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Still, the ICC has focused almost exclusively on crimes committed in Africa. Some of the most powerful countries in the world have not yet joined the ICC, including China, Russia, and the United States. The ICC has yet to initiate any investigations against citizens of nations that hold significant power in international law.

Jenia Turner, professor of law at Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law, argues that the ICC can regain some of its [sociological legitimacy](#) by becoming a mixed court—composed of both international and national judges—explaining that “[a] less hierarchical international criminal justice system that relies significantly on national governments is likely to be better informed by diverse perspectives, more acceptable to local populations, and more effective in accomplishing its ultimate goals.” This is because local judges “are more likely to be attuned to the [interests and preference](#) of local populations.” This argument also reflects an emergent soft law norm—the principle of [fair reflection](#)—which requires that judicial selection be a fair reflection (i.e. a descriptive representation) of the society.

The accusations of anti-African bias facing the ICC can likely be attributed to both the historical wrongs of colonialism justified under international law and the inherent difficulty of applying international law equitably when international criminal jurisdiction requires a country's consent. Either way, the ICC is facing historic opposition that could gain further traction and likely shape the court's actions to come.

United States Lifts Sanctions on Sudan

February 21, 2017

by Marina Mekheil

On January 13, 2017, U.S. President Barack Obama issued an [executive order](#) revoking some economic sanctions that had been imposed on Sudan.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury cited several indications of “sustained progress” from the Sudanese government in areas such as counterterrorism and ceasing hostilities with conflicting parties within the country. Over the last two decades, [Sudan’s government](#) has committed mass killings, implemented systematic rape, bombed children and schools, starved civilians, and tortured and killed protesters and activists. The [United States Treasury Department](#), however, asserts that Sudan’s government has demonstrated “a marked reduction in offensive military activity, a pledge to maintain a cessation of hostilities in conflict areas in Sudan, [and] steps toward improving humanitarian access throughout Sudan.” President [Obama](#), in a letter to Congress, cited “Sudan’s positive actions over the past six months” as the motivating factor behind this historical reversal of U.S. foreign policy. [The State Department](#) also issued a statement describing increased cooperation with Sudan and attesting to the steps Sudan has taken to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

[On November 3, 1997](#), President Bill Clinton issued an executive order imposing a trade embargo against Sudan. In [April 2006](#), President Bush, in acknowledgment of [UN Security Council Resolution 1591](#), froze the assets of certain persons in connection with the conflict in Darfur. Now, for the [first time in twenty years](#), Sudan will be able to trade extensively with the United States but will still be officially labeled by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism. However, [Sudan’s Foreign Ministry](#) is hopeful that through future cooperation, Sudan will no longer be classified as such.

The announcement of the sanctions lift has garnered significant dissent. The [Enough Project](#) called it “premature” and said “any easing of pressure on Sudan should be in exchange for resolving conflicts in Darfur and South Kordofan, and ensuring humanitarian access to those affected by military blockades.” United States House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman [Ed Royce](#) stated, “while counterterrorism cooperation has increased, the government still abuses the fundamental human rights of the Sudanese people.” One of the few positive reactions came from [Peter Pham](#), Director of the Africa Center at the Washington-based Atlantic Council, who argued that the sanctions had predominantly affected ordinary Sudanese people, and that the lift did not “reward” Sudan’s President, Omar al-Bashir.

Concern for the well-being of ordinary Sudanese people is not the only reason the Obama administration decided to revoke the sanctions. The administration felt that although Sudan has a long road ahead, a better relationship between the two countries can garner some clout in the region for the United States. Sudan is one of the poorest and most afflicted countries in Africa. The United States and Sudan are emerging from two decades of bitter relations, in which the latter has consistently expressed the desire to have sanctions and restrictions lifted. While sanctions are considered one of the most effective tools used by states to ensure compliance with international