Understanding Complexity in Darfur:
Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy


A Senior Honors Thesis


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*"In a less than perfect world, where the ideal so obviously lies beyond human reach, it is natural that the avoidance of the worst should often be a more practical undertaking than the achievement of the best, and that some of the strongest imperatives of moral conduct should be ones of a negative rather than a positive nature...it is not surprising that some of the most significant possibilities for the observance of moral considerations in American foreign policy relate to the avoidance of actions that have a negative moral significance, rather than to those from which positive results are to be expected."*

- George F. Kennan
Morality and Foreign Policy
Foreign Affairs, Winter 1985/86

**Introduction**

In April 2003, an airport in North Darfur State in western Sudan was attacked, looted and held under siege for a period of a few days by a rebel group, or rebel groups, attempting to secure arms and vehicles for a rebel insurgency and hoping to send a message to the government ruling in Khartoum.  This barely reported quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we literally know nothing has since, even yet somehow unexpectedly, turned into what has been (accurately or otherwise) identified as the worst humanitarian crisis facing the international community at present.  The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] estimates 240,000 Darfuri currently live in twelve camps in Eastern Chad, having fled from neighboring Darfur.[1]  Another 3.3 million Darfuri are located in internally displaced persons [IDP] camps in the region.[2]

The situation in Darfur has attracted a growing amount of media attention in the world community and more recently, in the United States.  Some articles report the news of the day streaming from the region, summing totals of refugees, IDPs, casualties, intervention status, humanitarian aid, and general temperature of the conflict.  Otherwise, the most obscene references to *Darfur* demonstrate the buzz word news worthiness of the conflict:  this story is a really big hook.  Ask the average individual about this "hook" and you may be decidedly un-surprised to hear how the Arab government is committing genocide against a poor, marginalized, peripheral African population.  A slight more surprising may be an assessment of the conflict – a bit more historically accurate – which relates that the government is conducting a genocidal

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[1] United Nations.  Economic and Social Council.  Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees.  *UNHCR expresses growing concern over affects of Chad unrest on refugees.*  4 February 2008.
<http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/47a737514.html> Accessed 18 February 2008.
[2] Humanitarian Information Centre for Darfur.  *Darfur IDP Gathering Map*.  October 2007.
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/358C2FECF946FDA4C125709E0044F761/$File/hicd_IDP_sdn081005.pdf?OpenElement> Accessed 25 November 2007.

campaign against a rebellion started due to economic marginalization. And, finally, you may be

disheartened to hear how environmental scarcity has driven the region into utter anarchy and

chaos, where Arab and African alike are engaged in an existential battle over land and water.

Occasionally you may receive a combination of the above three factors; admittedly, that answer

will hardly result from the average individual. It is doubtful you will learn of any other

contributing factors to the conflict. Worst of all, you might even be asked, "Darfur?"

Yet most major media outlets have from almost the very beginning portrayed the conflict

primarily in its ethnic tone. Following the U.S.'s declaration of genocide in Darfur, ethnicity has

become even more entrenched and implicit in our understanding of the situation. All of this begs

the question: why has the conflict been constructed in such simple terms? The argument has

most certainly been made that simplifying conflicts enables organizations like Amnesty

International, Human Rights Watch, SaveDarfur.org, and others to quickly and dramatically

mobilize support for action. The presence of green "Save Darfur" wristbands and t-shirts

emphasizes the reality of this justification. Furthermore, when one party to a conflict is un-

questionably painted as victim, and another as oppressor, no questions follow as to the

appropriateness of the support being solicited and subsequently offered. We can feel good about

doing something for the victims of a conflict. Or, perhaps more accurately, we can stop feeling

bad.

The danger in this line of thinking is that the simplicity with which we address this

particular conflict appears to have contributed to the problem, probably in ways that have yet to

become apparent even to those most informed. Keeping things simple in our minds, otherwise

known as sticking our collective heads in the sand, has implications, and it appears they can be

pretty bad, too. The question then becomes: *which is worse?* And so, in order to discuss

possible answers to that increasingly important question, this paper begins with a description of the opening of the conflict based on media accounts of the region in late 2002 and early 2003, attempting to date the conflict as accurately as possible. From here, the paper establishes the factual components of the conflict structured around the major players: the rebel militia forces and the government forces.

The next section of the paper elaborates on some of the most commonly cited causes of the conflict – ethnicity, economic marginalization and environmental scarcity – but is not satisfied with a cursory review of those causes. Rather, the paper surpasses the 'logical' assumptions often associated with these causes and investigates their actual historical legacies. Also, this paper punctuates the detrimental consequences of historical analyses that fail to perceive the dynamic aspects of the conflict. Any analysis of or prescription for the conflict must move through time with the conflict. A static snapshot of the conflict at its beginnings will fail to yield any successful attempts at peace.

The paper then discusses the perspectives of the parties involved in an attempt at a qualitative understanding of the progression of the conflict from its beginning. The importance of this exercise should not be diminished. As is shown in the discussion, dangerous assumptions and conclusions will be drawn – and worse, acted upon – when the actions of the parties involved are viewed from an outsider's perspective, especially when that perspective is less than gracious or not wholly informed. The conclusion discusses the already evident repercussions of a narrow understanding of the conflict. Negotiator policy has in reality made an even bigger mess of the conflict than it may have been otherwise. While counterfactual statements such as this are difficult to evaluate, the circumstances presently in Darfur support the assertion. The discussion included here elaborates the consequences of that policy and the implications of the

conflict for the international arena, presently and in the near and far future.

Finally, this paper suggests that the tendency for conflict to be understood and handled in this simplistic manner has at its foundation a moral component. That morality has been translated into policy designed to preserve global standards regarding government responsibility, genocide, ethnic cleansing and human rights issues. However, as this paper demonstrates, in our pursuit of that justice, we have simultaneously insulted what should have been placed at the center of our policy from the start: the innocent Darfuris whose suffering prompted our pursuits. Rather than pursue justice in a global manner without consideration for local impacts (what has occurred in Darfur), our pursuit to preserve global standards of justice ought to direct our attention and motivate our intervention, while local justice ought to determine our specific policy. This paper underscores the many complexities operating in the conflict, describes them more fully in detail and in aggregate form and emphasizes how our morality interrupts justice. That is to say, more precisely, this paper does not attempt to solve the overall crisis in Darfur. Rather, this paper suggests a different route to security so that a more holistic approach can prevent future conflict. Because the approach suggested here can have the appearance of immorality, its implementation is unlikely. Based on this analysis, the situation may simply be hopeless.

### Dating the Conflict

Like many conflicts, the inception date for this one is at best elusive. Media reports from the region at that time are sparse, while those that do exist are sometimes unclear as to the subjects of the reports, and at other times should be considered propaganda from one of the parties involved. These reports do supply a general temperature of the region leading up to the most commonly cited event – the rebel attack on El Fasher Airport, North Darfur State, in April 2003 – as the beginning of the conflict.

On 8 April 2003, Africa News reported a concerted effort by the Government of Sudan against indigenous communities in the west of the country in response to an armed rebellion. That article referred to a statement suggesting the government of Sudan had killed a prominent leader of the community the previous month – an indication that the insurgency had begun earlier than the El Fasher attack.[3] Minni Minnawi, the prominent rebel leader, in an interview with Al-Jazeera in Makkah, Saudi Arabia on 25 April 2003, indicated that the rebel movement and the government were already negotiating, though those talks were apparently failing.[4] On 30 April 2003, Africa News reported Darfur had been experiencing heightened insecurity. Khartoum had apparently been arming Arab militias against sedentary agricultural groups. It was in response to those attacks – by the 'Arab nomadic tribes' – that indigenous communities had taken up arms and founded the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement/Army [SLM/A].[5] This lead directly to the attack on El Fasher, about which then Governor Lieutenant General Ibrahim Sulayman reported that between 400 – 450 men driving approximately 30 Toyota Land Cruisers had attacked the airport with guns and other weapons.[6] This has become the customary date of the beginning of the conflict, though that date is easily contested.

The two most informed authors on the conflict – Alex de Waal and Gérard Prunier – offer their own assessments. Prunier does not give a specific date for the beginning of the insurrection. Rather, he asserts that following the violence in Darfur in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially after Libya's man Idriss Déby had taken power in Chad, things quieted down to an 'acceptable' level of calm. In his words, "…it was not exactly peace, but it was no longer open

[3] Africa News. *Government accused of Darfur attacks.* 8 April 2003. Online. Lexis Nexis Academic. Accessed 7 February 2008.
[4] Al-Jazeera. *Manna Arko Minnawi*. 25 April 2003. Transcript online. Lexis Nexis Academic. Accessed 7 February 2008.
[5] Africa News. *Rights Groups Condemn Government Action in Darfur*. 30 April 2003. Online. Lexis Nexis Academic. Accessed 7 February 2008.
[6] Sudanile. *Official claims Darfur rebels have links with southern counterparts*. 30 April 2003. Online. Lexis Nexis Academic. Accessed 7 February 2008.

war – just a state of insecurity where villages would be attacked once in a while, where trucks traveling to and from the markets were liable to get ambushed but where long periods of calm would give the impression that things were basically all right and that all this was simply an expression of some kind of 'traditional' or 'tribal' violence."  In his estimation, the conflict began around the time "Khartoum [woke] up to the danger".  This would have been around November 2002 and by sometime around the new year, "the fighting had picked up and was not going to stop."[7]

Alex de Waal and Julie Flint assert that the most common date cited as the beginning of the insurrection is 26 February 2003, following an attack by the Darfur Liberation Front (later to become the SLM/A) on district headquarters in Golo.  However, they cite the SLM/A leadership claiming an attack on the same town in June 2002 and officially endorse 21 July 2001 as the beginning date.  On that day, the leadership of what would later become the SLM/A swore an oath to work together to fight Arab supremacist policies.  The oath was apparently very secretive which contributes to the difficulty in establishing a beginning date.[8]  De Waal's endorsement of an oath as sufficient to trigger the origination date of a conflict is less than stringent, though the attack in Golo in July 2002 certainly could be supported as the appropriate date.  For our purposes, the original dating of the conflict should lie somewhere between that attack in Golo and October 2002.

### The Rebel Movements

While the date of the beginning of the insurgency is difficult to pinpoint, the perpetrators of the attacks in late 2002 and early 2003 are much less ambiguous.  Two rebel groups emerged in Darfur:  the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army [SLM/A] and the Justice and Equality

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[7] Prunier 2007, 74, 91 – 92
[8] De Waal 2005, 76, 85

Movement [JEM]. The first major attack on the airport in El Fasher, North Darfur State, was a collaborative effort by both groups.[9] While both rebel groups recognized a common enemy – the Government of Sudan – they both had clearly distinct histories, each held different views of an appropriate resolution to their claims of marginalization and under-representation and, therefore, remained distinct.

*Sudan Liberation Movement/Army*

The SLM/A, originally the larger and more militarily adept of the two rebel movements, was led primarily by two individuals representing the two main ethnic groups that comprised the movement, the Fur and the Zaghawa. Abdel Wahid Mohamed al Nur led the Fur of the movement while Abdallah Abbaker Bashar led the Zaghawa. The SLM/A largely drew from these two ethnic groups and a third, the Masalit. The original intellectual members of the group, whose ideas founded the rebellion, came from many backgrounds. Some were farmers, some were former army members, police officers, students from Khartoum, lawyers, doctors, and others who were interested in self-defense, joining in response to attacks by the government.[10] The roots of the group have been traced as far back as the war in Darfur in 1988 – 1989, a remnant of the self-defense groups that had formed at that time and had, until over a decade later, remained mostly underground. They buried most of their weapons and waited.[11]

Foot-soldiers, on the other hand, were primarily drawn from the traditional self-defense committees of the villages and ethnic groups. A member of the committee was responsible for mobilizing a group of fighters upon being attacked or upon imminent threat of an attack. These committees were established institutions in the villages and it was through them that the leaders

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[9] Al-Hayat. *Sudanese opposition sources describe attack on western provinces capital.* April 26, 2003, London, 1, 6. Accessed through Lexis Nexis.

[10] De Waal and Flint 2005, 66 – 88. See also Victor Tanner 2007, 24. Minni Arkow Minnawi replaced Abdallah Abbaker in 2004 after he was killed early in that year.

[11] Prunier 2007, 93 -94

of the SLM/A drew their numbers. Other recruits are reported to have joined the rebels due to general lawlessness and to the violence imposed on their own people.[12] They were generally younger, jobless high school graduates or drop-outs.[13] According to an interview conducted by Alex de Waal in January 2005, by that time the SLM/A had grown to around 11,000 in number.[14]

Members of the Fur group, three in particular, raised funds for the rebel movement from several sources. Fundraising activities in Khartoum, according to one estimate, amassed more than a million Sudanese pounds, used to purchase ammunition. Otherwise, funding came from expatriates in places like Qatar, Syria, possibly Chad[15] and most certainly arms were routed to the movement from Eritrea, distributed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army [SPLM/A] from the south.[16] When these funds were depleted, the leaders of the movement began to rely on donations from their constituencies, in the form of money, food and supplies.[17] As the conflict continued, the rebels also began amassing weapons, vehicles and ammunition from their attacks on police stations and army reserves – one possible motivation for the attack on the Al Fasher airport and other government stations leading up to April of 2003.[18]

*Justice and Equality Movement [JEM]*

The leadership of the Justice and Equality Movement has been closely linked to current and former members of the National Islamic Front [NIF], the ruling party in Khartoum. Most notably, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim is reported to have begun the movement and Hassan al Turabi, infamous Islamist and former mentor to the current president of Sudan, Omar al Bashir, has

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[12] Tanner 2005, 16, 18
[13] Prunier 2007, 94
[14] De Waal 2005, 85
[15] De Waal 2005, 71, 84. £1,000,000 Sudanese converts to approximately $388.43 U.S. Calculation data was gathered from www.oanda.com/convert/classic. Tanner 2007 more forcefully confirms financial resources coming from the diaspora in Chad.
[16] Tanner 2007, 22
[17] De Waal 2005, 71
[18] Tanner 2005, 16

financial and ideological ties to the movement.[19]  Their intellectuals include those with

backgrounds in medicine, anthropology, politics and government employment.[20]

Since the National Islamic Front came to power in Khartoum by coup in 1989, the two

master-minds of that military victory, Bashir and Turabi, split over ideology.  The defections

from the NIF that followed are directly linked to the formation of the JEM in Darfur.  Its

intellectual leadership is drawn largely from those disillusioned constituents who preferred a

more Islamic approach to the problem of marginalization than the SLM/A had to offer.[21]

Additionally, the JEM is distinct in that is it also largely drawn from a specific group within the

Zaghawa – the Kobe – centralized in Western Darfur state.  This group straddles the border with

Chad, and those living in Sudan represent the minority of the Kobe in this area.  The roots of this

movement date as early as 1993 with the original intentions of reforming the NIF from the inside

out.[22]

The members of this movement, as stated, were largely drawn from the Zaghawa Kobe

branch, Khalil Ibrahim's ethnic affiliation.  Some were drawn by the Islamic ideology of the

leadership, others by family and friendship ties, and still others, just as with the SLM/A, were

young, jobless high school drop-outs and some graduates.[23]  Others still were drawn into the

movement in the spirit of revenge or justice, men having witnessed violence against their

families or villages.  The JEM, however, began considerably smaller than the SLM/A, with only

an estimated 100 fighters in March 2003.  This group's strength came not from its numbers but

rather from its political expertise.  These leaders knew political savvy, could organize and form

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[19] Evidence of the link between Turabi and the JEM has been contested, most notably by Alex de Waal.  A
discussion of that debate follows below.
[20] De Waal 2005, 89 – 90
[21] Prunier 2007, 121 – 122
[22] De Waal 2005, 89, 92
[23] Prunier 2007, 94

solid structure and institutions and were connected to Khartoum.[24]  In May 2000, the JEM

published and anonymously distributed the Black Book, which outlines the political and

economic marginalization of Darfur and other regions of the country.  Part I of the Black Book

was published in 2000, in August 2001 the JEM declared their political existence, and almost

one year later, Part II surfaced.[25]

*Cohorts?*

The first major attack on the airport in El Fasher in April 2003 was reported to be a

collaborative effort between the two groups.[26]  As discussed, the two groups are distinct from

each other in a few ways.  First, the ideology of the JEM is far too Islamist for the members and

leadership of the SLM/A.[27]  Second, the JEM is drawn from a distinct sub-group of the Zaghawa,

a group who apparently displays suspicion and animosity toward another particular sub-group in

the Zaghawa dominant in the SLM/A.  Third, the JEM is politically much more savvy than the

SLM/A, whose leadership fears a summary side-lining by the JEM leaders if the groups were to

align and merge.[28]  Finally, as described already, the roots of the groups are clearly distinct.

They were not borne of a collaboration to begin, one dating to the late 1980s and the other only

to 1993; one from security committees, the other from an ideological break within the ruling

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[24] Tanner 2007, 16, 31

[25] De Waal and Flint 2005, 93.  Discrepancy exists between the "coming out" dates offered by the two most notable, and arguably, most informed, authors on this conflict.  While the date here is supplied by Alex de Waal, Gérard Prunier accounts, "On 5 March [2003] Khalil Ibrahim…claimed from London…having initiated the revolt in the name of the *hitherto unknown* Justice and Equality Movement." (Prunier 2007, 93.  Emphasis added.)  Furthermore, de Waal also claims that Dr. Ibrahim declared his movement's existence from the Netherlands, not London, although the discrepancy in dates may account for the difference in location.  See also Tanner 2007, 32.  A discussion of the contents of the Black Book follows below.

[26] Al-Hayat. *Sudanese opposition sources describe attack on western provinces capital.*  April 26, 2003, London, pp. 1, 6.  Accessed through Lexis Nexis.  It should be noted that in the same article, Minni Arkow Minnawi categorically denied any complicity between the groups.  According to the article, Minni "denied, however, any relations between his movement and the 'Justice and Equality Movement'."  Minni had not yet assumed a leadership position in the movement, but was secretary to then leader Abdallah Abbaker.  For an excellent summary and timeline of Minni's ascension, see Tanner 2007.

[27] De Waal 2005, 95

[28] Tanner 2007, 34, 36

party in Khartoum.  That they both ended up in the same area fighting the same rebel insurgency appears to be coincidental.  Any alignment between the two groups would be temporary at best, based on a common enemy rather than a common future cause.[29]

The original leader of the Fur group within the SLM/A was Abdel Wahid al Nur, and his counterpart for the Zaghawa group was Abdallah Abbakar, whose death in early 2004 led to the ascension of Minni Minnawi.  In-fighting between the groups is directly linked to these two men. Throughout 2004 and into 2005, they jockeyed for power and control of the rebel militia and it quickly became clear that the two were not united by a common goal, but rather, were only functionally united in that they shared a common enemy.  The SLM/A experienced its first major split in leadership in early 2004.[30]

Prior to the attacks in early 2003, most SLM/A leaders and members had acquiesced to a silent and secret rebellion.  During those early months, later in 2002, the local Darfuri population, who reportedly had been suffering from random and violent attacks by Arab militias, supported the SLM/A because they had come to the population's rescue.  However, when the government began retaliating against the rebel attacks with Antonov bombers, the population began to realize that the rebel groups were not only defending against and launching attacks on the Arab militias – they were also attacking the government.  Upon this realization, the local populations kindly requested their retreat from the area.[31]

The two top leaders of the militia – Abdel Wahid with the Fur and Minni Minnawi with the Zaghawa – chose to handle that request differently.  Abdel Wahid remained in Jebel Marra and Minni Minnawi coalesced.  It is within this situation that de Waal places the original splits of the rebel group along ethnic lines.  The split was cemented even further when Abdel Wahid

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[29] De Waal 2005, 95
[30] Tanner 2005, 11, 26, 36
[31] De Waal 2007, 86

reaped the unfortunate consequences of his decision to remain in Jebel Marra as the government

had essentially surrounded the mountainous range in which he was located. Minni subsequently

outright denied Abdel Wahid any assistance; he was left helpless to deal with his decision to

remain. In a decidedly fortunate turn of events for the hitherto unfortunate leader, the Sudan

People's Liberation Movement/Army [SPLM/A, the rebel group involved in the civil war in the

south] – a distinctly unusual suspect – rescued the impotent rebel and he was flown by helicopter

to the capital of Kenya.[32]

In what appears to be retaliation for the summary snubbing of Abdel Wahid's call for

assistance by Minni, some Fur in the area report subsequent clashes between the Fur and

Zaghawa members of the militia. It has been reported that scores of rebel fighters were killed in

the collateral confrontations. Over the following months and years, numerous attempts and calls

for attempts to mend the differences between these two groups have been made. Unfortunately,

these attempts were frustrated further by splits within the field of operations: those who had

remained in Darfur to actually implement the insurgency began to resent these two leaders for

their noticeable – and noticeably convenient – absence. The two factions within the SLM/A

began to be referred to aptly as SLA-Minni and SLA-Abdel Wahid.

In 2006, the negotiation of the Darfur Peace Agreement further fomented divisions in the

rebel movement.[33] Minni Minnawi unexpectedly signed the agreement and he was the only one

of the three rebel leaders to do so. He effectively became the fourth highest executive in the

country upon his signing and many of his supporters joined other pre-existing factions of the

SLA, new sub-factions of his own group, created new groups or simply ceased fighting

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[32] De Waal 2007, 86

[33] Most of the following discussion is drawn from Victor Tanner's *Divided They Fall: The Fragmentation of Darfur's Rebel Groups*. Tanner offers an excellent and very detailed presentation and analysis of the rebel groups and their splits following the DPA in 2006.

altogether.[34]  Originally, the splits were occurring along position lines:  those who had signed the DPA and those who had not.  But as the conflict has changed since 2006, so have the alliances between and amongst the rebels.

The nature of the splits within the JEM have been of a different character than of the SLM/A.  While most of the leadership has remained the same throughout the conflict, the JEM began a sort of coalition-building following the DPA, joining the National Redemption Front with various former SLM/A factions.  Power plays amongst the leadership led to the demise of the once-powerful union in early 2007.[35]  Since the splitting of the SLM/A, the JEM has begun to increase its arms and power in the region and has become quite the military force with which to deal, garnering more weapons and more men over time.  Its attacks on Government forces and janjaweed were rather successful during its coalition with the National Redemption Front.

Various attempts to handle the organization and enumeration of the rebel militias have yielded the following:  on August 3, 2007, Zibb News noted that the non-signatory groups had splintered into more than a dozen groups;[36]  PBS Newshour's Charlayne Hunter-Gault reported at the beginning of October 2007 that some 22 factions were present in the area;[37]  finally, the U.N. recently counted 28 rebel factions present in the conflict.[38]  The following list of rebel groups gives an indication of the intensity of the splintering since the DPA was signed in 2006:  Sudan Liberation Army and Movement;  SLA-Abdel-Gasim Imam;  SLA-Abdel Wahid, which subsequently split into the Front for Liberation and Rebirth, a.k.a. SLA-Free Will, and SLA-

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[34] Tanner 2007, 41

[35] Tanner 2007, 55 – 56

[36] Zibb News.  "AU Mediator says Arusha talks meant to unite Darfur rebel factions."  BBC Monitoring, August 3, 2007.  http://www.zibb.com/301.aspx?a=1439871&h=
AU+mediator+says+Arusha+talks+meant+to+unite+Darfur+rebel+factions (accessed 10/23/2007).

[37] The Online NewsHour.  "AU Peacekeepers Missing After Rebel Attack in Darfur." October 1, 2007.
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/july-dec07/darfur_10-01.html (accessed 10/5/2007).

[38] *The New York Times.* "At the Darfur Talks in Libya, Rebel Unity Is as Scarce as the Rebels Themselves."
October 30, 2007.

Peace Wing; SLA-Classic; SLA-Minnawi; G19; National Redemption Front, a coalition between non-signatories to the DPA; SLA-Unity; and SLA-Mainstream. G19, SLA-Peace Wing and SLA-Classic enjoyed friendly relations at one time. The National Redemption Front and SLA-Classic attempted to unite to form the Non-Signatory Factions [NSF].[39]

**The Government Forces**

*The janjaweed*

The current reference to the janjaweed is very closely associated with the government's response to the insurgency in the west of the country, implying that the government recruited the militias to carry out its counter-insurgency campaign. Musa Hilal, the infamous leader of the janjaweed, claims publicly and proudly that the government of Sudan has called upon him to fight the rebels. In response to the government's appeal, Hilal raised a militia from his ethnic base in order to fight that rebellion. The janjaweed, under his direction, began assembling at a camp in North Darfur State at Misteriha.[40]

Members of the janjaweed are drawn from various distinct sources: former bandits and highwaymen, former soldiers dismissed from the regular forces, members of "Arab" groups engaged in very local conflicts with their "African neighbors," released prisoners given their freedom in exchange for joining the militia, extremist members of the Arab Union, and young unemployed high school graduates – similar to those who had been recruited by the rebel movements.[41] Corroborating the assessment that some of the recruits are former prisoners, one Darfuri, previously a policeman, stated that he recognized the janjaweed militia members as common criminals. He remembered having seen them in jail cells – naming at least four as

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[39] Tanner 2007, 40 – 66
[40] De Waal 2005, 39
[41] Prunier 2007, 97

thieves.[42]   Interestingly, some of the names the militia members assigned to themselves are:

"the border intelligence division," "the second reconnaissance brigade," and "the quick and the

horrible."[43]

Another source of recruits may be 'Arabs' from West Africa (Niger, Nigeria, Mali,

Mauritania, Central African Republic, Chad and Burkina-Faso), though the number of those

recruits may be relatively low.  According to one estimate, the total military base of the

janjaweed is no more than 10 – 15,000 strong.[44]  De Waal and Flint estimate that Musa Hilal has

at his command 20,000 men.[45]  Each of the three Darfur states has at least one similar base and

so the number could be as many as fifty or sixty-thousand in total.  The janjaweed may not be a

homogenously Arab group – some members are drawn from 'African' ethnic groups.[46]

The janjaweed logistically sustain themselves through government support of arms, funds

and looting rights.  According to one source, recruits were to receive £150,000 Sudanese per

month – $58US/month – as base salary.  When they had their own camel or horse, they received

an additional £20,000 Sudanese per day – or $7.75US.[47]  Other sources estimate the monthly

allowances between £200,000 and £300,000, $78US – $116US, depending on camel or horse

ownership.  Upper-ranking members of the janjaweed are paid as much as £600,000 Sudanese

per month.[48]  The militias were granted looting rights and impunity for their other various crimes.

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[42] DeWaal 2005, 68
[43] Prunier 2007, 98
[44] Tanner 2005, 19 – 21
[45] De Waal 2005, 40
[46] Tanner 2005, 19
[47] De Waal 2005, 40.  According to personal e-mail correspondence with de Waal, this reference is to the Sudanese Old Pound.  This results in a yearly salary of $3,486.00.  Economic data specific to the Darfur region only is sparse.  For comparison, the CIA World Fact book reports an estimated gross domestic product per capita of $2,400.00 and the Gross National Income per capita of $810.00 for the whole of Sudan, figures for 2006. Conversion calculations were processed at www.oanda.com/convert/classic and reflect the exchange from 2 February 2003.
[48] Human Rights Watch 2004b. *Darfur Destroyed:  Ethnic Cleansing By Government and Militia Forces in Western Sudan.* Volume 16, Number 6(A). May 2004, 45.

Any cash or firearms found by the recruits were to be relinquished to the leaders.[49] Prunier offers a slightly higher estimate of payment for the recruits. Those without an animal were paid $79US/month and those with a horse or camel received $117US/month. In his calculation, officers in the janjaweed could receive as much as $233US/month. Of course, the militia members were also given a weapon.[50] Payment to the militia members creates incentive to join, of course, but looting appears to be another.[51]

We have taken here a cursory review of the janjaweed as it relates to the current conflict. A common assumption about the janjaweed is that this militia was recruited – or even created – by the government of Sudan in order to perpetrate its crimes against the Darfuri. However, several authors have elaborated extensively on the existence of the janjaweed prior to 2003 – one as early as the mid-1980s. Arab ethnic groups in Darfur began forming their own self-defense militias – a clear pre-cursor to the janjaweed – in response to increased conflict over access to land and water in Darfur. Agriculturalists had begun fencing off their lands to prevent the passage of herds of camel and cattle and the trampling of the season's crops. The largest of the janjaweed militias is from the Abbala [or camel-herding] Rizeigat ethnic group[52] and the term dates as far back as the early 1980s[53] and as late as the last years of the same decade during the Fur – Arab war of that time.[54] As we will see, the history of the janjaweed precedes the current conflict by over a decade.

The situation in Darfur in the early to mid-1980s stemmed partly from the international political atmosphere of the time.[55] The ruling government in Chad, prior to the coup by Hissene

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[49] DeWaal 2005, 40
[50] Prunier 2007, 97 – 102
[51] Tanner 2005, 19
[52] Tanner 2007, 43
[53] Harir 1994, 165
[54] De Waal 2005, 55
[55] A more detailed account of the historical context in Darfur follows below.

Habré in 1982, had been supported by Qaddafi's Libya, who at the time had been severely challenged by an adamant United States, Egypt and Sudan. In an effort to stunt Qaddafi's southward expansionist tendencies, those three states supported the Zaghawa, Habré's ethnic group, and others in their attempt to overthrow the ruling government in Chad, apparently too close to Qaddafi for the surrounding region's comfort. In classic proxy warfare, following Habré's successful coup, Libya continued to support the Arab ethnic groups recently ousted from the Chadian government, who, fully aware of the situation, drove the 'Arabs' back into Darfur. Meanwhile, leading up to the Darfur drought and famine of 1983 – 1984, desertification, reduced rainfall, increased commercial farming and migration to the Jebel Marra mountain range by other Darfuris further constrained the available resources. Agriculturalists and pastoralists were all competing for access to land and water around the mountain range at a time when that same access became an increasingly existential imperative.

It is within these historical circumstances that Sharif Harir places *janjawid*. His original dating of the term to the early 1980s appears to be the earliest. According to his description, the term *janjawid* translates most nearly to *hordes*. The Fur ethnic group, traditionally dominant in the Jebel Marra mountain range, began retaliating against the influx of all these 'non-indigenous' peoples. Resources were strained, agriculturalists were losing crops due to trampling, and tit-for-tat retaliation led to a generally increased level of banditry and criminal activity between various groups. In an effort to protect those crops and resources, members of the Fur ethnic group began burning fields of crops and blocking water access in order to drive the pastoralists into other areas. These assaults were answered by the pastoralists – the *janjawid*. The battle tactics have not changed. The janjaweed used tactics similar to those being reported today, including burning of villages, indiscriminate killing, and random appropriation of Fur property; these same tactics

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were reportedly used by the Fur militias against the Arabs and the janjaweed.[56]

It is important to remember that these conflicts appear to have been driven by a constraint on natural resources. Sharif Harir describes the conflicts in the 1980s as "Arab Belt" versus "African Belt."[57] However, it may be more informative to emphasize the correlation between livelihood strategies and ethnic groups. The groups in Darfur described as Arab are very generally also associated with pastoralism and those groups in Darfur described as African are also very generally associated with agriculturalism. And so, within this conflict, pastoralists were associated with the Arab ethnic groups who were also associated with the janjaweed. Of course, Darfur contains exceptions to these generalizations.

Alex de Waal and Julie Flint, on the other hand, date the term to the late 1980s and associate the use to the "Qoreishi" ideology. In a translation similar to Harir's, *janjaweed* refers to *hordes* or *ruffians*; these authors also associate the term to the G3 rifle, the devil and the horse, all three extrapolations on the Arabic words *jim, jinn and jawad*. According to this account, the term was first heard by Darfuris in the late 1980s, but the organization of the janjaweed actually began to formalize during and after 1994. It was at this time when the government in Khartoum began employing the militias to fight for the government. This militia tactic by the government became more predictable as time passed and by the end of the century, the government had come to rely heavily on para-militaries generally, and the janjaweed specifically in Darfur. It was at this time the janjaweed began receiving payment from the government, and began training through the army under the authority of the Popular Defense Forces (discussed below).[58]

In their discussion of the history of the janjaweed, de Waal and Flint digress substantially to the origins of Musa Hilal, notorious leader of the janjaweed mentioned above. In their

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[56] Harir 1994, 165
[57] Harir 1994, 142 – 185
[58] De Waal 2005, 55, 57, 58

estimation, Musa Hilal is the source of 'Arab supremacy' that permeates the government's campaign in Darfur.  Musa's father had clear connections to the Islamic Legion and the Arab Gathering in the early 1980s.  Tensions existing between Tripoli and Khartoum – products of more than a decade of suspicious transactions and exchanges between the two leaders – were finally relieved upon the deposing of Sudan's Nimeiri regime in 1985.  The roads leading into Darfur from the north were subsequently opened for food aid and relief for the victims of the recent drought.  Weapons also filtered into the region, carried by exiles, friends of the newly-ruling Sadiq Mahdi, returning to the Sudan.  According to de Waal and Flint, some of these individuals trained in Qaddafi's camps and brought with them the lacings of racist ideology – among these, presumably, were Sheik Hilal and his son, Musa.[59]

According to de Waal and Flint, the relationship between the janjaweed and the government became most entrenched and obvious in 2000.  General Abdalla Safi al Nur became the most influential of the Abbala (cattle-herding) Rizeigat (Arab) ethnic group, the base of the janjaweed, in the capital.  Meanwhile, a particularly nasty split was occurring in the capital between the two leading men of the National Islamic Front, Omar al-Bashir and Hassan Turabi.  Given the split and Turabi's overwhelming success in garnering Darfuri support leading to the coup in 1989, the central government began to expect rebellion from the West.  Safi al Nur proposed the enlistment of the janjaweed – members of his own constituency – in order to prevent a rebellion from escalating.[60]  This brings the history of the janjaweed to meet the current conflict in Darfur.

*The Armed Forces*

The janjaweed are obviously the most infamous of the parties working for the

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[59] De Waal 2005, 46 – 49
[60] De Waal 2005, 63

government in this counter-insurgency. But it is important to note they are not working alone and other government forces are also influencing the conflict. Opposing the rebel groups, the Government of Sudan offers its own ambiguous and complex arrangement. The government has employed, to a more limited extent, its Armed Forces. Overwhelming evidence shows that the attacks are perpetrated on the victims in Darfur in coordination with the Sudanese Armed Forces as the use of Antonov bombers would be impossible otherwise. On the other hand, it has also been reported that the Government of Sudan resorted to use of the paramilitaries because the Armed Forces refused to fight the Darfuri rebels and citizens. They had been largely drawn from the Darfur region and so were not trusted by Khartoum.[61]

*The Popular Defense Force*

The government has also involved its paramilitary Popular Defense Force [PDF], a quasi-compulsory service unit similar to the National Guard in the United States, where men of age are required to enlist before they are eligible to attend university. The Popular Defense Force, created in 1989 with the coup d'etat of Omar Bashir, has been described by the PRS Group/Political Risk Service as an Islamic popular militia. That organization also posits the Sudanese military may view the PDF as an attempt by the National Islamic Front to undermine its power and authority.[62]

*Coordination*

The Sudanese government assembled security committees to coordinate the actions of all the government groups, including the Armed Forces, the Police, the Sudanese Intelligence and Security Service, with the activities of the militia/janjaweed. The committee was comprised of

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[61] Prunier 2007, 97

[62] The PRS Group, Inc. *Military*. October 1, 1995. Online. Lexis Nexis Academic. The assertion pre-dates the current conflict. If the National Islamic Front at that time referred to Hassan Al-Turabi, the military may not have been more paranoid than realistic and perceptive. It was only four years later, after Turabi had been arrested by Beshir, that he signed his agreement with the SPML/A. The situation is discussed further below.

representatives of each of these entities to receive information and instruction from the government, coordinate the implementation, and then report to Ahmed Harun, then-Minister of State for the Interior and manager of the "Darfur Security Desk."[63]

The government forces have also morphed into more complex entities, difficult to precisely describe. The janjaweed have generally been described as a separate non-Armed Forces entity, also separate from the Popular Defense Forces. However, some members of the Masaleit believe that the Popular Defense Forces were completely replaced by the janjaweed – that "the janjaweed occupied all PDF places."[64] The fact that the PDF were training the janjaweed is a contributing factor to the confusion of the Darfuris about who is PDF, who is janjaweed and who is leading whom. In other accounts, specifically by Musa Hilal, notorious leader of the janjaweed, the group does not appear to be a separate entity. When questioned about the janjaweed, Hilal refers back to the government armament of the Popular Defense Force.[65]

### Root Causes

With an account of the history and the players of the conflict in place, what remains to be discussed are its causes. The most reported and accepted theories involve ethnicity, economics, environmental scarcity and religion. It is not difficult to trace the reasoning behind these concepts and the sources of these simplistic explanations of the conflict are the usual suspects: the media and academia. One expert on the region aptly stated, "The present crisis has been presented in the media as consisting of a form of ethnic cleansing verging on the genocidal, as carried out at Khartoum's behest by 'Arab' tribes against 'African' ones. This is both true and

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[63] International Criminal Court, 32 – 33
[64] De Waal 2005, 60
[65] Human Rights Watch. *Video Transcript: Exclusive Video Interview with Alleged Janjaweed Leader.* September 2004. http://hrw.org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/english/docs/2005/03/02/darfur10225.htm (accessed December 2, 2007)

false…."[66] Political theory also does little to expand the boundaries of these assumptions. That from which we have to choose is scarcely complicated. Even a less simplistic variety of theories from which to choose would hardly be transferable from one conflict to the next. And so how can we [and why do we?] call it theory? We are left with vague two-or-three variable formulas and those variables usually consist of ethnicity, environmental scarcity, economics, and political institutionalization. Some notables include Robert Kaplan's ancient ethnic hatreds explanation and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations?"

### *The Ethnic Element*

Explanations that emphasize Darfur's ethnic nature are certainly the most salient: the conflict is based on the ruling Arab elite in Khartoum ethnically cleansing the African periphery in Darfur. The description is not without warrant. Many interviews with refugees in Chad enunciate very clearly the ethnic nature of this conflict. They report very similar propaganda, verbal weaponry and hate speech by the perpetrators of the violence. Some victims report being referred to as slaves, hearing "Kill the Nubas!" repeatedly.[67] One victim reported being told, "You get this because you are black."[68] Another reported, "We must get these people out of this place."[69] Other former recruits of the janjaweed report the leadership of the paramilitary saying, "'We are the lords of this land'…'You blacks don't have any rights here…We are the original people of this area.'"[70]

Ethnic overtones to conflict in Darfur are nothing new. Alex de Waal with Julie Flint, Gérard Prunier and Sharif Harir all provide excellent historical evidence of ethnicity becoming entrenched in conflict. Alex de Waal traces the ethnically divided nature of Darfur, what he

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[66] Prunier 2007, 4
[67] Human Rights Watch 2004b, 14
[68] Human Rights Watch 2004a, 29
[69] Human Rights Watch 2004b, 12
[70] De Waal 2005, 41

refers to as "Arab supremacism," from the west of the country, rather than from the east in Khartoum. Originally, this 'racial' identity came from the Mahdi movement in the late 1800s, but was revived by Qaddafi in the 1970s and 1980s during his campaign against Chad.[71] His argument seems to be based almost solely on Qaddafi's manipulation of the region and the resultant spread of Pan-Arabism. This emphasizes the very personal nature of racism –'Arabs' believed they were supreme to such an extent they began to take violent action based upon those beliefs. Attached to the supremacism as de Waal and Flint present it in their account is something very dark. Their insinuation is of an internalized supremacism held by these Darfuris at a very profound level of identity, both for themselves and their 'African' counterparts.

In that book, the authors emphasize the influence of one man in particular – Musa Hilal, named by the State Department as a suspected genocidal criminal. His credentials also include leadership of the 'Arab Gathering,' a very secret organization linked to the ideology of Muammar Qaddafi, laced with expansionary racism of the 'Arab race'. De Waal and Flint link the government of Sudan to Musa Hilal through documents from Military Intelligence to that leader. However, these authors emphasize the racial intentions of Musa Hilal and their effects on the execution of the campaign in Darfur. Musa Hilal improvised his own agenda into that of the government's. De Waal and Flint reference documents they obtained quoting that leader, conjecturing that "…[h]e is waging *jihad*," and quoting Hilal thus: '….cleaning our land of…agents, mercenaries, cowards and outlaws.' One recruit reported that Hilal instructed his recruits, "'*Zurga* [blacks] always support the rebels.'"[72]

In a similar but far more detailed offering, Gérard Prunier establishes the Arab and

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[71] De Waal 2005, 25

[72] De Waal 2005, 36 – 41. It should be noted that these authors specifically trace the ethnic element to Hilal. That is to say, they specifically do not trace the ethnicity element to the Government of Sudan. This seeming paradox is explored and discussed further below.

African context from three distinct sources.  First, reaching as far back into history as the late 1960s and early 1970s, his account emphasizes political divisions among the parties in Khartoum over Islamism's place in the state's constitution as the very beginnings of ethnic manipulation in the region.  A second source of ethnic division occurred within the Umma party.  The Umma were strongly influenced by the Mahdist movement from the west.  Their leadership, Sadiq al Mahdi and Imam al-Hadi, Sadiq's uncle, were engaged in a battle over the party.  Through political jockeying, Sadiq secured the Fur ethnic group of Darfur as his constituency within the party, representing a majority of the region.  Imam al-Hadi had few options other than turning to the Arab ethnic groups for his support from that region.  These two men began to create exclusionary ethnic identities within the region.  Sadiq emphasized the difference between the Fur and the ruling 'Arabs' in Khartoum.  This left al-Hadi little choice but to draw the similarities between his constituency – the 'Arab' groups – and the ruling elite in Khartoum.[73]

Meanwhile, just across the border in Chad, ethnic identities were already quite salient, with the Presidency being held by a southern 'African' and northern Muslims jockeying for power.  Sadiq began to support these Muslims in staging their insurgency in Darfur.  A few years later, just to the north, the pining of newly empowered Muammar Qaddafi in Libya about Arab expansion also began influencing the Darfur region.  Qaddafi despised the President of Chad at the time and began funding the same insurgency as had Sadiq – only he was allowing them to also establish bases in Libya.  Qaddafi's unabashed racism filtered into the region and Pan-Arabism – yet another source of ethnic identity – was borne into Darfur.  At the time, the recent coup d'etat by Jaffar Nimeiri in Khartoum was encouraging to Qaddafi as he saw a fellow pan-Arab comrade in his Sudanese counterpart.  Not much time had passed before these two, Nimeiri and Qaddafi, split in their views and Sadiq, recently deposed by Nimeiri's successful coup, fled

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[73] Prunier 2007, 39 – 41

to Tripoli to Qaddafi's open arms.  Qaddafi's severe racism influenced the Darfur region,

especially after he created the Arab Union there.  According to Prunier, the pan-Arab

organization's first target was Chad; its second was Sudan.  In this, Nimeiri saw a clear threat to

his regime, first from the Arab Union, second from Qaddafi himself, and third from Sadiq al

Mahdi in Tripoli.  In response to these threats, Nimeiri began funding yet another Chadian

insurgency and allowed them to stage their troops in Darfur.  He threw his support behind Hissen

Habré, perceived by the Darfuri as 'Arab.'[74]

These three factors – splits in Khartoum over the influence of Islamism in the

Constitution, the split in the Umma party between uncle and nephew, and the influence of the

Libya-Chad-Sudan conflicts – summarize the source of ethnic identity and tension in Darfur

according to Prunier.  The racist ideology of the region was not personally borne of the Darfuris

as implied by de Waal and Flint.  Rather, these identities were imported into the region and

manipulated by the political elite for their own personal gain or for regime security.  Prunier

punctuates the decidedly non-ethnic nature of Darfur prior to his three watershed events.  For his

argument, it is imperative to understand that divisive ethnic identities were not borne of or in the

Darfuri as a matter of personal belief.  Rather, the ethnic element was created by outsiders.[75]

This argument is corroborated further:  "…individual participation in the *janjaweed* does not

imply tribal responsibility in the eyes of the people of Darfur….It is the decision of the leaders

within a tribe…."  Furthermore, "….there are many reports of individuals from tribes that are not

involved in the violence participating in *janjaweed* operations….these men are attracted by

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[74] Prunier 2007, 42 – 46.  Recall from the discussion of the history of the Janjaweed that Nimeiri was ultimately
overthrown by Sadiq in 1985.  Nimeiri's perception of threats was hardly paranoid as it would appear, based on
historical events, he was actually right.

[75] It should be noted Prunier's estimation of outside influence on the ethnic identity of the region seems to, assuredly
innocently, imply that Darfuris were easily manipulated, naïve and impressionable.  This assumption should be
checked with a great degree of caution.

opportunities for looting."[76]  The implication is that Prunier argues ethnicity, and especially

ethnic hatred, is not profound, rather imported or directed by leadership, whereas de Waal and

Flint argue just the opposite.  Moreover, Prunier articulates the ethnicity of Darfuris generally,

while de Waal and Flint articulate only the racism of the 'Arab' ethnic groups, implying that their

'African' counterparts did not hold such ideas.

Victor Tanner discusses the ethnic nature of the conflict within his overall argument that

it is mostly political in nature.  He argues that identity in Darfur has been fluid for a very long

time, though capitulating that over the past thirty-five years or so, ethnicity has increasingly

become a more important identifier among Darfuris.  Despite the qualification to his argument,

Tanner discusses in an assumptive manner the influence of Arab supremacism in the region; he

describes the conflict thus, "Like the current crisis, the 1987 conflict was triggered by the

convergence of a political agenda in Khartoum – the ideologically-driven push to expand the

'Arab belt'…."[77]  The emphasis here is that this war was driven, based on ethnicity, by the

Khartoum ruling party – and that this behavior is a pattern.  It should be noted, in 1987, when the

supposed agenda of the ruling party in Khartoum was the expansion of the 'Arab belt', the ruling

party in Khartoum was the Umma, led by Sadiq al Mahdi, whose political base was composed of

many Fur and Zaghawa of Darfur through their support of Ahmed Diriage and the Darfur

Development Front [DDF].  The current conflict, 'ideologically-driven' by Khartoum some

fifteen or so years later, has been conducted by the National Islamic Front, curiously the party

that deposed Sadiq in 1989.[78]  The stark difference in leadership between the two conflicts raises

serious doubts about Tanner's assertion that both conflicts were driven by Khartoum and that

both were the product of the desire to expand the 'Arab belt'.  We return to this inference below.

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[76] Tanner 2005, 19
[77] Tanner 2005, 9, 15
[78] See Prunier 2007, 41 – 42, 55.

Two additional, and quite instructive, sources cite ethnicity as a cause of the conflict in Darfur: the Sudanese government and the rebels themselves.  Reaching back over a decade into the region's history, the trend by the government of blaming tribal tensions for conflict is documented by Prunier:  "….the killings [in 1988] were piecemeal, closer to the theory later developed by the Khartoum government of 'tribal conflict.'  This type of explanation had been somewhat closer to the truth in 1988 than in 2003…."  Also, Prunier suggests that the government had tried to 'sell' the conflict as tribal clashes and banditry.[79]  The ethnic nature of the conflict emphasized by the rebel leaders may be based on reality and the experience of average Darfuris suffering at the hands of the 'Arab' militias.  However, the SLM/A clearly implicates a genocidal campaign of the government as the initial cause of their rebellion.  This may be true, again, but as we will discuss shortly, the citizens of Darfur were very much aware of the role of the Arab militias in the atrocities, and furthermore actually resented the rebels for targeting the government.  The conclusion should be clear: accusing a government of attempting to eliminate an entire ethnic group is sure to spur support.

*The media and ethnicity*

Gérard Prunier states, "The present crisis has been presented in the media as consisting of a form of ethnic cleansing verging on the genocidal, as carried out at Khartoum's behest by 'Arab' tribes against 'African' ones.  This is both true and false…."[80]  Victor Tanner notes, "[…] A tendency, especially in the west, [is] to view political violence in Africa as an extension of tribal conflict.  Conventional wisdom has it that tribal issues play out in the political arena:  rebel movements and political parties reflect ethnic membership; local interests drive would-be national agendas; ethnicity determines elections.  Such conclusions seldom resist careful

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[79] Prunier 2007, 65, 92
[80] Prunier 2007, 4

analysis…." He states again, "Once [….] tribal politics had come to the fore [….] Western analyses of the conflict seized on this dynamic and furthered the notion of an ethnic war."[81] Sharif Harir concludes, "[…] conflicts are usually reduced, either to the bellicosity of ethnic groups and their bigotry, or to the actions of self-seeking local elites."[82]

Much of the news media does not necessarily exclude other non-ethnic information about causes of the conflict. Rather, the articles seem to emphasize, or dramatically over-emphasize, ethnicity's role. John Mueller articulated the nature of the media's role in hooking the ethnic line into a story. He observes that journalists, the good ones anyway, generally do report some very specific information about a conflict, but usually bury that information so far into the story, and often, that information is mentioned only briefly. It is an element that must be mentioned, leaving the impression that it has only been included in order to preserve the 'integrity' of the reporting, however begrudgingly.[83] The following quantitative analysis supports the positive relationship between ethnic representations of this conflict and the western media. In the only New York Times article returned from a Lexis Nexis search containing the string "Sudan" which mentions Darfur between 1 January 2003 and 1 June 2003, the headline reads thus: "World Briefing Africa: Sudan: *Tribal Violence.*"[84] Comparatively, a similar search of most major media returns 1000 results, many from BBC Monitoring Middle East. Notably, these sources hardly even include the terms "Arab" or "African."

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[81] Tanner 2005, 21

[82] Harir 1994, 182. It should be noted that Harir was referencing the Fur-Arab conflict of 1988 – 1989 in this conclusion. However, the final statement of his essay is eerily predictive: "As it stands today [1994], Dar Fur may become yet another "South" Sudan albeit in the West." [Page 182.] As it turns out, perhaps a bit suspiciously, Dr. Harir became a candidate for leadership of the National Redemption Front following the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006 and prior to that had been a member of the SLM/A. See Tanner 2007. A discussion of this prophet-turned-rebel-leader follows below.

[83] Personal conversation with the author, 26 February 2008.

[84] New York Times. *Tribal Violence.* 25 April 2003, late edition, pg. 6. Lexis-Nexis Academic. Online. Accessed 28 February 2008. Emphasis added. Incidentally, Darfur is mis-spelled in the article. For a result, search "Dafur" instead.

### *The Economic/Political Marginalization Element*

*The Insider Perspective*

As mentioned earlier, in February 2000, anonymous authors began distributing *The Black Book,* an outline of the accusations of economic marginalization and developmental neglect by the government against the western, eastern, southern and central regions of the country. Development money originally ear-marked for projects across the landscape of Sudan had been redirected to the northern region.  According to the Black Book, the Northern region, composing Current River Nile and the Northern States, is home to 1,291,620 Sudanese, 12.2% of the country's population.  Meanwhile, government employees from the Northern region occupied 59.4% of the constitutional or ministerial positions – 120 in total – during the period July 1989 to December 1999.  1999 also saw the dominance of representatives in the Northern Region: 60.1% were from the north. [85]

The Black Book cites few specific examples of economic marginalization.  The above demonstrates an obvious imbalance of representation and power in the central government.  The imbalances in the division of wealth around the country are also outlined, each by its respective economic sector.  In the agricultural sector, the financial sector, industrial sector, water and energy sectors, transport and communications, education and development services and insurance and division of resources, government funds directed at projects are dominated by those in the Northern Region. The Black Book accuses specific ministers of redirecting funds from projects outside that region to projects inside that region. [86]  Regarding the distribution of the Black Book at the time, Prunier writes, "When Darfur militants came out with the…[("Black

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[85] Black Book 2004.  The Black Book used 1993 census data to calculate these percentages.

[86] The Black Book bases its characterization of economic marginalization on the Three Years Programme, one of several development plans adopted by the various governments since independence.  Others, without further description by the Black Book, include the Ten Years Strategic Development Plan and Five Years Development Plan.

Book")] in 2000, it said nothing to the average Northern Sudanese that they did not know already. What created a shock were not the contents of the book but simply the fact that an unspoken taboo had been broken and that somebody (obviously not a [Riverine Arab]) had dared to put into print what everybody knew but did not want to talk about."[87]

*The Outsider Perspective*

Several authors posit arguments regarding economic marginalization as a cause of the conflict. Alex de Waal and Julie Flint incorporate this aspect into their argument peripherally and mostly in the context of the Black Book and the Justice and Equality Movement's perspective. Gérard Prunier emphasizes the economic issues as driven by environmental constraints. He asserts, "In terms of brutal economic reality Darfur's discrimination was regional and global, not ethnic, racial and cultural….the levels [of political manipulation] were arbitrarily determined by non-Darfuri, but given the extreme economic poverty of the province, outside actors….could quite easily manipulate an economically deprived population."[88]

Victor Tanner offers the most elaborate description of the conflict in terms of economic marginalization, but emphasizes that the conflict is mostly political in nature. While he describes generally what the government in central Sudan has been neglecting to do in the region, specific examples of that marginalization are sparse. Dividing states into separate constituencies and depositing "Arab" traditional leaders is mentioned more than once. It should be noted, however, he suggests that political marginalization is evidenced because the government split the region of Dar Masalit into thirteen areas and further because of the "Arab" traditional leaders that were employed. However, he clearly states within the text that five of the thirteen leadership positions were assigned to the "Arab" leaders. He does not offer which ethnic group received the same

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[87] Prunier 2007, 77. It should be noted again Mr. Prunier's assumption of the ease with which the Darfuri population could be manipulated should be cautiously checked.
[88] Prunier 2007, 79

positions in the remaining eight areas, but it should be emphasized that five of thirteen is, obviously, less than half.  It is difficult to draw a conclusion from this information. [89]  Prunier posits that the use of traditional tribal administration was to undermine the Darfur support of the Umma and the Democratic Union Party [DUP].[90]  Otherwise, Tanner's generalizations about the lack of rule of law are repeated throughout.  He describes the underdevelopment of the region as a contributing factor to the violence, citing more specifically negative aspects of the government. Here, the government has mostly been ignoring the region, not investing money or capital. When situations such as famine or drought do arise because of this underdevelopment, the government does not, in turn, solve the resultant crises.[91]

### *The Environmental Element*

Aside from the ethnic element of the conflict, probably the second-most cited cause of conflict in this region is environmental scarcity – and with good reason.  The past several decades have riddled Darfur with declining rainfall and drought. Previous conflicts which have occurred there also have their roots in environmental constraint.  Gérard Prunier supplies rainfall documentation for various areas within Darfur from 1976 to 1986, with the annual average declining by one hundred nineteen inches.[92]  This led up to and enveloped the well-documented drought and subsequent famine in 1984 – 1985.   His argument regarding rainfall here is in addition to his discussion of the roots of the ethnic dynamic in Darfur.  As previously discussed, a 'perfect storm' scenario he developed included splits in Khartoum over the influence of Islamism in the Constitution, the split in the Umma party between uncle and nephew, and the influence of the Libya-Chad-Sudan conflicts.  Prunier adds to this mixture constraints on

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[89] Tanner 2005, 12 – 13
[90] Prunier 2007, 75
[91] Tanner 2005, 13 – 15
[92] Prunier 2007, 49

environmental resources. He places the 1984 famine directly in the centre of this mess and caps these four as the sources of ethnic identity and tension in the region.

Jeffrey Sachs, in a recent interview with Jon Stewart, referred to the Darfur crisis and emphatically suggested that the conflict is a "water problem." To his credit, he also indicated the conflict began over a decade ago when herders began moving south because there was no water. He suggested installation of wells, rain catchment mechanisms or otherwise would solve the problem. Mr. Stewart immediately argued that without security, delivery and installation of these implements is impossible.[93] Finally, Alex de Waal and Julie Flint interlace environmental scarcity into their assessment of the conflict as well and they also reach back decades to establish the constraints leading to the drought and subsequent famine in 1984 - 1985.[94] The desertification of the Sahel has exacerbated conflict between certain ethnic groups, to be sure, though it is difficult to trace environmental scarcity outside of desertification as a direct and primary cause of the present conflict. The Sahel spans the continent from west to east just south of the Sahara. If desertification has caused this conflict, one should also expect conflict all along the Sahel. While other conflict is not absent, sustained conflict of this magnitude is absent for most of the Sahel.

### *Confounding Effects*

As demonstrated in these last two discussions, economic underdevelopment and environmental scarcity as causes of a conflict are difficult to tease apart. It is not difficult to see that the economically marginalized, those who may be living below poverty – less than $1 US per day on most accounts – and even those above that guideline are those who are also living much closer to nature. Economic underdevelopment generally serves to exasperate

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[93] *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.* Interview with Jeffrey D. Sachs. Aired 18 March 2008 on Comedy Central.
[94] See also Alex De Waal, *Famine That Kills*.

environmental constraints even more.  Arguments have certainly been made that responding to

economic needs will mitigate the effects of environmental scarcity and also reduce the use of

violence.

In Darfur, where violence has erupted in the past, the parties involved have justifiably

perceived the situation to be – and understandably became engaged in what may very well have

been – an existential battle over resources.  Land-owners plant crops and thus need their land to

be free from grazing and trampling.  Pastoralists need to move their herds to feed them.  The

historic land ownership system in Darfur is based on *hakura* where agriculturalists generally

hold land and pastoralists do not.[95]  Historically, the relationship has been mutually beneficial:

herders move across the land before the planting season, fertilizing as they go which in turn

benefits the crop yields of the farmers.  When desertification began pushing herds to migrate

earlier and earlier in the seasons, the farmers' crops began to suffer.[96]  In turn, the farmers began

to 'defend' their land by planting fences or by simply burning the grasses in the field to prevent

the herds from having access to food.[97]  Viewed within the ethnic context, the situation is even

more clear.  Generally, the farmers in the Darfur region are the 'Africans' and the pastoralists are

the 'Arabs.'  This is by no means a rule – it is certainly a generalization.  The tendency, however,

serves to cement the ethnic nature, further blurring the differences between ethnic, environmental

and economic causes.  These 'causes' root conflicts prior to the one discussed here, but the

previous conflicts hardly grew to present-day proportions.  The conflict in 1988 – 1989 and the

drought and famine of 1984 – 1985 did not last as the present conflict has.  However, the

remnants of these issues are relevant to the discussion.

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[95] De Waal 2007, 3
[96] Tanner 2005, 11
[97] Harir 1994, 165

### *Religion as Cause*

Another explanation of the conflict is that the Muslim government is prosecuting crimes against a Christian Darfur region of Sudan.  It has been nearly impossible to find documentation in this regard.  Despite this lack of tangible sourcing, the Washington Post must also have been under the same impression – that confusion existed as to the religious nature of the conflict – when it published an article, "5 Truths About Darfur," which demystified the religious aspect of the conflict and resolutely declared, "Nearly everyone is Muslim."[98]  The inference is the Washington Post was responding to a common misconception that Muslim-on-Christian violence was operating in this conflict.  It may be because they are Muslim that they believe they are victims of targeted ethnic cleansing by the government.  They see a Muslim government targeting other Muslims; and they see "Arabs" targeting "Africans." They may infer the violence must be based upon their ethnicity, the aspect of their identities conspicuously different from the government.

Furthermore, the Black Book quotes the Qoran in an effort to support the argument for a fair government based on the five major criteria for an Islamic state, thereby attempting to legitimize the argument that the government, which claims to be the champion of Islam, has failed to support those five criteria.  It bases its contentions on economic and political marginalization but then compares the present ruling government to that of the ideal Islamic state, suggesting that Muslims were criticizing the extent to which their government was following the divine order.[99]  Therefore, the construction of the conflict in religious terms, if there is to be one, should not emphasize conflict between religions but rather within one religion.  As discussed earlier, the split within the National Islamic Front, between Beshir and Turabi, was reportedly

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[98] Wax, Emily.  *5 Truths About Darfur*.  The Washington Post.  23 April 2006.  Accessed online.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/21/AR2006042101752_pf.html>
[99] Black Book 2004, 26 – 28

over the former's preference to secularize the government and the latter's preference to establish Sharia rule over the country. Additionally, one major difference, originally at least, between the two main rebel movements was also over Islamic ideology. The SLM/A was less concerned with Islamic rule of law than the JEM leadership. It is within that context religion is most appropriately placed into the conflict.

### *Summary*

It is not so much that reports, media articles, and books are necessarily wrong, rather they are suspended in time. It is not easy to investigate the causes of regional conflict, certainly not when that conflict is taking place on another continent. And certainly not at a time before the conflict has been 'handled.' Furthermore, researching a conflict to find its causes should hardly be construed as a mistake. It is a necessary element in conflict resolution. And the argument can most certainly be made that the root causes of the conflict in Darfur are related to ethnic tensions, economic marginalization, environmental scarcity and religion (though to a more limited degree). For proper and holistic resolution, examining and understanding the causes is essential – peace will certainly not be possible without an accounting. The benefit of examining the root causes of the conflict is also an essential element of study for the predictive value it may provide. However, even if we are able to predict where the next humanitarian crises-by-conflict will occur, we would do no service to the value of research and academia in general if that predictive value were to be wasted because we fail to act quickly enough or because we act in such a manner, positively or negatively, that adds to the severity and life of the conflict.[100]

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[100] The recent flare of conflict in Nairobi, Kenya should spur loads of research. Why has there been such a quick response from the international community for resolution? Why has there been such a great amount of media attention? More importantly, will quick and decisive intervention prevent that conflict from escalating away from its root causes and gaining more energy and complexity? It may be quite nearly impossible to make the argument because we do not know what would have happened otherwise. However, it seems in that conflict lie a host of answers and proofs, if not a plethora of new questions. For now it seems the jury is still out.

This is the lesson of Darfur, if not many other conflicts. The problem for peacebuilding in Darfur lies now not only in the causes of the conflict, but rather also in all of the constraining, contributing and sustaining factors that now operate. When our analyses only include the roots of the conflict – again, an essential element – we fail to understand and appreciate the factors that feed the conflict, growing it into more of a monster. Those lateral, secondary factors are dangerous. When we say the conflict is chaotic, seemingly unsolvable, those secondary factors may be – and probably are – the reason. Yet, scour the literature about Darfur and you will hardly find a source of information that begins to aggregate and emphasize those factors beyond the originations of the conflict. The conversation seems to stop.

## Analysis

### *Who started it?*

And so, in order to begin that discussion, we must first establish an appropriate perspective. The unasked and unanswered question remains: who struck first? The purpose of exploration is by no means blame-seeking, so why is it important? It must at least be discussed because it is directly linked to the motivations of the government and the rebel militias. Their actions are informed by their motivations. In order to establish their motivations, it is necessary to deduce which party, or to what extent each party, felt it was responding to an attack. That in turn enables an analysis of the 'causes' of the conflict. Furthermore, if it is possible to trace the very precise beginning of the conflict, then it becomes a more tangible goal to determine the intentions of the parties involved. With this determination, we can begin to analyze and evaluate the perspectives of the two main fighting parties, allowing appropriate insight into the actions of these groups as well.

Without that perspective and insight, analysis is laced with bipolarity: good guy versus

bad guy, white hat versus black hat, victim versus aggressor. The tendency is then to summarily

justify all the actions of the good side and demonize all the actions of the bad side. These

connotations limit the discussion and assume a static progression of the conflict. Things simply

do not change, bad cannot ever do good and vice versa, and grace and guilt are applied in the

same bi-polar manner but never to their ideological opposites. The very dangerous trend thus

far has been to assert the blame or responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the government of

Sudan. This assertion cradles the assumption that the conflict is entirely, or even mostly,

ethnically driven and leaves the impression that the government randomly and inexplicably

began terrorizing the indigenous 'African' population of the region. The SLM/A confirms just

such an impression on its website-posted manifesto when it states the government was

perpetrating its campaign of genocide against the Darfur population.[101] But, ethnicity suddenly

loses its viability as a direct cause of the conflict if the government did not suddenly or randomly

begin targeting civilians because they are African, but rather because of a 'popular' rebellion.

Actual evidence about who struck first in this conflict is ambiguous at best. Sparse media

coverage of the region prior to the major armed incidents and the skewing of the reports that do

exist muddy the water even as to the official beginning of the conflict. However, in a telling

statement to Alex de Waal, Abdel Wahid admits, "If I had known what was going to happen to

my people, I would not have started this revolution."[102] Even those innocent civilians, who

clearly are on the receiving end of this grossly heavy-handed campaign recognize that the

violence escalated to this point because of the insurgency.[103] Some other rebels, however, claim

attacks by the 'Arab' militias and marginalization as the spark. Regardless it seems, as Prunier

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[101] Sudan Liberation Movement/Army. *Political Declaration*. 14 March 2003. Online.
<http://www.sudan.net/news/press/postedr/214.shtml> Accessed 7 November 2007.
[102] Africa News. *Sudan; Darfur peace talks analysis*. 29 December 2006. Online. Lexis-Nexis Academic.
   Accessed 1 March 2008.
[103] Tanner 2005, 17

suggested, the intensity of the violence qualitatively and quantitatively changed upon the rebel attacks on government posts in 2002 and early 2003.

Major media outlets at least indicate a rebel insurgency began attacking government targets and the government is responding to that insurgency. The fact remains the insurgency began attacking the government and its buildings. On 3 April 2003, BBC Monitoring Middle East documented an article from the website for Akhir Lahzah, a daily paper in Khartoum, entitled, "Western rebels reportedly attack town near border with Chad." The paper reported what could mostly be described as a press release from Minni Minnawi stating that the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance had seized a military camp and two police and customs stations.[104] It is interesting to note two of the leaders of that alliance, and members of the SLM/A, were Sharif Harir, author of the essay cited here, "'Arab Belt' versus 'African Belt'" and Ahmed Diriage. In Harir's article, published in 1994, he concluded in reference to the Fur-Arab conflict of 1988-1989: "As it stands today, Dar Fur may become yet another "South" Sudan albeit in the West."[105] His conclusion may have only been conjecture, but the prophetic reality of the statement supports the assertion made here that the rebel movements intended their rebellion. For his part, Diriage at one time had been governor of Darfur, deposed by the same government against which he is a leading a rebellion. It would appear their intentions may have been borne long before any campaign was begun by the government.

*The Rebel Perspective*

We have examined thus far the economic and political marginalization of Darfur, outlined in the Black Book – as one of the rebel causes of the insurgency. The other reason most cited by the rebels themselves and by outsiders like Victor Tanner and Alex de Waal is the

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[104] Akhir Lahzah. *Sudan: Western rebels reportedly attack town near border with Chad.* 3 April 2003. Lexis-Nexis Academic. Online. Accessed 7 February 2008.
[105] Harir 1994, 182

security threat posed by the Arab militias. Given the dire situation in Darfur today, the unquestionably deteriorated economic and political status of the region, and the anarchic rather than secure and stable environment, and the splitting and fractionalizing of the rebel movements and their inability or unwillingness to negotiate toward peaceful settlement, it seems almost necessary to review these claims with more scrutiny and return to the beginning. While both of these justifications – marginalization and security concerns – may very well be valid and have contributed to the rebel agenda, it is difficult to claim both because the arguments for one negate the arguments for the other. And, the responses dictated logically by an economic rationale contradict the responses logically required by the security rationale.

If the insurgency were driven by economic/political marginalization, the rebel groups should have only been targeting the government and their tactics should have also included methods of obtaining support from the 'Arabs' of Darfur. That group, it can be logically concluded, should have been suffering from the same economic/political marginalization as the rebels and their constituency. Following this line of reasoning, it should not have been difficult for the rebels to secure the ideological support from the 'Arab' ethnic groups as Darfuri against Khartoum, West against East, Periphery against Center. Furthermore, the tactics the rebels actually did use – targeting government infrastructure rather than government forces – is assuredly perplexing. Most probably the least logical target of an insurrection claiming this sort of agenda is government infrastructure, arguably one of the essential ingredients in correcting underrepresentation and underdevelopment. And because the rebels do not seem to have pursued the Arabs as cohorts in their rebellion, or at least they have failed in their attempts, the political/economic marginalization of the region could not have been the sole or even the main motivation for the insurgency.

Alex de Waal and Julie Flint assert the Arab supremacist ideology that had flooded Darfur in the mid-1980s was fomented and sustained throughout the interim period leading up to the current conflict. On the receiving end of this supremacist policy were the Fur and other African ethnic groups who had been enduring low-level but nasty attacks throughout. This construction of the background implies the rebels began their insurgency in response to the continued abuse their people suffered from the Arab militias – a decidedly non-economic motivation for the insurgency.[106] Therefore, on the other hand, if the insurgency were driven by security concerns, the logical tactic by the rebels would have been to target the militias that were targeting them. Rather, the rebels engaged in what could be construed as a bizarre proxy war where, in a passive-aggressive engagement, the rebels began attacking the government. But if it were the janjaweed or Arab militia attacks that prompted the insurgency, why did the rebels specifically target the government instead of the janjaweed? It should be underscored, the message being sent by de Waal and Flint is clear: the janjaweed are decidedly racist and the rebel movements are angelically non-racist. Victor Tanner parallels this argument in his article, stating: "Generally, but not always, the rebels made a point of not attacking Arab or janjawid targets for fear of alienating Arab support."[107] He suggests the rebel groups determinedly tried to garner Arab support for their insurgency against the government. While the janjaweed may be supremacist, the connotation of the purity of the rebels may be here seen as a by-product of the messengers, de Waal and Tanner. Given that, the reality of the rebel attacks simultaneously questions the integrity of their claimed motivations.

De Waal and Flint contribute their analysis from outside the conflict, rendering the

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[106] De Waal 2005. See Chapters 3 and 4 for general tone.

[107] Tanner 2007, 23. It should also be noted here that Tanner references his own 2005 article in this assertion. The note to which he refers is not further referenced, placing a question mark over the source of this information. It remains unclear how exactly that author knows the rebel movements specifically avoided attacking the 'Arab' ethnic groups.

possibility that theirs may be an error of projection. But, the rebel groups echo their analysis. In another confusing confirmation of their justification for the insurgency, the SLM/A website reads thus: "….the SLM/A has originated from Darfur as a matter of necessity in response to the brutal genocidal policies of the NIF Government in that region…."[108] This of course begs the question, *what, or perhaps which, genocidal policy?* The SLM/A, according to some of the most informed authorities on the conflict, originated as early as 1988-1989, and de Waal dates their oath to overcome the racist agenda of the government to July of 2001. Even if the government had already begun placing Arab militias on the payroll at that time or earlier – which it most probably could at least be argued – the cosmically over-exaggerated terminology *genocidal policy* that early – July 2001 or even as late as July 2002 – hardly seems to create an accurate picture of the reality at that time.

The absence of news reports streaming from a very remote and poverty-stricken region in Africa is hardly evidence that no conflict or genocidal policy was occurring. However, Gérard Prunier's estimation of low-intensity criminal banditry and feuding leading up to the end of 2002 corroborates the argument. Moreover, if Prunier's support were not convincing enough, when something a bit more like genocidal policy (hardly a consensus even today), but closely resembling ethnic cleansing, actually did begin, the media began to report the story within a matter of months. Had a genocidal policy been pursued by the government in 2001 when the SLM/A formed, the same media timeline should have applied. If the absence of media coverage at an earlier date does not seal the argument, the investigations into Darfur, interviews with victims, and the demand for IDP camps and humanitarian organization support would have most certainly yielded a consensus on the original dating of the conflict at a much earlier date than is

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[108] Sudan Liberation Movement/Army. *Political Declaration*. 14 March 2003. Online. <http://www.sudan.net/news/press/postedr/214.shtml> Accessed 7 November 2007.

actually supported by those various international organizations – a date already discussed, located somewhere on the calendar in late 2002 or early 2003.  All of this leads to the conclusion the rebels could not have begun their campaign in reaction to an orchestrated government cleansing campaign.  Alan Kuperman, in an Op-Ed of 31 May 2006, sums this discussion, stating: "They [did not take] up arms….to stop genocide – which erupted only after they rebelled…."[109]

The rebels' possible intentions are interrelated and difficult to tease apart from each other. On the one hand, the rebels, according to de Waal and Flint, were responding to Arab supremacist ideologies against an organizationally separate, passive but complicit, party.  At the same time, the rebels were trying to garner the support of the Arab militias – intentionally targeting the passive but complicit party, the government – in order to create an 'us vs. them' identity among the Darfuris.  All this supposedly in response to attacks originating from the 'Arabs' – half of the aforementioned yet-to-be-assembled 'us' who, notably, the rebels were attempting to entice.  Clearly – or, rather unclearly – the logic is contradictory, at best a *non-sequitor* and most certainly, a circular argument.  The source of the confusion may lie in the dual nature of the rebel movement from its inception.  Admittedly, the Justice and Equality Movement authored and distributed the Black Book. Their agenda may have been more economic and political than the other rebel movement.  Even so, we appreciate the subtle contradictions play havoc on peace negotiations.  As emphasized earlier, these two groups ended up in the same region at the same time fighting the same government, but they were clearly borne of separate intentions and backgrounds.  It would not be difficult to defend an argument that suggests the SLM/A actually began the insurgency – in secret – and the JEM, with its 100 or so fighters at the time, saw the opportunity and took it.  Attempting to consolidate the rebel movements as one united front against the government obviously will not be successful unless

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[109] Alan Kuperman.  *Strategic Victimhood in Sudan*.  The New York Times.  31 May 2006.

the issues about which the movements independently are motivated are addressed.  And so, pressuring the movements to speak with one voice – in other words, forcing simplicity into the resolution – is doomed to fail.  Leading up to the Darfur Peace Agreement, this is exactly what the African Union did:  it required the rebel movements to negotiate under an umbrella – attempting to limit the number of rebel groups it would recognize at the table.[110]  It should be clear – the rebel perspective is not united.  The motivation for each is not the same.  There exists no "rebel perspective" for the insurgency.  Rather, there exist rebels' perspectives.

*The Government Perspective*

When we summarily view the rebel groups as the 'good' guys in the conflict, we restrict our perspective of the government as the 'bad guys' and its response to the conflict.  The following discussion intends to elaborate the perspective of the government.  It should be emphasized here, and will be throughout the following discussion, that in no way do any of the following arguments intend to or actually succeed in justifying the actions of the government against the Darfur population.  Rather, the intention of this discussion is to elaborate on possible motivations of the government from a less biased and more balanced perspective.  It is one contention of this paper that ignoring this perspective has contributed to the chaotic nature of the crisis.  And so it is with that spirit – for the betterment of the population of Darfur – and in an effort to contribute to the resolution of the crisis, the perspective of the government must be considered – though must not, in any vein, justify its actions.

<div align="center">

*A response was required*

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If a group of individuals laid siege to an airport – civilian or otherwise – in the United States or any other western country, the fact is, we would expect our governments to respond militarily.  Let us make it a bit more personal.  Place that rebellion in Louisiana and attach a

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[110] Tanner 2007, 40

manifesto claiming economic marginalization.  The reality is, while we would most certainly

have sympathy for the rebels, even possibly understand their motivations, we, *en masse*, would

by no means begin wearing green wristbands or t-shirts and fundraising to support the financial

needs of such a group.  Rather, we would expect the rebellion to be put down.  We might even

suggest using any means necessary.  The earlier discussion of the origination dates of the

insurgency in western Sudan and the subsequent discussion of who started what in the region

suddenly become glaringly relevant.  Alex de Waal remarked during his interview with PBS's

Frontline that the government was responding to an insurgency, though the response was

extremely heavy-handed.  From the start, it must be emphasized the government had a

responsibility – as all governments do – to keep the peace.

The implication is at least two-fold:  the government does not appear, in this light, to

have inexplicably and spontaneously begun a campaign against the Darfuris. If one does not

concede that a response to the rebellion was required, the good-guy-bad-guy dichotomy can be

dangerously allowed to operate.  We must be gracious toward the government in an attempt to at

least understand the position in which the government had found itself at that time.

Understanding that the government was constrained to respond, we can scrutinize its

justifications for its choice of a response.  To begin, the government may have feared the extent

to which the uprising in the west would affect the rest of the population outside of the north and

central regions.[111]  It is by no means a big secret that the central government has not exactly been

developing the peripheries of the country.  The fact is, as Prunier noted regarding the Black

Book's articulation of the underdevelopment, "What created a shock were not the contents of the

book but simply the fact that an unspoken taboo had been broken and that somebody […] had

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[111] Tanner 2007, 21

dared to put into print what everybody knew but did not want to talk about."[112]

That says nothing of the military situation of the state. A cursory review of the conflicts that have inflicted this state is revealing: war in the south has dominated media attention on Sudan for the past twenty or so years. Additionally, there is conflict in the Nuba Mountains, and conflict with rebels further north in the east who are supposedly backed by the Eritreans. Literally from every direction, Khartoum is quelling rebellion and militias. And the timing of the rebel insurgency was eerily close to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. If that rebel logic were operating, the government may have been less paranoid in its perception of threat than might otherwise be assumed. If the insurgency, emphasizing a united Sudan with equal rights and representation for all within the state, had been inspired to action by the progress of the SPLM/A in the south, perhaps the government was more accurate than it was paranoid in its assessment of the situation.

Furthermore, if the insurgency in the west had begun in order to preserve the west's piece of the Sudanese oil pie, it becomes even less far-fetched that the central government really feared the insurgency in Darfur and its spread across the state. And, the state was not exactly without evidence. In 1991, Daud Bolad, a former National Islamic Front member turned rebel, attempted to lead an insurgency into the Darfur region from the south. This connection was at the direction of John Garang, then leader of the SPLM/A. The expansion turned out to be a cosmic failure, and is reportedly the last of its type to attempt such a connection between the two regions. Daud Bolad was summarily surrounded and captured and later executed by government forces – *murahaleen* in this case, the southern counterpart to the western janjaweed.[113]

If the national conspiracy theories were not enough, the Government of Sudan may have

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[112] Prunier 2007, 77
[113] Prunier 2007, 73 – 74

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been also concerned with international conspiracy theories. The Justice and Equality Movement may have connections to the Eritrean government. Victor Tanner documents that connection when he describes the meeting of rebel leaders that occurred in Asmara following the signing of the DPA in 2006. The National Redemption Front was the result of this meeting in June 2006. If that were not enough to demonstrate the reality facing the government, Tanner also documents that the governments of Eritrea, Chad and Libya were all jockeying for a seat at the negotiation table – befriending the rebel leaders, and, simultaneously, getting a little too close for comfort for the Khartoum ruling party.

In the west, at the beginning of the Darfur conflict, the Chadian government appeared to affront a "no comment" policy, enabling it to host the N'djamena peace talks in 2004. Reach not so far into Chadian history and one finds that Idriss Déby ascended to the presidency of Chad by coup. He is a Zaghawa Kobe, the same ethnic group from which most of the Justice and Equality Movement is drawn. When the janjaweed, apparently out of the control of the government of Sudan, began invading Chad (in others words – crossing international borders as a military force!) and attacking the ethnic Kobe, Déby's security forces, also drawn from that group, began to support the rebel movements and shed their hitherto unbiased stance. Furthermore, those rebels waging the recently attempted coup in Chad were based in Darfur and reportedly backed by the Sudanese government. Déby's government is reportedly being backed by the international community, or at least the West, apparently for the 'sake' of Darfur.[114]

In the north, Libya, for its part, has been for quite some time courting the annexation of the Darfur region. Again, reaching not so far into history, we see that Qaddafi's Libya and various ruling parties in Khartoum, but mostly Sadiq Mahdi, have placed Darfur on the

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[114] Lydia Polgreen. *For Darfur's Sake, West backs Déby; Opposition in Chad feeling 'forgotten'.* 13 February 2008. The New York Times. Online. Lexis Nexis Academic. 2 March 2008. This issue is discussed further below.

negotiating table between the two governments.  In what Gérard Prunier described as a tactic rather than a commitment, Sadiq apparently agreed to a unification agreement with Libya.  Not much later, when a needy Sadiq approached Qaddafi for financial support, Qaddafi recalled the agreement over Darfur and Sadiq was forced to sign yet another agreement over unification, which was obviously never fulfilled.[115]  Given that relationship, and Libya's jealous eye over Chad's land holdings as well, it is not surprising that Sudan might be a little suspicious of its immediate international neighbors.

The government perspective is further informed when the comments of the rebel leaders are considered.  Most accusations against the government of Sudan are based upon their targeting civilian populations, unquestionably outside the rules of engagement and clearly violating international law, both treaty-based and customary.  Without excusing the atrocities, it must be considered – it is necessary – that the government was clearly being informed by the rebel leaders themselves that the communities had welcomed them and were supporting them.  For example, in an interview given by Minni Minnawi as early as April 2003, he was already stating the rebel insurgency was a 'popular movement', implicating the civilians of Darfur and their complicity in the attacks.  And in what can be described most accurately as a press release, referenced earlier, Minni Minnawi declared, "Our forces approached the people of the area humanely.  We have won their support and assistance." [116]  When the government claimed it was rooting out a rebellion, maybe, at least in the beginning, they really did think they were rooting out a rebellion inside the community.  That is precisely what the leaders of the rebel movements were telling them.

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[115] Prunier 2007, 59 – 60, 65
[116] Akhir Lahzah. *Sudan:  Western rebels reportedly attack town near border with Chad.* 3 April 2003.  Lexis-Nexis Academic.  Online.  Accessed 7 February 2008.

*The Turabi link*

As discussed briefly earlier, Hassan al-Turabi has been controversially linked to the

rebels through the Justice and Equality Movement.  It has been suggested by many authors that

Turabi is funding this rebel movement in an effort to weaken the ruling National Islamic Front.

It was he and Omar el Bashir that waged the successful coup d'etat in 1989 against Sadiq Mahdi.

Following the coup, a sort of verbal understanding had been established between the two.  Bashir

would hold the figurehead position as President, but Turabi would retain the power and direct the

Party.[117]  Ten years later, in what has been termed a "soft coup" Turabi was deposed by Bashir

and effectively placed under house arrest.  It was at this time Turabi created the Popular

Congress Party, drawing much of its leadership from the west, and became the greatest

opposition threat to the ruling National Islamic Front government.  Turabi subsequently signed

into a political alliance with John Garang's SPLM/A in the south of Sudan.  Gérard Prunier

suggests that, because Turabi was second in command to Garang and, more importantly,

Garang's army, Turabi turned to the constituency in Darfur.  What Turabi needed was an army

and there he was able to find one.[118]  Enter the Justice and Equality Movement, whose leader, Dr.

Khalil Ibrahim, was closely associated with the former leader of the National Islamic Front.[119]

The leadership of the JEM has reportedly begun to distance itself from the link to Hassan al

Turabi.  They claim Turabi's influence over its activities was ever minimal at best, and his

credibility with the people of Darfur had long since waned.  Turabi was responsible for gaining

the Darfuri Muslim support for the National Islamic Front prior to 1989 when he and President

Beshir attempted their successful coup d'etat.  Since then, his promises to the Darfuris have

remained unfulfilled.  Because of this, the JEM claims that Turabi holds no influence over the

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[117] Prunier 2007, 83
[118] Prunier 2007, 81 – 91, 93
[119] Tanner 2005, 17 – 18

group. [120] It is not far-fetched to suppose, however, that the leaders of the JEM betray their relationship with Turabi publicly in an effort to preserve international support and sympathy.

It is also not very difficult to infer the implications of Turabi's involvement in the conflict. Even if he is not still directly involved with the Justice and Equality Movement, but is still vying for power in the capital, conflict sprouting from Darfur or elsewhere is certainly a threat. If Turabi still maintains his involvement with the JEM, a persistent accusation, anything less than the deposing of the current president and Turabi's ascension to power will fail to end the fighting. If this aspect of the conflict is neglected, it is highly doubtful that the leadership of this group will work towards peace. Likewise, the involvement of Turabi in this conflict is particularly threatening to the government in Khartoum. Just as Turabi has undermined the power balance between Khartoum and the south over the past decade or so – which has been well documented – the government would be naïve not to view the Turabi link with the west as particularly threatening, not to mention just plain irritating. Khartoum is reasonably justified in fearing the threat posed by the Darfuris because of this link. The implication for their response is also obvious – the greater the threat, the more serious the response. The government could have based the extent of their response to the insurgency on this connection. Their response should be considered in light of this information because it informs, in one way at least, its determined nature.

### *The Powell Doctrine – Sudan Style?*

So we have developed here a background and perspective that most likely informed the government's response to the rebellion in Darfur. Given the original attacks by an as yet unknown rebel movement; growing success and extent of those attacks; popular civilian support of the rebel movement in Darfur; potential popular support across the entire state of Sudan;

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[120] De Waal 2005, 89

likely regional international support for the movement; delicate peace talks in the south; meddling by Chad, Eritrea and Libya; and the possibility of a coup attempt by Hassan Turabi, who, notably, had once already successfully executed a coup, the Government of Sudan was justifiably concerned with the Darfur rebellion.  Does this discussion excuse the atrocities in Darfur?  Positively not.  However, this conflict is being sustained by (at least) two parties and they are each claiming their own actions are conducted in response to the other's.  The average citizens of Darfur – one in three of whom are displaced from their homes and have been for quite some time – are the collateral damage.  Alex de Waal described the government's response to the Darfur rebellion as 'extremely heavy-handed.'[121]  This may not quite underscore the seriousness which the Government was placing on the rebellion.  The demonstration of that seriousness may be seen in the use of the janjaweed and its other forces.  It should be noted that the military strategy is not novel and Khartoum may have just torn a page from the United States' playbook: use overwhelming force.  The parallel to the Powell Doctrine is striking.

## *Power politics[122]*

The difference in the results of the military strategy perhaps lies in the calculations – or mis-calculations – of the power balance between Khartoum and the rebels in Darfur and between Khartoum and the janjaweed.  Following the negotiations that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006, Abdel Wahid enunciated his regret to Alex de Waal.  He stated, "*If I had known what was going to happen to my people, I would not have started this revolution.*"[123]  This statement indicates clearly what may be one of the biggest causes of this civil conflict to begin.

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[121] PBS Frontline.  *On Our Watch.*  Interview with Alex de Waal.  Online.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/darfur/interviews/dewaal.html> Accessed 2 March 2008.
[122] The following owes primarily to discussion with Yohanes Sulaiman on 29 February 2008.  Many of the ideas articulated here are a remnant of that debate and should be credited to him.
[123] Africa News.  *Sudan; Darfur peace talks analysis*.  29 December 2006.  Online.  Lexis-Nexis Academic.  Accessed 1 March 2008.  Emphasis added.

Clearly, the rebels overestimated their own power in comparison to Khartoum's holding, and Khartoum, it would certainly appear, had done the same. What appears to have resulted is a balance of power which prevents the summary success of one side over the other, but also enough power within the balance to continue the conflict indefinitely – probably the worst possible of power situations. The Government should not be judged inept on this miscalculation alone, however. International support of the rebel movements has certainly affected the balance to the government's detriment. We return to this discussion below.

While Khartoum's miscalculation underestimated the strength of its opponent, it also underestimated the power held by the militia which it chose to handle the rebellion. Although the force it sent to quell the rebellion appears to have been capable of terrorizing the population, it was decidedly incapable, or arguably unwilling, to complete its actual assigned task – eradicating the rebellion. If incapable, the janjaweed would also presumably have been unable to wreak the sort of havoc that is operating in the region today. Clearly, in tandem with government forces, the militia had the capacity to militarily confront the rebellion, given an open battlefield and the absence of any sort of guerilla tactics.

As earlier discussed, it is quite plausible the janjaweed were unwilling to follow the narrow, for the sake of the argument, government request. If the janjaweed had been operating with the government to pursue its own goals and used the impunity in pursuit of its own agenda – land ownership, land access, to change the demography of Darfur – one might assume the janjaweed anticipated the eradication of the rebel movements would have been realized at the same time as their acquisition of capital. It is possible the Government of Sudan is doing lip-service to its agreements to disarm and rein in the janjaweed, never actually intending to control the group. This accusation is assuredly being hurled at the government and it seems the

accusation is not without merit.  However, in a spirit of graciousness, let us assume, momentarily,

the Government of Sudan has attempted to absorb the janjaweed into the Armed Forces.  Let us

assume they actually are not – as they claim – in control of any remaining rogue groups.[124]  As

the janjaweed may have been drawn from criminal groups or jails, it is very plausible the

government actually is no longer in control of some of these groups.  One article quotes a

janjaweed who had been arrested in Chad clearly stating the government had no involvement in

its movements into Chad.[125]  Recent reports also indicate that in-fighting is occurring between

the Arab groups now as well.[126]  Given this possibility, it seems appropriate to consider the

janjaweed as its own entity.  When the janjaweed are viewed only as an instrument of the

government, bound to the direction of the Sudanese military without any latitude, we restrict our

perspective of the overall conflict – just as we have seen when we also limit our understanding of

the circumstances in which the government has found itself.  It is, therefore, necessary to remove

those restrictions yet again and consider just how independent the janjaweed may be in their

actions and how this may have affected the situation in the past and how it may be sustaining the

conflict now.  It is necessary to consider their motivations, too.

As discussed previously, Alex de Waal and Julie Flint posit that the ethnic overtones of

this conflict are directly related to Musa Hilal and the roots of Arab supremacism that filtered

into the region from Libya and the west.  If members of the janjaweed are driven by ethnic

hatred, and it seems that based upon their rhetoric during the attacks, it is entirely possible, it

should also be possible that the intention of the janjaweed is to expand the 'Arab belt'.  They

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[124] De Waal 2005, 122

[125] IRINNews, "Janjaweed militia in Darfur appears to be out of control," May 14, 2004,
   http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=49882 (accessed September 14, 2007)

[126] International Crisis Group 2007, 8 – 9

argue the goal of the janjaweed is to change the demography of the Darfur region.[127] Assuming this is a motivation, the janjaweed would have to resort to tactics that would displace the 'African' population – permanently. However, even if the interests of the janjaweed were economic in nature – a land grab – the tactics used toward that end would most probably have to be the same as of ethnic motivations. Victor Tanner proposes that argument. He suggests the janjaweed are economically driven and that ethnicity, though it has become more closely related to identity over the past thirty-five years, is not a driving force in this conflict. Based upon the forced displaced patterns evidenced from interviews and the actual placement of the IDP camps themselves, the objective of the janjaweed may be more economic or political in nature.

During the attacks, the militias and the government forces generally burn homes and crops and permanently spoil the water supplies by depositing animal or human carcasses into the wells. The inhabitants are forcefully driven from their homes, but again this does not change the fundamental demography of the region because the IDPs remain internally displaced. However, in Darfur region, land usage is a key element of land ownership and land rights. An individual may lose access to land if he or she does not plant at least once every three years. Given this legal background, the purpose of the janjaweed in their scorched earth campaign may be to gain the land "legally" rather than to rid the region of Africans. As the conflict began in April 2003, in some areas, especially those closest to the Jebel Marra mountain range, three planting seasons have expired.

Simultaneously, the janjaweed are being paid – and paying themselves – to "quell" a rebellion. It follows, then, if the janjaweed have a vested interest in obtaining land, even changing the demography of the region, or perhaps more accurately a combination of the two possibilities, the support of the government in obtaining weapons and assistance from the

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[127] De Waal 2005, 39

military may be an added, but non-essential, element of their campaign.  As de Waal and Flint argued, the SLM/A may have been responding to attacks by 'Arab' militias to begin.  The janjaweed, it would follow, were already pursuing their goal.  The government's request for assistance only accelerated their progress.  To put it more simply, when the goal of the government – quelling a rebellion – and the goal of the janjaweed – whatever that may ultimately be – require the same action, the government may be 'in control' of the janjaweed.  However, when those two goals diverge, the balance of power clearly shifts in favor of the janjaweed and the government is left holding the proverbial bag and being stared at by a justifiably impatient international community.

The purpose of this discussion, again, is not to excuse the government or the janjaweed for their actions.  That is impossible.  However, a better, clearer picture of what the situation may be should inform a better, clearer picture of what the resolution should be.  On the negative side of that statement, an unclear picture of the situation may be making it even worse.  In this case, the lesson is two-fold.  A clear picture of the power situation in Darfur before the situation began was obviously missing, on the part of the rebels and the government.  Second, a clear picture of the power situation between the janjaweed and the government may still be missing, and that may be contributing to the escalation of the conflict.

### *Primary Consequences*

*Fracture*

Victor Tanner emphasizes the African Union's insistence on a unified voice, but also alludes to the United States' pressure on the rebel leaders to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement.[128] Alex de Waal also emphasizes the amount of pressure emanating from the United States and from the African Union for the Darfur rebels to sign.  He insinuates that because both parties had

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[128] Tanner 2007, 41

placed such aspirations on the document, they both felt they had much to lose if the document

was not signed.  And so, they set a deadline.  Their work began to focus on the signing of the

peace deal itself and less on the actual plausibility of its contents.[129]  Prunier notes an economist

from University of California, "There is a giddiness in the air….leading to mass wilful blindness:

never mind what the various Agreements actually say, just sign the damn things." [130]

One member of the G-19, a group that split from the SLM/A after the DPA had been

signed, recalled, "Unfortunately, the AU denied the action of the G-19 and told us:  either you

follow Abdel-Wahid, or Minni, or JEM."[131]  The implication is clear:  the pressure placed on the

rebel leaders, not only to unite, but also to sign, may have caused further splitting in the SLM/A

ranks.  Minni Minnawi, who ended up signing the deal in 2006, alone among his two

counterparts, had been on the receiving end of threats from the United States to be placed on a

terrorist watch list.  All three of the rebel leaders felt that threat, but Minni Minnawi's

circumstances leading to his signature were quite different.  Literally hours before he signed,

Minni had learned of his brother's murder.[132]  He was unaware at whose hands his brother's death

had been perpetrated, and so he was unsure of the message.  Had the janjaweed intended to force

him to sign – or not to sign?  Had the government?  Had his own people, in protest to his

signature?  Or was it international?  The message was unclear, but the odds were stacked in favor

of his signature.  At least three of the possible sources would have meant the message to read:

*take the deal*.  Africa Research Bulletin forcefully asserts the consequences:  "Paradoxically, the

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[129] Africa News.  *Sudan; Darfur peace talks analysis*.  29 December 2006.  Online.  Lexis-Nexis Academic.
Accessed 1 March 2008.

[130] Prunier 2007, 91.  Here, Prunier is referring to the agreements for the south.  The quote has been included here
because it is still instructive, as the economist is referencing the untapped oil revenues patiently waiting for the
ink to dry and peace to magically appear.  The time period is relevant – Spring 2004 – and as Prunier notes, just as
the international community was beginning to realize there was trouble in the west and negotiations were being
conducted in N'djamena.

[131] Tanner 2007, 48

[132] Africa News.  *Sudan; Darfur peace talks analysis*.  29 December 2006.  Online.  Lexis-Nexis Academic.
Accessed 1 March 2008.

May peace agreement has triggered a deeper split between the two main factions....15 Security Council ambassadors heard that disputes over the pact have already led to clashes between the two main rebel factions."[133]  This was published in July 2006 – less than two months following the signatures of Minni and the Government of Sudan.

The subsequent splitting of the group has wreaked havoc on the peace negotiations since then.   In October 2007, peace talks between the warring factions were scheduled in Sirte, Libya. Leading up to the talks, as expected and predicted by many, violent attacks increased, a sense of security was weakened as each of the parties attempted to garner more bargaining power for the negotiation table, and the anticipation of failure was salient as many rebel leaders voiced to the media their boycott of the peace talks summarily.  The talks were a cosmic failure. Few of the rebel groups did send delegates to the table, and some of those that attended were lower ranking members of their respective groups.  The difficulty in garnering cohesive peace talks since May 2006 is one of the clearest examples of the danger of reducing a conflict to categorically simplistic proportions.  The United States, the United Kingdom, African Union, and United Nations – and most probably others – consumed by efficiency and time-constraint concerns, failed to consider the implications of that pressure.  Any gracious analysis – an attribute attempted in this paper – will undoubtedly understand their position.  Most likely, the peace deal was being championed by the negotiators who had, at each turn, the Darfuri population suffering daily on their minds.  But, even with the best intentions, the repercussions of narrow considerations can turn tragic, and very quickly.

*White Hats*

In this conflict, and arguably many others, the tendency for humanitarian organizations, western media, and others has been to unquestionably support the 'work' of the rebel leaders in

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[133] Africa Research Bulletin.  *Sudan:  Zaghawa versus Fur*.  10 July 2006.  Volume 43, Issue 6, 16694

their quest against oppressive governments. In Darfur, the trend has continued. As previously discussed, the rebels have been constructed in western minds as pure, not to be held responsible because, for one, they are completely innocent, and two, they are the victims. John Mueller articulated the arbitrary nature of this tendency when he remarked that the rebels enjoy such support because "they're the ones wearing the white hats."[134] Another author wrote, "In light of janjaweed atrocities, it is natural to romanticize the other side as freedom fighters." While some rebels and their leaders are victims, and some are certainly innocent, the uninformed and categorical support of the rebel leaders has its consequences, too. Alan Kuperman published an Op-Ed in The New York Times on May 31, 2006, asserting just that. The article, "Strategic Victimhood in Sudan," questions the blind and naïve support being afforded to the rebel leaders and the extent to which those leaders were being excused for their unjustifiable behavior. Kuperman wrote, "Put simply, the rebels were willing to let genocide continue against their own people rather than compromise their demand for power…." He continues, questioning the intentions of the rebel leaders summarily: "This rejection of peace by factions claiming to seek it is actually revelatory....It helps explain why violence originally broke out in Darfur…"[135]

Kuperman goes even further, asserting, "…how the Save Darfur movement unintentionally poured fuel on the fire…" When humanitarian organizations do blindly support rebel movements, it is most probably a tactic to spur political will and mobilize support for the true victims of the conflict: "Advocates of intervention play down rebel responsibility because it is easier to build support for stopping genocide than for becoming entangled in yet another messy civil war." However, the rebels in Darfur have been, in the very least, irresponsible. Again, Kuperman writes, "…but the rebels have long wasted resources fighting each other rather

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[134] Personal conversation with the author 28 April 2008.
[135] Alan Kuperman. *Strategic Victimhood in Sudan*. The New York Times. 31 May 2006.

than protecting their people… persistent calls [by advocates of intervention] for intervention have actually worsened the violence."[136]

Kuperman's point should be noted and emphasized even further as his accusation not only places the consequences of the advocacy community's actions ahead of their intentions, but he goes even further when he insinuates that they actually do recognize the conflict as a 'messy civil war,' but actively pursue its description in simpler terms.  If, in reality, the rebels were wholly, or even mostly, cooperative, it is possible that African Union troops and United Nations peacekeepers may have actually had a peace to keep and could possibly have been successful in achieving their goals.  Given their cooperation, the peacekeepers would have only to keep tabs on one fighting side, the Government and their proxy.  Moreover, had the rebels ceased their hostilities according to the Ceasefire agreements, in light of the government perspective described above, the government may have been more compelled to more actively pursue control of the janjaweed.  In tandem with international forces from the African Union and the United Nations, it is possible that security could have been created and maintained.  Instead, these 'advocacy' calls for intervention have created political will on false – intentionally false – terms and the African Union and United Nations are on the receiving end of that pressure.  What could be done other than assembling troops to pacify an impatient and ill-informed international public?

### *Secondary Consequences*

The ripples of the conflict in Darfur have spread.  Over the past two years or so, *Darfur* has become associated with some very expected, some very unusual, and some very inexplicable, cohorts:  Mia Farrow; the consciences' of George Clooney and Steven Spielberg; the 2008 Olympics; and, China more generally.  And the conflict has brought into its own scope the War in Iraq, the 'war on terror' and CENTCOM, China, the definition of genocide, and the

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[136] Alan Kuperman.  *Strategic Victimhood in Sudan*.  The New York Times.  31 May 2006.

International Criminal Court.

*All roads lead to…China?*

Perhaps because it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, perhaps because it is a burgeoning economic powerhouse, or perhaps because of a misinformed or naïve understanding of international relations, coercions, sanctions and cooperation, China has been placed summarily into the international spotlight as the Enabler of Genocidal Governments. Let's follow the trail: the Government of Sudan is conducting a genocidal campaign against the African population in Darfur. Sudan receives a lot of money from China for its oil. Therefore, China can pressure the Sudanese government to stop the genocide. If China refuses, it becomes guilty of genocide-by-economic-expansion. The international community can, and presumably should, through media campaign and boycott of the 2008 Olympics, pressure China to pressure Sudan. The hope? China's coming-out party is so very valuable to that nation that it will no longer provide 'diplomatic cover' for the Sudanese government to continue its genocidal policy in the region.

But what exactly *can* the Chinese government do? The international community is calling for the Chinese government to impose economic sanctions on Sudan in order to choke it into compliance. Let us assume China does just that. Economic sanctions, smart or otherwise, have clearly been shown to harm the wrong people.[137] It is not clear any sanctions imposed on the government will be effective in actually stopping the atrocities. The janjaweed will still exist and continue to rape, loot and pillage. The rebels will still exist and will continue their attacks – on government and civilian alike. As previously discussed, neither of these groups relies on the Government of Sudan to fund their activities. The rebels are receiving much of their aid from the international advocacy community. And the janjaweed certainly pre-existed the

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[137] See John Mueller and Karl Mueller. *Sanctions of Mass Destruction.* Foreign Affairs. May/June 1999.

government's call for assistance in putting down the rebellion. It is likely that the janjaweed would continue their attacks without further government support. Their goal has probably never been to quell a rebellion, and so the government assistance they had and have been receiving should be considered a bonus, non-essential element of their campaign.

However, the Darfuri citizens, already bearing the brunt of the atrocities, will likely suffer more. That is not to even mention the population of Sudan outside the conflict: those in the east and the south, those in the Nuba Mountains. Alas, sanctions will hardly give the Government of Sudan the tools necessary to control rogue elements of the janjaweed. Furthermore, as has already been argued, the rebels continue to attack! One cannot reasonably expect the government to summarily quit its campaign against the rebels. If sanctions are the answer – which is most probably not the case – those sanctions must also be applied to the rebel groups. Furthermore, the practical issues associated with such economic sanctions should, even beyond the moral and ethical issues associated, prevent their use as well. The government of Sudan has negotiated a settlement with the south, and will have to, at some point, negotiate a settlement with the west, too. If China boycotts the government's income, how do those crusading for the sanctions propose the government will be able to make payments to the Government of South Sudan, and to begin to pay reparations to the Darfuris?

Despite the logical conclusions following economic sanctions, activists campaigning against the Government of China are popping up in the most bizarre places. Mia Farrow encourages the U.S. to boycott the 2008 Olympics. Steven Spielberg was recently quoted by USA Today thus, "I find that my conscience will not allow me to continue business as usual….At this point my time and energy must be spent not on Olympic ceremonies but on doing all I can to help bring an end to the unspeakable crimes against humanity that continue to be

committed in Darfur."[138]  Should it be assumed then that Mr. Spielberg's conscience will rest

more easily if his media campaign is successful and sanctions are imposed?  We should hope not.

Time Magazine recently published an article about a reporter who invited George

Clooney to his place for dinner. And, in a bizarre and unexpected twist of events, Mr. Clooney

actually obliged the request.  Next to a picture of George Clooney 'playing' on his motorcycle,

Joel Stein relates Clooney's apprehension about whether his organization, 'Not on Our Watch', is

'striving after the wind' by raising awareness of the conflict.  To his credit, Clooney at least

recognizes that his assistance – building health facilities or implementing water resource

mechanisms – may be worsening the situation.  He wonders if bringing attention to the situation

can cause more damage than ignoring it.  Unfortunately, that article did not articulate the moral

conclusions reached by the last real movie star.[139]

*African Union*

The situation in Darfur has been considered the first real test of the African Union's

ability to handle regional conflicts.  As previous discussion has outlined, it can be easily argued

the regional international organization had been set up for failure from the very beginning by the

advocacy community.  Without rebel cooperation, peacekeeping was never a possibility.  But

that did not matter.  What mattered, it would seem, was the appearance of action in the face of a

genocidal government regardless of the safety of the peacekeepers being injected into the chaos,

the safety of the humanitarian volunteers in the camps, or the Darfuris whose lives continue in

disruption and devastation, at the hands of the government and the rebel groups.

*Defining Genocide*

The most common arguments appearing in the debate against labeling this conflict as

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[138] USA Today.  "Spielberg withdraws Olympic support."
[139] Joel Stein.  "George Clooney:  The Last Movie Star."  Time Magazine.  20 February 2008.

*genocide* are the usual suspects. The number of casualties – controversial at best – may be too low, though no concrete baseline has been set. The Government, as has been argued here, may not have actually been prosecuting a genocidal policy. The ethnic element was most probably inserted by the janjaweed. The definition is so overwhelmingly broad in scope that many conflicts that otherwise would not be considered genocide could be categorized as just that. A sort of desensitization will surely follow if the term is carelessly and generously applied. Of course, this begs the question: what does it matter if the term is over-applied and desensitization occurs if no action is implemented to stop genocide when it is said to be occurring?

Even so, the argument for genocide should be made always with the greatest caution if not for other reasons. The calls for the United Nations, the United States and the international community to label this conflict genocide probably stem from the assumption that with a declaration of genocide, somebody would actually do something about it. As eloquently pointed out by Mr. Powell in his testimony to the sub-committee, genocide is occurring in Darfur, but no new action is required. To his credit, Mr. Powell stressed the terminology should not change the unacceptable nature of the conflict. Calling it genocide does not change the reality of the situation for those victims suffering the consequences of the dispute. His point should not be taken lightly.

Humanitarian organizations and other voices have pursued with fervor the labeling of the conflict as genocide. The implication is action would be the required next step, but as Mr. Powell stated, no new action is required. It remains unclear why these organizations were so convinced that action would follow the declaration. One can infer the remorse demonstrated by former President Clinton in his quasi-apology to the Rwandese that had we known genocide was occurring, we would certainly have acted. However, no state's sovereignty has been violated –

certainly not since 1948 – based solely upon a declaration of genocide.  It could be argued that the U.S. declaration of genocide and continued inaction has further entrenched a non-action precedent.  If humanitarian organizations were pursuing action in the face of genocide, it is most certainly evident that their energy was misdirected.  The extent to which they could have known their energy was to be wasted ultimately can only be estimated in the historical reality that state sovereignty has never in the past been placed second to genocide occurring within a state's territory.  Furthermore, in pursuit of that action, the United States was most probably the least likely to have contributed troops or finances to the cause.  Darfur is a remote region in Africa, and the agenda pursued by many of these organizations starkly contrasts that of the current administration.  These organizations failed to support the war in Iraq or the more general war on terror.  Those on the receiving end of the advocacy community's calls for military intervention into Darfur may have very well been engaging in a tit-for-tat exchange: you support our war and we will support yours.  That support was never to be realized on either side.

Another implication of the labeling of genocide in Darfur has been what action the terminology may have prevented.  In the earlier analysis contained here, the balance of power between the rebels and the government was clearly a miscalculation.  The rebels overestimated the impact or the extent to which they would have been able to successfully maintain their campaign.  While the support they receive from the international community is undoubtedly propping them up, it is obvious they do not hold enough power to achieve their ends – whatever those ends may actually be.  The government, obviously not attuned to the international community's support of the rebels after only a short period of time, also severely miscalculated.  What has resulted is a balance so closely equalized on either side that victory by one over the other is implausible.  The most prudent policy for the U.S. in addressing this conflict may have

been to support the government in its efforts to establish security in Darfur and then pursue a

correction of the inequities claimed by the rebels. That policy would have saved the Darfuris

from a conflict that has lasted now over five years. Meanwhile, with security in place,

development and representation could have actually been realized. With the declaration of

genocide, that is no longer an option.

*The International Criminal Court*

This recently engendered international organization, after receiving the file from the

United Nations Security Council, has brought charges against some of the actors perpetrating

crimes against the Darfuri citizens. There is no question that seeing justice done to some of the

perpetrators of these crimes against humanity is a desirable outcome. In that sense, it seems

almost necessary to bring charges against these individuals when the Government of Sudan is

unwilling, or at least arguably incapable, of doing so. The Security Council forwarded the case

to the ICC based on the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur report of 31 March 2005.

Upon completed investigation, the ICC brought indictments against two individuals accused of

war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ahmad Harun was the head of the "Darfur Security

Desk," allegedly appointed by the Government of Sudan with the task of coordinating janjaweed

attacks with the government forces. Ali Kushayb is accused of leading the janjaweed militia in

prosecuting raids against the Darfuri.[140]

Conspicuously missing from the list of indictees are any rebel leaders or rebel soldiers.

Whether or not evidence exists amounting to crimes against humanity, war crimes, or the crime

of genocide on the part of the rebels, the fact remains that the rebel leaders did start the rebellion.

While one may be sympathetic to Abdel Wahid's remorseful statement to Alex de Waal, that

remorse is simply not enough to excuse the consequences of the rebellion. It is most certainly an

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[140] International Criminal Court. *Application for Prosecution.* 27 February 2007. No. ICC-02/05, 23

age-old debate: should we be judged by the intention of our actions or rather by the consequences of them? The rebellion in itself has been a contributing factor not only to the escalation of the conflict from its origins, but also – with subsequent rebel indignance and snubbing – to the continuation of the conflict. And the longer the rebellion lasts, the longer insecurity reigns in Darfur, in turn preventing the return to peaceful daily lives of the displaced Darfuris.

Whether or not this argument supports the indictment of the rebel leaders or their soldiers by the International Criminal Court or any Sudanese court remains unanswered. However, it does not even appear to be a part of the conversation. And, clearly, as Abdel Wahid stated, he would not have started the rebellion had he known what was going to happen to his people. The point is instructive to other rebels, for sure. But without clear personal consequences for rebel leader actions – rather, what is clear that rebellions can be overwhelmingly rewarding! – what mechanisms exist to discourage violent rebellion? Furthermore, the almost overwhelming acceptance by much of the international community of the rebels, and the sympathy to their 'cause' – whatever that might actually be – most probably would encourage others to follow their lead.

In an entirely unrelated, yet equally relevant discussion, the controversy over the involvement of the International Criminal Court, for the Sudanese Government to begin, is that of jurisdiction. The Sudanese government has claimed that it has also simultaneously brought charges against these two individuals, thereby negating the claimed jurisdiction of the international governing body. The Government of Sudan is claiming its sovereignty while the International Criminal Court is arguing its jurisdiction based on the Government of Sudan's inability to fairly try these two individuals. The Security Council has exercised its own judgment,

siding with the Court when it forwarded the file in the first place.

Yet another other controversy over the International Criminal Court, perhaps as yet to be enunciated by the indictees or the Government of Sudan, but rather fortunate for those parties, is the harm that may be caused by the court. Joseph Kony, notorious leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, is also under indictment for his crimes against humanity in that twenty year long conflict. Hidden somewhere in the mountainous regions of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and desperately being rooted out by that government (and, inexplicably, Condoleeza Rice), Joseph Kony is using the court to negotiate his peace treaty with Museveni's government in Kampala. He and his fellow indictees have the fortuitous upper hand: if Museveni does not agree to grant impunity, Kony will not talk. Meanwhile, having ratified the Rome Statute, the Ugandan government finds itself in a precarious position. Try Kony at home or at the International Court – and guarantee the continued suffering of the Ashanti in Northern Uganda – or grant him impunity in the face of the ICC.

But, the ICC cannot drop the charges! With little legitimacy the recently engendered court has now, submitting to the will of the Ugandan government would surely crumble its foundation. It will effectively place itself on the agenda for negotiations, rendering itself impotent to seriously try any future cases. Worse yet, the international theatre would certainly see that the court had not so much bowed to the Ugandan government but rather to the will of Joseph Kony. Surely, it can be argued that the court submitted rather to the well-being and best interests of the Ugandan people and the Ashanti in the north. However, the result is the same. The court in effect becomes an instrument of states and individuals, a mere pawn. The time may soon be approaching that the Government of Sudan must make the same choices. Admittedly, the situation is starkly different. The Ugandan government has not been backing and funding the

LRA as has its counterpart to the north.  However, the implication is clear.  When peace time comes, if peace time comes, the indictments of these two individuals will undoubtedly complicate the circumstances at the negotiating table.

*'War on Terror'*

On February 20, 2008, Retired General John P. Abizaid visited The Ohio State University to discuss the current strategic challenges the United States is facing in the Middle East.  During that talk, Gen. Abizaid displayed a map of the CENTCOM region, spanning from Sudan and Libya in the west and south over to Pakistan in the east and Kazakhstan to the north.  Superimposed on that map were red boxes dotting the entire region, inside which were written the names of various organizations.  Each box was connected by lines to the other boxes, representing a web of connections.  Gen. Abizaid indicated this map represented what the Al Qaida network 'may look like.'  The 'janjaweed' organization had its own place on that map.

On 10 July 2006, Douglas Farah cited a 'recent international intelligence document' offering evidence of Al Qaida links to Musa Hilal and the janjaweed.  According to the report, fifteen operatives were assisting in training the janjaweed.[141]  Other reports document a video from Osama bin Laden himself calling for *jihadis* to join the fight in Darfur against the 'Crusaders'.[142]  A Google search of the terms 'Al Qaida' and 'janjaweed' returns many articles and websites 'documenting' the connection between the two groups.  However, the assertions hardly resist scrutiny as the articles consistently cite Douglas Farah's blog.  The 'recent international intelligence document' supporting his claim is never actually produced or titled.  As for the video from bin Laden, the appropriate response may actually be in the form of a question:  *what*

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[141] Douglas Farah. *Intelligence Report links Janjaweed to al Qaeda.*  Counterterrorim Blog.  16 July 2006.
    Accessed online.  <http://counterterrorismblog.org/2006/07/intelligence_report_links_janj.php>
[142] Andrew McGregor. *Bin Laden's African Folly: Al Qaeda in Darfur.*  The Jamestown Foundation.  18 May 2006.
    Volume 4, Issue 10.  Accessed Online.  <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=3732>

*conflict involving Islam and the west hasn't bin Laden requested jihadis to represent?*

Even giving Farah grace in his report of the Al Qaida link, perhaps a little perspective is warranted. The report apparently cites fifteen Al Qaida representatives training the janjaweed. The janjaweed under Musa Hilal's command number as many as 20,000. Even if Al Qaida were represented in the janjaweed, and, even if Al Qaida were training the janjaweed, those fifteen members represent precisely 0.00075% of the janjaweed in the Misteriha camp. Let us not lose perspective by forgetting that, with or without those fifteen Al Qaida members, the other 19,985 or so janjaweed unquestionably under Musa Hilal actually have been waging a counter-insurgency against the Darfuris and are documented to be responsible for the some of the worst human rights abuses and crimes against humanity. These arguments have been presented against a blog from Douglas Farah, arguably undocumented, properly or otherwise. What remains is the map, presented by Gen. Abizaid, of what the Al Qaida network 'may look like'. Given the source, it is more difficult to question the validity of the claim, so let us accept that Al Qaida may, or may not, be associated with the janjaweed.

In what appears to be the more obvious, but decidedly unrecorded, connection between Al Qaida and the conflict in Darfur is on the 'opposite' side of the categorical good-guy-bad-guy conundrum. However, that Al Qaida connection is conspicuously missing from Douglas Farah's weblog and Ret. Gen. Abizaid's map of Al Qaida's connections. Osama bin Laden's connection to Sudan has been documented by news media, historians and analysts. In the mid-1990s, bin Laden was well-connected in Khartoum, spending a lot of money and time with the government. That government included Hassan al Turabi, who, as we have seen here, may be very directly and intricately connected to the Justice and Equality Movement and who, it may be argued, has much to gain from the insurgency. The ideological connection between Osama bin Laden and

Hassan al Turabi has been deconstructed, most notably by Lawrence Wright in his *Looming Tower*. He clearly documents bin Laden's residence and money spending in the capital at that time and his connection to Turabi. That both men were Islamists was not enough for Turabi to earn bin Laden's respect.[143] It is clearly not difficult to argue that the connection is weak, that it has been summarily severed or even that the leadership – as Alex de Waal has argued – of the Justice and Equality Movement no longer allow Turabi's guidance of the movement.

That, however, does not support the summary disengagement of the conversation. The problem, as this paper has been attempting to reiterate, is the overwhelmingly imbalanced perspective. The Turabi link to bin Laden – an important piece of information – is not even on the radar (or Abizaid's map for that matter). Meanwhile, fifteen Al Qaida members (or 0.00075% of the resident camp) and a video recording of yet another call by bin Laden to represent his movement against the 'Crusaders' conspicuously are. The implication – and this is not only an implication of the janjaweed being listed as terrorists, but rather a general trend to call terrorists *terrorists* when it is convenient – is that the global war on terror has become another Cold War scenario: threats can be constructed in almost any situation and national security is always at risk.

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to demonstrate the dangerous results of over-simplifying conflict and basing policy and peace negotiations on that simple construction. Conflicts, even regional ones, may seem so terribly difficult because we continuously handle them in such a simple manner. As the first half of this paper has demonstrated, the conflict in Darfur is hardly simple, certainly not black-and-white, and definitely chaotic. The chaotic nature of the conflict is in no way new news to anyone. However, the ambiguous nature of the conflict, generally

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[143] Wright 2006, 214 – 215

misunderstood and even worse – ignored – is operating in some yet unidentified ways. The summary snubbing of those operations has arguably contributed to its worsening.

The construction of the conflict as having been caused by ethnicity, environmental constraints, and economic and political marginalization implies that it never causes itself to become worsened; it never changes and new considerations never need to be addressed. When that perspective is assumed, the logical conclusion is to analyze the origins of the conflict – never a bad idea – without pursuing any further analysis. That trend is evident for Darfur. Only recently have any analyses of the complicated nature of the conflict come forward. And the delay seems to have rendered a difficult situation hopeless. Having ignored the peripheral, sustaining elements of the conflict – the rebel link to Hassan Turabi, the possible ulterior motives of the rebel groups, the independence of the janjaweed, among others – those elements have been allowed to fester, growing the conflict into an intractable scenario.

When the conflict is portrayed in Manichean terms, the rebels being painted in the most serene and pure light and the government as the big, bad wolf, the manner in which we approach the situation is skewed. The rebels instantly become the world's darlings, recipients of funding and sympathy. By rewarding their violent behavior, we see that we create an incentive for the rebels to continue their insurgency rather than to negotiate a settlement for peace. From their perspective, without continued government attacks, the justifications to continue to support their cause deteriorate. Ceasefire agreements are no longer in the interest of the rebels because if there remains no fighting, there remains no funding either. Alan Kuperman noted in his Op-Ed that the rebels have often been the party to first violate those agreements. If the rebels need the government to continue attacking them, so that they can continue to receive international sympathy and financial support, it seems logical that the rebels would violate the agreements to

provoke attacks.  That ensures the replenishing bank accounts.

The way we handle rebels and their movements may also permit other rebellions.  This is not to suggest a sort of domino effect where one rebellion triggers a chain reaction of rebellions. Rather, if a particular group is considering whether or not to begin a violent rebellion against their respective government, our treatment of current rebellions, just like the one in Darfur, is certainly not going to discourage others in their considerations.  And not all rebels have malicious motivations.  That assumption would be equally as harmful as it is when applied to the government.  Rather, the consideration by rebels of the consequences of their actions is less than accurate, at least in Darfur.  Even assuming the rebels to have been completely pure in their intentions, it is ridiculous to consider the actual results of their insurgency as anything close to successful.  Assuming purity means assuming the best interests of the Darfuris are at the heart of the rebellion and clearly, they are not benefiting from this insurgency.  They will never.  Five years later, having disrupted livelihoods, suspended education, disease, mal-nutrition and hunger, any re-payment scheme the Government of Sudan may consider will hardly compensate for all the losses these citizens have endured.  And that amount is only likely to remain stagnant in the midst of economic sanctions imposed on the Government.  Furthermore, with the increased number of rebel leaders, and the stagnant if not shrinking money pool to divide, the payments are only likely to become smaller.

*Foreign Policy*

Why has our policy been so categorical and simplistic?  And what does all this mean for U.S. policy in the future?  Darfur has demonstrated the failure by many parties involved to consider the consequences of the policy they have pursued.  Furthermore, Darfur has demonstrated the lack of continuous evaluation of the actual results of our policy.  We have

failed to acknowledge how our ill-informed pursuit has caused more suffering. It may be easy to suggest that United States, United Nations or African Union actions have been irresponsible in handling this situation. It may be easy to suggest that the efforts by the humanitarian community have also been irresponsible, all leading to unintended and harmful consequences. It seems this is not a new argument, either. There is nothing inherently novel in the suggestion that economic sanctions do not work as they are intended to. Strategies that provide military support for one side of a conflict in pursuit of some greater good cannot claim a good track record. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding have also in the past demonstrated dangerous consequences that arguably ultimately led to an overly trigger-shy approach to humanitarian interventions. What is apparent in the history of U.S. foreign policy in handling these sorts of conflicts is a very dangerous trend toward action or inaction that hardly achieves the stated intended effects of that pursuit. Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Iraq all forcefully demonstrate this point. This observation should lead us to question the underlying process by which we have come to these policies. Perhaps there is a profound error in thinking that has led the U.S. and others to cause so much harm, most probably unintentionally. This paper has alluded to that tendency already. The following discussion elaborates more toward that point in an effort to suggest a fundamental shift in our approach to humanitarian intervention specifically and our foreign policy more generally.

It seems apparent that in each approach by the United States, the United Nations and others to confront the growing crisis in Darfur has carried an impression of the way things ought to be. We ought to support the rebels, the rebels ought to be representative of the Darfuris, the government ought to stop the janjaweed, and China ought to discontinue its trade with Sudan. We ought to call the atrocities genocide, the *genocidaires* ought to be brought to justice, and someone ought to pay. But statements including terms such as *ought* and *should* must be

continuously evaluated according to a rubric based on justice and what justice means. The target

of the humanitarian organizations seems to have been skewed in just this way – it seems they

were seeking justice without an evaluation of exactly whose justice they were pursuing. Their

justice regarded a reckoning for the assault against humanity's preservation of the idea of what

humanity should mean. Their actions pursued just those ends. Label the campaign genocide so

that we can prosecute the *genocidaires* in order to maintain the international norm against crimes

against humanity, crimes of genocide, war crimes. Meanwhile, the pursuit of that sort of justice

insults what should have all along provided the basis for what justice actually ought to entail –

humans. The question, *justice for whom?* has long been unanswered and apparently unasked.

What may seem an extreme statement hardly fails to resist critical analysis. Can it be logically

concluded that supporting the rebels in their campaign demonstrates that the Darfuris suffering

the most were at the center of our understanding of justice? Can it be concluded that pursuing

the labeling of the conflict as genocide had as its foundation justice for Darfuris? Can it be

concluded that targeting China for supporting the Sudanese government was cradled in the best

interest of the Darfuris? Positively not, on all accounts. Rather, the conclusion should be drawn

that our policy has pursued decidedly immoral ends – a justice intended for humans who, aside

from that insult to their own morality, were hardly affected, if even at all, by the atrocities being

committed there.

　　Nor can we claim ignorance. A thoughtful analysis of the anticipated consequences of

these actions surely would have yielded caution. However, the intention was not to preserve the

human dignity of the Darfuris, it was to pursue justice for our intellects and international norms.

Pursuit of international norms against these crimes and human rights abuse cannot be ignored,

either. It can be argued, after all, the pursuit of those norms was the necessary pre-condition for

any international interest in the atrocities being committed in Darfur.[144] But we pursued that

interest at the expense of the dignity of the Darfuris. To place intellectual and philosophical

debate, righteousness at an intangible level in front of the pursuit of justice in its tangible form –

the discontinuation of specific human suffering – represents an overwhelmingly egoistic moral

policy. If our policy is to be based upon pursuit of this type of justice, to mend injuries against

our moral sensibilities, Kennan's policy as stated at the opening of this paper ought to be pursued.

We ought to prefer inaction over action. If our action intends what we perceive to be the best

outcome – the ideal – then we should resign to inaction because we should know – as history has

taught those humbly willing enough to evaluate purely – that our action in pursuit of the ideal

has hardly actually resulted in the ideal. Worse, as Kennan articulated, it has entailed

unacceptable collateral damage.

This paper, however, does not suggest that we throw up our hands in abandon, resigning

to simple inaction to avoid, as Kennan suggested, actions that have a negative moral significance.

Rather, this paper suggests a readjustment and ethical evaluation of what we consider to be the

ideal. The negative moral significance that actually resulted from the policy pursued by the

United States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations alike was hardly unable to be

anticipated. Rather, the precise predictability of the results of our actions support the assertion

that we have been pursuing the wrong kind of justice in most, if not all of our actions. That

justice stands to restore and protect our understanding and construction of what the ideal is

exactly – a world without oppressive governments, a world at peace. That justice intends to

reconcile what we believe ourselves to be with the actions we pursue. We do not believe it is

okay to commit genocide or ethnic cleansing therefore we act in ways to demonstrate we are

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[144] This argument is drawn from email correspondence of 3 May 2008 with Dr. Rafi Youatt and should be credited
to him.

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offended by those actions. We avoid actions that might otherwise call into question whether our moral sensibilities have been offended. To put in another way, we place our reputations in the world community in front of the suffering because we cannot afford to appear to not be offended.

For Darfur, that has led to our support of the rebels and their campaign. The effort meant to ensure that what we perceived to be good would in the end triumph over what we perceived to be evil. When the Security Council forwarded the Darfur file to the International Criminal Court, it was clearly an effort towards punishment, justice for humanity. Ironically, that pursuit of justice for humanity did not include in its purview the individual humans in Darfur whose suffering actually prompted such an intellectual campaign for justice. We accuse China of pursuing an immoral policy towards Sudan and the people of Darfur, but as has been argued here, it may be the funds the government of Sudan receives from China that may in the end alleviate some of the suffering being experienced today. Nor are we able to claim innocence in this respect. It does not appear that we even entertained the possibility of the negative significance of our action. The consequences should not have been difficult to anticipate: if you give power to the weaker side in any battle, the conflict will last longer. If you weaken the stronger side, the conflict will last even longer still. This is most certainly an elementary logic of military engagement. Yet, we pursued it anyway.

If morality does have a place in U.S. foreign policy – this paper argues just so – that morality must be based on the idea of justice. But, it does not seem that justice can be properly understood without an indication of the target of justice, an answer to indicate whose justice we are pursuing. This paper has demonstrated our preference for simplicity, for static analyses, for categorical declarations. That preference may very well be rooted in our formulation of what justice is. Our current conception is global and broad, very general and very transferable from

situation to situation.  Rather than pursue that construction of justice – perhaps what Kennan may have referred to as the ideal – on a very broad and general level, we ought to allow that general idea to direct our pursuits but pursue the ideal on a case-by-case basis.  We must calibrate at the outset, and systematically recalibrate thereafter.  We must measure against the consequences of our actions.  For Darfur, the ideal might be something more like the ultimate well-being of the Darfuris rather than the punishment of the *genocidaires*, the triumph of the rebels, the collapse of the government, or the humiliation of China.

The answer to the question *justice for whom?* ought to be the Darfuris uninvolved except they are victims.  Their justice ought to be at the fore of our policy pursuits.  It would appear this consideration has been only a periphery, if it has been consulted at all.  If we were to approach the conflict with that sort of justice in mind, we would most probably pursue the same end – security.  What changes, however, are the options available to us to pursue that end.  The assumption has been for most of the conflict that the rebels are acting on behalf of the Darfuris despite their actions demonstrating otherwise.  The approach here places the burden of proof on the rebels and suggests that burden should be steep.  The rebels have pursued violent means and it is unclear whether that violence actually was representative of the Darfuris – especially since the Darfuris requested them to leave the area when the government began responding.  Not only may there be a lack of legitimacy, but whether the rebels pursued all other means before they pursued violence remains unclear.  The Black Book was linked to the JEM who, arguably, saw the opportunity created by the SLM/A when they began their rebellion.  What non-violent measures the SLM/A did take prior to the rebellion remains ambiguous at best.  When viewed as right versus wrong in a global, intellectual manner, it is unthinkable not to support the rebels as they wage war against evil.  Using the approach suggested here, we can consider that we must

stop funding, supporting or advising the rebel leaders in their rebellion, at least until such time as they are able to demonstrate a legitimate claim to representation of the Darfuris.

On the other side of the violence, the janjaweed must also be disarmed. As they have been constructed as evil thus far in the conflict, it is not difficult to pursue the goal of disarming them. Rather, again, the options available to pursue those ends may diversify if we consider the Darfuris first, rather than an ideological triumph over evil. In order to achieve security, we may have to support the government. This option is most certainly unpalatable to our moral senses, nonetheless, if our moral senses rely on the livelihoods of the humans physically suffering from the conflict, it seems appropriate to pursue those means that will establish security at the earliest possible moment. We ought to help the government of Sudan do what governments are supposed to do – establish and maintain societal peace. At this moment in time, this option may truly no longer be available. The United States declared the Sudanese government to be committing genocide and to be a state sponsor of terror. We have tied our own hands.

We ought also to stop our campaign against China and the Olympics. As already articulated here, the Sudanese people will rely on Chinese oil consumption to support the payments they are receiving in the South. It is impractical to suggest that China boycott the Sudanese government. Once again, if we are to consider first the well-being of the Darfuris in our approach to resolving the conflict, more options present themselves. China has conspicuously refrained from accusing the Sudanese government or supporting the Security Council in its pursuits against them. It remains possible, therefore, for the Chinese government to assist the Sudanese government in establishing security in the region. This includes disarming the janjaweed and reining in the Sudanese Armed Forces and Popular Defense Forces. However, the Sudanese government may not – and arguably should not – pursue that option until the

rebellion has been stifled. If the international community quits its own support of the rebel leaders, based upon their own actions and their failure to prove their claim of representation, the Sudanese government, with assistance from the Chinese, may be able to quell the rebellion. Given that, they would most probably be willing to rein in the janjaweed and the Armed Forces – especially if it meant they were yielding to the will of the Chinese, who have refrained from casting any moral judgment on the Sudanese government. To put it more simply, Sudan would not lose face if it cooperated with China.

Our pursuit thus far has most certainly not left an open exit such as this for the government to take and demonstrates another benefit to the approach suggested here. It should really be no wonder why the Sudanese government does not want a military intervention and why they systematically interfere with some humanitarian organizations and their work. With these options available, it is plausible that security may be established and humanitarian organizations may be able to get to their business of assisting Darfuris back to their homes and livelihoods. Only within a framework of security is it possible to pursue development and begin to address those root causes that have captivated so much attention throughout this crisis.

That these policy adjustments will ultimately be implemented is unlikely. As was most probably anticipated, Mia Farrow and the Hollywood campaigns for Darfur, against the Sudanese government and against China have been successful. Now the morality machine is alive, unlikely to be influenced to support the governments of Sudan or China, or simply to be stopped. The U.S. government has declared the situation to be 'genocide.' We are even less capable now of reversing our policy into alignment with justice for the Darfuris. What remains, despite our moral hand-wringing, is an untenable situation. We desire to stop the suffering which is of course admirable at least. Yet we have prevented ourselves from that approach

which would most likely produce the quickest results.  Had those results been achieved, Darfuris

would actually suffer less and we could stop our moral hand-wringing – everybody wins.  As it

stands now, we have perhaps won only our pursuit of intellectual justice.  Genocide remains

morally unacceptable and, partially due to our path toward that victory, that which we have

labeled genocide continues.



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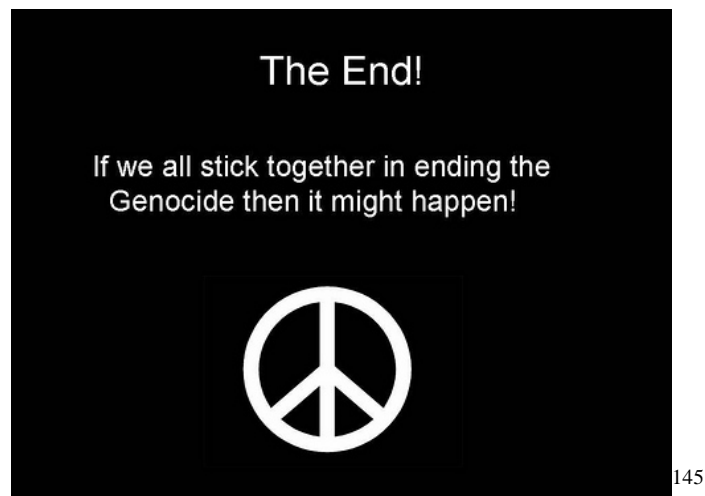
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