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Behavior Modification

With a long chain of titles including Head of State, President, Field Marshal, Lieutenant General, and His Excellency, the leader of the Government of Sudan makes for quite the interesting character. Besides his titles, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir[†] has garnered a wide array of accurate descriptions: authoritarian loathsome tyrant, personable, murderous thug, intelligent, radical dictator, charming and passionate, ruthless extremist.

He has the charm and wit to produce, at the least, a façade of friendship with whomsoever he talks; yet he fears nothing and emphatically enjoys violence. With the swell of political debate about this one man, the world is left to wonder how to stop his reign of terror. His political clout alone holds the key to stopping decades of genocidal war, but his deceptive persona makes this task almost impossible.

When peace finally becomes a possibility, another military sforzando surprises the world, and Bashir's name always comes up. From Bashir making accusations against insurgent rebels, or other governments, to those rebels or other governments accusing al-Bashir of the violence, the possibilities in this cycle prove endless. Most recently, Bashir has shown involvement, at least by name, in any number of incidents from attempted political overthrows in neighboring nations to illegal military strikes conducted against ceasefire and no-fly zone agreements.

The fortunate fact about all of these sad details is simple: Bashir has begun to show a behavioral pattern. On closer examination of the man's biographical history, the analytical

[†] As with any name or word of another language, spelling may vary. This paper will consistently use the most-common spellings. Some other examples of the President's name include Umar Hasan Ahmed al-Bechir, and Omar Hasan Achmed al-Bashier.

approach of psychological behaviorism may prove useful in understanding al-Bashir's method to his madness. Beyond this, it may finally show the key to resolving the strife that has earned Omar al-Bashir the number one spot on *Parade Magazine's* list of the Top Ten World's Worst Dictators 2005 and 2006.

As with any psychological investigation, the beginning provides the best starting-place. While not many personal facts are available from Bashir's early life, some important details are known. First, Omar al-Bashir was born on 01 January 1944 to a working-class family. With his family, he stayed in his hometown of Hoshe Bannaga, in rural Sudan, and finished his primary education in the Ahlia Middle School in Shendi.

In these early years, Omar al-Bashir learned early to pay attention to world politics, and to hate Jews. Anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist sentiments were the single unifying factor in the Arab world, and with the formation of Israel in 1948, Omar al-Bashir would learn nothing less than hatred for the Jewish peoples. In fact, he has publicly demonstrated his hatred against the Jews, Zionists, and Americans on several occasions.

World politics were not the only influence on Bashir, though. A brief period of time after he completed his primary education, Bashir's connection to his nation's politics grew apparent. In 1956, the Sudan gained independence from Great Britain and Egypt. A year prior to this, the First Sudanese Civil War began. The North vs. South war (Arab Muslims versus black African Christians) was a war for independence and a war that affected Bashir's outlook very deeply.

One of the factors in this war shows a deeper connection to Bashir than first appears. Shortly after independence, El-Ferik Ibrahim Abboud became the Commander in Chief of Sudan's military. In a military coup, he overthrew the civilian government on 18 November

1958 and retained leadership through 16 November 1964. During his rule, Abboud abrogated the constitution, banned opposition parties, enforced a military government regime, and initiated a program of Islamization against the South. Additionally, Abboud's economic plans failed miserably, worsening the economic factors that had already played such a role as a cause to the civil war, which lasted until 1972.

During the time of Abboud's rule, Bashir developed into a devout adherent of Islam and, as a northern Sudanese able-bodied male young Omar al-Bashir felt the calling to defend his faith and fatherland in the war efforts against the South. Almost immediately after completing his secondary education, he was admitted and chose to enroll in the military academy as a pilot. Omar earned his wings in the Airborne Forces, and transferred to the Infantry Brigade. Meanwhile, he earned two masters degrees in Military Science.

Abboud fought in the Sudanese branch of the Egyptian military; Bashir chose rather to study in Cairo, where he became a crack paratrooper. By this time, the First Sudanese Civil War had ended. Manifesting his hatred for Jews in militaristic demonstration, Bashir volunteered to serve with the Egyptian army—just as Abboud had done. Bashir fought against Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. After returning to Sudan, Bashir participated in a series of attacks on the rebel forces of the South.

After so many successful strikes against the southern rebels, Bashir earned the title and rank of General. By 1988, Bashir gained command of the 8th Brigade and was assigned to fight the 'rebellion' (now the Second Sudanese Civil War) in South Sudan.

Suddenly, in June 1989, Bashir and a group of middle-rank military officers overthrew the elected government of Sadiq al-Mahdi in a coup d'état. With support of a fundamentalist leader of the National Islamic Front, General Bashir quickly dissolved parliament, banned all

political parties, shut down the press, took immediate steps to Islamicize the nation, and initiated an excessively violent military campaign against the South. This ‘scorched earth’ campaign continued successfully and Bashir turned his attention to political threats.

This behavior worsened the Second Sudanese Civil War and virtually destroyed the Sudan’s economy—though it is easily the wealthiest nation in Africa. This becomes a good point to show a historical situation and reaction for behavioral analysis; however, the biographical details of Bashir’s beliefs play too much of a role to go unexplored any longer.

As previously mentioned, Bashir adheres devoutly to fundamental—extremist—Islam. Sharia law greatly influences the military strongman and often becomes an excuse for his behavior and campaigns. Bashir strikes any threat with a vengeance and shows little regard for human life. He has remained heavily involved in the North’s efforts in the Second Sudanese Civil War, which has claimed an estimated 2,000,000 or more civilian lives since its start.

Along with his deep-rooted hatred for Jews, Zionists, and Western powers (the United States and United Kingdom, primarily), Bashir hates Christians in general. Essentially, this is another example of his extremist interpretation of Islam. The great biblical jihad against the ‘people of the book’ is no less than a personal responsibility to this man and, though he is often seen smiling and chatting sociably, he retains a deep resentment for the aforementioned peoples.

3.1. With this information established, the first historical situation to review occurred shortly after al-Bashir came into power. Much of the background to this incident appears above; the basic premise: al-Bashir has just overthrown the government in a military coup; a civil war is still raging; his authority is challenged and threatened; he still aims to fix conditions awry since his youth. In response to this situation, Bashir reacts with defined and excessive force, using sharia law and his Western and Jewish enemies as scapegoats.

As explained before, he quashed all opposition immediately, and burned South Sudan. Bashir claimed his takeover was an effort “to save the country from rotten political parties.” He enacted Sharia law over the whole of the Sudan and dismissed all of his opponents as ‘agents of imperialism and Zionism.’ Furthermore, he denounced his archenemies, claiming that ‘Jews control all the decision-making centers in the US. The Secretary of State, the Defense Secretary, the National Security Advisor and the CIA are all Jews.’ Bashir then declared a state of emergency and took total control of the government. He overturned the constitution and gave himself total control of the military.

3.2. With this historical situation, much biographical information is implied and easily inferred. Further situations, however, reveal more about this leader’s true character. One such example results, in part, from the conditions he caused. The situation: miserable economic failure, shrinking population—due mostly to his ethnic-cleansing campaign in southern Sudan, and the people’s unwillingness to accept Sharia law. Bashir found one simple solution to all of these problems: polygamy.

Polygamy, he declared, was an encouraged institutional behavior in the Qur’an. He asked citizens to marry the widows of martyrs in recognition of their sacrifice and to care for their children. He declared that this would boost the population. Meanwhile, an increased population signifies an increased war-front, which would lead to a greater economy. The benefits of this solution also encourage certain aspects of sharia law, particularly the solution itself.

3.3. The next situation involves relations with the West. With the ongoing genocidal conflict in Darfur and the raging war (officially resolved last week, though there is yet no sense of security, only doubt whether a peace-agreement will finally stick) in the South, the West has

sanctioned Sudan. The Sudan is a nation on the United States' list of those that harbor terrorists, primarily due to the fact the Sudan harbored Osama bin Laden in the 1990s. The UN has imposed sanctions and the World Bank has withdrawn aid. More and more, western superpowers are threatening Khartoum with further sanctions and the possibility of war. All of this strife results from the genocidal war-campaigns. Bashir is losing face with his own people, his fellow Arabs, and the governments that continue to support him—China, for example.

How does Bashir solve this problem? He continues to verbally attack the West; however, Bashir has also turned these verbal attacks into a parade of propaganda—accusing the West of blowing his domestic situations out of proportion. He said that the West, especially Great Britain, is inflaming the Darfur conflict to destabilize greater Sudan. Bashir considers the Darfur genocide merely a skirmish and the civil war as a minor rebellion. He has recently agreed to a commitment for peace, though previous agreements have been repeatedly broken, to calm the West temporarily. Meanwhile, Bashir focuses on his newfound oil wealth—in Darfur—and says that Sudan has entered a 'new stage' and that the people of Sudan can now rely on themselves.

3.4. This peace-agreement comes at a rather strange time, though. Reflecting back only days, weeks, and months, Bashir has maintained a hard-line approach to these situations. In fact, when faced with the prospect of foreign intervention, Bashir always reacts excessively harshly.

Such reactions appear under various circumstances. The first also relates to the aforementioned idea that Bashir is always involved in some event that breaks the possibility of peace. In this circumstance, Bashir's military and paramilitary troops crossed the border into neighboring Chad to attack Darfuri refugee camps. This same striking method has occurred at

least twice. In one of these attacks, reports circulated that some 200 to 300 Chadian citizens had been killed in the border-city of Adré, Chad. Due to this, the Chadian government threatened war against Sudan. Chad argued that Sudan must control its own wars and keep them in check or they would be forced to intervene for the security of the people of Chad.

Negotiations mediated by the African Union followed this threat, and the situation was eventually resolved. However, Bashir did not forget this threat. After weeks of planning, according to the government of Chad, Bashir reacted by organizing an attempted revolution in Chad. It was an effort to remove the current Chadian head of state and remove the threat of intervention. The rebellion was crushed and the rebels forced to parade around Chad's capitol.

Another example of Bashir's reaction to the possibility of foreign intervention is apparent in a statement he made as recently as March 2006. To establish a brief history to this instance, one must understand the current state of affairs in Darfur—the westernmost region of Sudan. In this war-torn region, the African Union is the only international group permitted. With less than 8,000 soldiers to cover an area the size of Texas, no threat to Bashir was existent. Furthermore, the AU soldiers are on explicit peacekeeping orders, and are not permitted to intervene.

With the recent increase in violence throughout Darfur and the proposed peace-agreements at the time, Bashir feared that the UN and NATO would overtake the AU forces, change the orders, and implement a heavy intervention effort. In response to this fear, Bashir entertained the idea of peace-agreements, but maintained a hostile approach. He publicly promised to make Sudan a graveyard for foreign intervention forces. He ordered the Sudanese fighters to prepare for jihad and suggested that the militias practice their fighting against civilians in Darfur and the South.

3.5. A final historical situation to review in analyzing the behavior of this militant dictator is simply a review of a fact noted earlier in the biographical information. The situation is more an

overview of his early life, in which he grew an affinity for Abboud's leadership, only to see him followed by another leader and another. Omar felt that these successors did not honor the true meaning of Islam, that they were impotent leaders of talk.

Because he had joined the military previously in an effort to support Abboud and fight Jews and Christian rebels, Omar al-Bashir saw a simple solution to his qualms with the reigning government: overthrow it. While this was mentioned before, the simple fact of his willingness and ability to overthrow his government and take the reins plays a great role in two important aspects of understanding the man. These aspects are both understanding him as a person and how he achieved his feats, and also understanding how extreme his behavior is and to what ends he is willing to fight.

4.1. When dealing with hypothetical situations, certain details must be acknowledged. One such detail is the general personable and sociable traits of al-Bashir. Psychologically, he is prone to seeking alliances and friendships; however, he has been so crushed in the past that Bashir refuses to lose face at any cost. Rather, he reverses roles and crushes his opposition if friendship seems impossible or improbable. This is largely result of his military background, but it plays a significant role in his personal life and political activity.

In the first hypothetical situation to explore, an Islamic nation threatens intervention and/or sanction against Sudan. While Chad is 51% Muslim, this greatly differs from Sudan's 70% Sunni Muslim population. Some tension between the neighboring countries results from different Islamic interpretations. Should an Islamic nation with views more aligned with Bashir's threaten his regime, his behavioral reaction could prove quite interesting.

His typical denunciation of the enemy as Jews would prove more difficult, and jihad is not meant for intra-Islamic war. This situation may actually prove the most difficult position

Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir would face in his life. No easy way to justify war against another Islamic nation exists.

The most likely response of Bashir is not all that different from those illustrated by his past. First, Bashir would denounce his opponent as an infidel, a non-believer, and maybe even an ally of the West. He would then rally for support of other extremist Muslims, and call on the people to form militias for the overthrowing of the opposing Islamic nation's government. If this overthrow succeeds, Bashir would ally himself with the replacement leader; if not, he would deny all accusations and attempt to maintain isolationism.

4.2. The next hypothetical situation draws on current situations. As of yet, the African Union is the only peacekeeping force permitted in the Sudan. Bashir views this organization as an under-equipped, under-funded, under-trained, and under-prepared attempt at peacekeeping. He has no problem with the AU peacekeepers because they are non-intervention troops and they help take the pressure off of his government. However, there has been a big push lately for the United Nations and NATO to take over the African Union Mission In Sudan (AMIS).

If Western peacekeepers enter Sudan, nobody knows what will happen. Based on his bold and violent behavioral past, however, certain predictions can be made. First and foremost, Bashir promised to turn Sudan into a graveyard for intervention forces. Whether this is just show, playing on the United States' already pessimistic views caused by Iraq, or he truly means what he says, one thing is sure: Bashir will not go down without a fight.

He could easily hide in a spider-hole and wait to be found like Saddam Hussein, or he could hide indefinitely in the mountains, like Osama bin Laden. Neither of these seems appropriate for His Excellency, though. Instead, Bashir would most likely declare all-out jihad against the intervention forces, calling on all Muslim citizens and neighboring Muslim nations to

defend Khartoum. Furthermore, Bashir would attempt to 'make a statement' by ordering increased violence in South Sudan and Darfur.

While he may not survive the intervention, Bashir knows how to distract his enemies and aim for a goal. His ultimate plan would be to claim as many lives, civilian and peacekeeping, as possible before he is taken out of power. As he so often saw his former leaders removed by coup after coup, Bashir expects nothing less than attempts on his own life; however, he has the die-hard approach that just may help him survive longer than his predecessors.

4.3. In the next hypothetical, Bashir gains weapons of mass destruction. Years ago, he was accused of attempting to develop WMDs when a Sudanese pharmaceutical factory was bombed out of suspicion of illegal weapons research and production. The question remains, what would Bashir do with these capabilities?

Bashir is militaristic and impatient. While he could potentially take the time to develop ICBMs, this would take too long. Rather, he would find the technology for basic WMDs and use them against his own people. The South Sudanese would be guinea pigs for his weapons, and the Darfuri people would feel the brunt of his extermination attempt.

If UN weapons inspectors catch on before he tests the weapons, he would block their entrance, as did Saddam Hussein, and stall until he has the time to prepare a defense. Bashir is a believer; he feels that he will survive anything, no matter the odds, as long as he is carrying out his 'mission.' Even if it means the beginning of a World War, Bashir would fight to the end, so long as he will soon have WMDs to use against his enemies.

4.4. In another hypothetical situation, Israel becomes involved in efforts to stop the Government of Sudan's systematic killing campaign. On the other side of Egypt lies Israel from Sudan. Bashir personally fought in a war against Israel when he was younger, and would have

no reservations of starting another. In fact, Bashir would likely take any excuse possible to declare war on the Jewish State.

This would be his simple solution. He would start by encouraging Egypt's support and that of any other Arab nation. If Bashir gains support of any other nation in a war against Israel, he will not hesitate. On the other hand, if he has no support, Bashir will spend some time bargaining with Egypt to allow passage of troops through to Israel for coordinated air and ground strikes against the Jews. As with an intervention, Bashir would not allow other military interactions to slow his killing campaigns throughout Sudan. Instead, any other military confrontation would prompt Bashir to increase his attacks and raise the death toll.

As an anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist, anti-Western Islamic extremist, Bashir has a certain unspoken fondness for Adolf Hitler. Similar to Iran's leader, Bashir praises the Nazi leader and essentially declares that, had the Holocaust happened, Bashir would bless that as he does Hitler. Because of his affinity for such persecution and murder, al-Bashir wants to make a name for himself as Hitler did. It is Bashir's goal to cleanse his nation, and ultimately the rest of society, through a bloody, public war.

4.5. Unfortunately for Omar al-Bashir, things may not work out as he hopes and plans. This fact brings about the final hypothetical situation for analyzing Bashir's behavior. In this hypothetical, intervention succeeds and the international forces capture Bashir. After such defeat, Bashir would behave conspicuously.

This does not mean his behavior would *change*, per say, only that he would intentionally act even more outwardly hostile and excited than usual. Essentially, Bashir has come to see what became of Saddam Hussein, who, even after rebelling at his court trial, is already faded out of the media so soon after his arrest. To compensate for this possibility, Bashir would use any

opportunity to declare war after war, reassert his power over Sudan, and threaten his captors.

Now that these five hypothetical situations and reactions are established, an effort to evaluate the potential for change via behaviorism becomes necessary. While Bashir's political clout remains the only key to stopping the genocidal conflicts in the Sudan, his persona must no longer remain mysterious.

Returning to the first hypothetical, Bashir's sociable nature proves key. In fact, this will play a major role in modifying the outcomes of the other hypotheticals, as well. First, however, the question of how to prevent an intra-Islamic war comes into play. As suggested, the best way to keep Bashir from starting another war remains through friendly talks. While he will likely attempt to manipulate the negotiators and other party, a war will be averted.

Regarding the proximal hypothetical, a sudden shift from AU peacekeepers to UN and NATO forces would almost certainly incite a bloodbath. The best way to prevent this undesirable outcome seems militarily, oddly enough. Because Bashir has so long engaged in militaristic behavior, and he adheres to sharia law, the Sudanese president has immense respect for true power and force. While he would dislike the significance, strategic bombing or firebombing of government and military institutions with sweeping force could potentially weaken his stance on the change of power. The distraction of this show-of-force would suffice to transition forces to UN and NATO command before Bashir would have the opportunity to organize counterstrikes.

Next, the WMD hypothetical remains a threat in reality. While no solution ever proves easy when dealing with Weapons of Mass Destruction, certain manipulative attempts against Bashir could succeed in preventing the use and proliferation of such threats. The best example to modify his behavioral response to possessing WMDs is *not* to threaten use of such weapons

against Sudan, but rather to again enter forceful, seemingly friendly negotiations. If he seems too near having the capability for WMD warfare, strategic military strikes as proposed for the previous hypothetical may suffice.

In terms of modifying Bashir's behavior in response to Israel, such a possibility does not exist. The only chance that Israel might affect such a man as Omar al-Bashir without causing all-out war exists not through direct political confrontation but through indirect means. By indirect means, such as pressuring other nations to confront Bashir or pressuring other nations to sanction and divest Sudan, Israel may successfully impact the struggle to stop the violence. However, if Bashir so much as suspects involvement of the Jews in an effort to change or stop his campaigns, the entire situation would likely worsen.

Regardless of any stimulus to gain cooperation, Bashir would not easily accept Israeli intervention—military or political. If, for the sake of argument, a change must be made to modify Bashir's reaction to the given hypothetical, the Israeli approach would have to operate extremely cautiously and slowly. Bashir seeks a reason to get revenge on Israel for the Yom Kippur War, so Israel cannot make any mistakes or underestimate Khartoum in any way. Essentially, Israel would only stand a chance if a bipartisan movement between Israelis and Palestinians could properly function and lobby Bashir for change. In this event, the effort to stop the genocide stands a chance.

Unfortunately, no true solution exists for the final hypothetical situation. Should Bashir fall into the hands of an intervening force, he would most likely get himself killed before any trial could occur. Following the hypothetical, however, where he is successfully captured, a few precautions could prevent Bashir from such behavior as to draw memorable attention to himself.

As he has no respect for imperialism and international organizations, the ICC at The

Hague would only encourage such a response. Rather than turning Bashir over to the ICC, a deliberate effort must be made to place Bashir in an Islamic court. Trying Omar al-Bashir under sharia law seems the only possible chance to keep his behavior in check. Furthermore, to keep Bashir from outbursts, any trial setting would need to be relatively free of Western influence—media, in particular. If he feels at all like ‘the world is watching,’ he will only be encouraged to rant and demonstrate further.

Sadly, most of the possible modifications for these hypotheticals only reduce the severity of Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir’s reactions and solve nothing. A potential benefit does arise from such a situation, however, in that any amount of cooperation on his part would show a step in the right direction and the potential to save countless lives. While no aspect of this analysis provides guarantees, the general idea of empathizing with an enemy has benefited wartime negotiations for centuries.

Bashir’s reputation as a tyrant thug may never change, but his hard-line approach to Islamization or extermination could weaken enough to make a difference. His witty charm and sociable nature seem obvious tools in manipulating the old general at his own game and could easily be the key in resolving these decades-old crises. With a more-informed and strictly analytical approach, even more possibilities to use Bashir in an attempt at peace could present themselves. Though the solutions yielded exist as nothing but hopeful guesswork, a certain behavioral pattern is obvious in Bashir’s known history, and such patterns—as behaviorism argues—do not change. With this established, a behavioral approach to this dictator may prove the final solution to a quandary once thought utterly unsolvable.