that lever proved almost entirely worthless in practice. Little or no reform was achieved and rapid inflation nullified the devaluation that was imposed.

Unsurprisingly the results were minimal or negative. In 1978, the current account balance of payments deficit was 7 per cent of GDP and the nominal debt service ratio was 14 per cent. By 1982 an 'imbalance' had turned into bankruptcy. The current account deficit had more than doubled, to 17 per cent of GDP, and the debt service ratio was over 150 per cent. For the people of Sudan, the adjustment years saw per capita income drop from US \$ 526 in 1978 to US \$ 330 in 1987. (Brown, 1990)

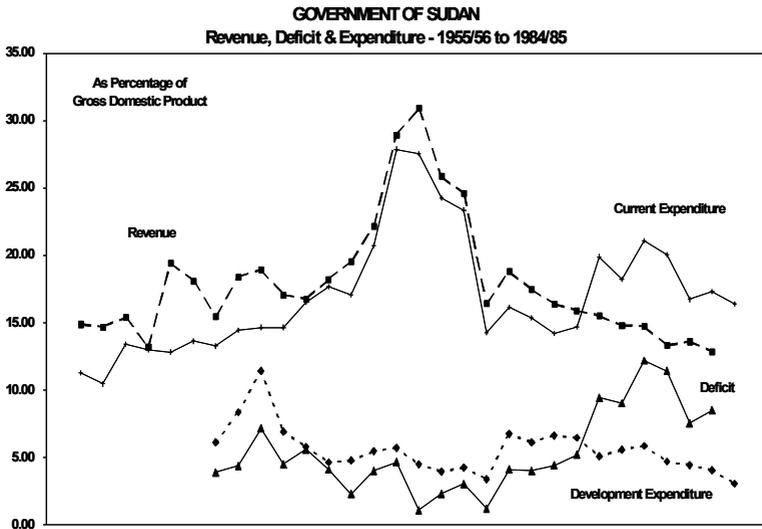
As the figure on the next page shows, the outstanding result of the structural adjustment period was a disastrous loss of fiscal control and there was certainly no sign of any administrative deregulation or reform.

To sum up, thinking Sudanese considered that until the state was reformed there was little point investing any more capital in development schemes while Sudanese investors were voting massively with their feet by moving any funds they had off-shore as fast as possible. They did not share the international finance agencies' belief that reform could be achieved by investing more money and results proved that they were right.

## **Can Governance Be Bought?**

For all its recognition of the scale of the problems of Government in African development, Aid is all too willing to accept the easy assumption that Civil Society can achieve good governance naturally and painlessly, through democracy, individualism, grassroots associations and free markets. Based on this assumption, the aim is to invest aid resources in the institutions of Civil Society and thus create a counter-balancing force which be sufficient to ensure that the state performs effectively.

This puts the cart before the horse. In the western world, Civil Society developed after the establishment of a State that was capable of ensuring its proper operation, not before. "A market is a highly precarious and artificial thing, since a basic security must exist; yet such security does not flow



spontaneously from the interaction of the producers, nor can any individual producer ensure it. Only a centralised power which enjoys legitimacy and can enforce obedience can do that. The market in which exchange is free and equal, in which contracts are honoured, in which the fruits of economic activity are secure, in which money is universally acceptable as a store of value and as a means of payment, requires a strong and active state pledged to maintain all three. But it must be a state that is separated from the producers themselves and so not tied to any sectional interest .... " (Gamble, 1981) The last point bears emphasis to underline the fact that the more representative a state is the more difficult it will find it to successfully referee Civil Society.

And it is in precisely this area that the Sudanese state has failed; be the regime military or democratic it has been unable to to out-face any interest group, however undeserving and unimportant and it has proved incapable of refereeing any major political or economic conflict.

Two examples serve to illustrate this failure. One, from the modern agricultural sector, serves to illustrate how the Sudanese state has managed to avoid any realistic negotiations over economic resources with any of its

citizens and the other, from the rural areas of western Sudan, shows how fundamental political tensions are never resolved.

### ***A Distributional Coalition***

One theory suggests that poor economic performance in the first world can be attributed to the power of 'distributional coalitions' or interest groups capable of forcing a distribution of income that is not in the interest of the economy as a whole. What follows is only one example of how competing economic groups in the Sudan have succeeded in forcing the state to finance such a distribution. At times it has seemed that the whole Sudanese nation is such a 'distributional coalition'.

In the modern irrigated sector, following the October Revolution of 1964, tension between the irrigation scheme licensees and their tenants increased. Government, under pressure from the tenants', first raised their share of profits from 40 to 50 per cent and then, in 1968 nationalised the pump schemes under the Agrarian Reform Act. This was ostensibly in response to the tenants' accusations against the scheme operators. Nevertheless, the blow for the latter was considerably softened. They were paid compensation, despite the fact that many of their licenses were nearly expired, and their debts were taken over by the new government corporations.

Cotton was, in any case, becoming increasingly unprofitable for the scheme operators. Directly, the tenants' share of the profits on the cotton crop had been increased. Indirectly, the tenants also gained by diverting their efforts to other crops because all the overhead costs of the schemes were charged to solely to cotton. The area under cotton on the Gezira scheme dropped from 57 per cent in 1954/55 to 43 per cent in 1969/70 as a result. In the face of this competition from their tenants, private sector licensees were happy to abandon irrigation and shift into mechanised farming, especially so when offered attractive compensation by Government. Many of them were politicians for whom the tenants were an important constituency and this change allowed them to preserve that political support at small cost to themselves. This shift kept all groups more or less happy, at the expense of Government taking over the thankless task of trying to maintain its share against the tenants' pressure, something it was manifestly failing to do on its own schemes.

## ***Cultivation Through Justice***

In western Sudan, Darfur is home to two major tribal groupings: the Baggara Arabs and the non-Arab Fur. Since the late 1980's this region has seen a series of tribal clashes between Arab tribes as well as between Fur and Arab. Many have interpreted these as evidence of competition over land resources: between cattlemen and farmers, for example. Others see the fighting as a popular rebellion against the oppressive state, of the non-Arab Fur against the Arab dominated state in particular. The reality is more ordinary, the failure of the Sudanese state to provide the first element required for Civil Society to develop: security and justice. I can quote three examples from personal knowledge.

### **Ta'aisha v Salamat**

The Ta'aisha are one of the original Arab tribes of Darfur while the Salamat are newcomers who have been amicably settled in Ta'aisha territory for a considerable time. The Salamat, were mainly farmers while the Ta'aisha were more involved with cattle, as is the common pattern.

The dispute itself started with a single killing when a Ta'aishi murdered a Salamat. He reported himself to gaol for so doing but the Salamat were not prepared to accept the likely outcome of the judicial procedure and carried out a retaliatory raid killing some eleven Ta'aisha leading to a counterattack which left more than 40 dead. At this stage government moved in. Some Salamat villages moved away from the area where they were likely to be attacked and the fighting stopped. It was, however, several years before a truce was agreed and it was impossible to reestablish a local council or administration and a troop of Sudanese army had to keep control.

Why did a single murder between two tribes living closely together lead to such a vicious fight? The answer is politics. In essence, the Salamat appear to have seen the introduction of elected councils as an opportunity to escape from their subordinate position as clients of the Ta'aisha. This they did by winning the elections to the local council. They tried to build on this by demanding the right to their own cattle Damins. In a cattle market the damin stands as guarantor that cattle being sold by members of his tribe are truly theirs and not stolen. For this he receives a fee. The Salamat resented the fact that their cattle were sold under the guarantee of the Ta'aisha damins. Lastly, of course, there was the matter of sugar, that fundamental indicator of

political power in Sudan. As controllers of the local council, the Salamat controlled the sugar allocation.

### **Fellata v Gimr**

Ostensibly, the Fellata-Gimr dispute was about land. An old boundary dispute dating back to the 1920's was resurrected as the result of a series of tit-for-tat raids stemming from an individual murder in 1984.

Once again the relationship between the Gimr and the Fellata was a close one but without the patron-client character of the previous example. The Gimr were principally farmers and many of them had cattle hired out to the Fellata, a major nomadic herding tribe. The Fellata's principal route to the dry season grazing of Central Africa lay straight across the Gimr territory. Both sides therefore lost from the dispute. The Gimr had to repossess their cattle and probably sell most of them while the Fellata had to take a long roundabout route to Central Africa.

So why did they fight? Once again the answer lay in electoral politics. The land under dispute belonged, at least since the 1920s settlement, to the Gimr but it was farmed by Fellata. The question was which rural council did they vote for and, probably more important, which council was going to get their sugar ration: the Gimr council at Katila or the Fellata at Tullus. Once again, government was only able to impose a truce. The dispute remained unresolved until the late 1980s.

### **Fur v. Arab**

The Fur-Arab war of the late 1980's was far larger in extent and more serious and many have seen it as an extension of the civil war in southern Sudan. In fact, it was far more similar to the tribal disputes of the Ta'aisha-Salamat and Gimr-Fellata writ large. In almost all cases the fighting sprang from isolated incidents of theft or violence that were not dealt with by the authorities. The result was that all parties began to take matters into their own hands.

There were, however, two differences: a democratic government in Khartoum and a general worsening of public security; both cattle raiding and armed truck-robberies were becoming commonplace, partly as a result of Chadian problems overflowing into Darfur.

Numeiri reintroduced regional Government to Darfur in 1981 and many Darfuris from the Arab side and even some from the Fur side date the start of the problems from the rule of Ahmad Dereij, the new Fur Governor

Numeiri appointed. (He had been forced to change his first nominee by pressure from within the region.) At first Dereij's administration was reasonably well balanced in tribal terms but after the elections in 1982 ministerial appointments were biased towards Non-Arab groups and this meant that the major cleavage between Arab and Non-Arab, between North Darfur and South became a live issue once again.

The full effect began to be felt when democratic politics revived at the national level, after the 1985 coup. Prominent Arab Darfuris then won national ministries, reflecting long historical links between the ruling party and the Darfur Arabs, but this was not enough to satisfy Arab aspirations in Darfur itself. One result was the famous 'Arab Letter' of 1987 which purported to be signed by a large number of Darfuri Arab leaders and which represented a fairly straightforward claim on the prime minister Sadiq el Mahdi, as an Arab and as leader of the Ansar to redress the balance in Darfur: "You are our brother and one expects more from a brother than from other people".

These political pressures were not the cause of what happened between Fur and Arab but they created an atmosphere of distrust and, crucially, they made it difficult if not impossible for the democratic politicians to act effectively as arbitrators of the dispute.

### **The Ineffectual State**

If the Sudanese state was too weak to control competing economic interest groups in the modern sector, it was doubly weak when it came to providing security and justice in the traditional sector. This leads to the conclusion that the roots of the Sudan's problems do not lie in a lack of balance between the government and the governed but more simply in the state's failure to deliver the services that form its primary obligation: law and order.

This situation also revealed how dependent on Aid the state had become, even in remote areas and even in matters to do with security and justice that are usually considered to be inappropriate for external aid. The larger aid projects in Darfur command far greater material resources than either the regional government or the security services and for years it has been commonplace for the army to have to borrow project vehicles in order to deal with major incidents. The epitome of this was when new police vehicles supplied following a spate of highway robbery were not labelled 'Darfur Police Department' but rather 'Project Against Armed Robbery', thus turning the most fundamental task of government into a short-term project.

## Diagnosis and prescription

Lord Bauer, one of the earliest and most persistent critics of the concept of Aid has suggested that "Aid increases the money, patronage and power of the recipient governments, and thereby their grip over the rest of society. It thus promotes the disastrous politicization of life in the Third World." (Bauer & Yamey, 1982) At first sight, the Sudan seems a good example but a closer look reveals another possibility; not that aid puts politics into the economy but rather that it takes the economics out of politics. Because it allows a weak state to survive without the need to raise domestic revenue, it destroys the processes by which the state can adjust to changing economic circumstances. Theory sees politicians as 'entrepreneurs' who bring about institutional change in response to the changing needs of society and who find their reward in society's willingness to pay for this service. In a poor and disturbed state such as the Sudan, the costs may be high and the potential rewards small. It is hardly surprising, therefore, if the relatively vast sums that they can win from negotiating a new aid deal for relatively little work distract such political entrepreneurs and make genuine change a remote possibility.

It is for this reason, that the aid prescription of continuous and increasing capital aid is unlikely to succeed even though the aid diagnosis, of inappropriate economic policy and a failure of governance, is wholly correct.

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