

Abstract

Conflicts and Cooperation in Sudan's North-South Border Zone

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As Sudan will split into two in July 2011, tensions over the borders of the new states have been increasing. Indeed, deadly clashes have occurred recently. The North-South border zone is politically sensitive not only because of the traditional tensions among its inhabitants but also because of the valuable natural resources, particularly oil, that political elite in the North and South are keen to control.

Despite the tensions over the border, there are areas of positive, reciprocal relations among the diverse groups that subsist along it. For example, nomadic Baggara Arabs, who drive their livestock from the North to the South during the dry season, frequently conclude agreements with Southerners on access to grazing and watering points. Most of these agreements have been adhered to, and hence many potential conflicts are avoided.

This paper examines the complex relations among the people who live, or seasonally migrate into, the North-South border zone. It is mainly based on fieldwork conducted in the counties of Unity State bordering Northern Sudan this year as part of Cross-Border Relations Project implemented by the Center of Peace and Development Studies and a UK-based NGO.