

AFRICA

USAcademics - Sudan

by Jess Maghan
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The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.

In August 2006, my retirement flipped with a single phone call catapulting me into experiencing a childhood fantasy of journeying to the juncture of the Blue and White Nile at the ancient city of Khartoum. I was invited to join twelve academics from across the United States in a dialogue conference with political and religious leaders in Sudan under the auspices of USAcademics, the Council for International Peoples Friendship, and the Sudanese American Friendship Society.

My lifelong romantic vision of this strangely beautiful place was now obscured in a dark awareness of **153 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps** in the states of the Darfur region. Further compounding this situation are the eight years of U.S. sanctions, three Peace Treaties currently in limbo, and a nascent *Weimarian atmosphere* of government by fiat. Sudan is boxed-in and besieged with illicit trafficking in weapons, nomad gangs, rebel "soldiers" and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons seeking refuge.

So what are the roots of the Darfurian *genocide*? The answer is blunt and related to a word which Nazism, the demise of colonialism, and the development of scientific anthropology have marginalized into a political opprobrium: the word is "race." Race has now become an adamant dimension to the genocidal political violence of Darfur.¹

Measured in the stretch of a mere five decades, Sudan's modern post-colonial statehood is infused with fundamentalist and secular Muslims, fragile constitutional constraints on Sharia law in Southern Sudan, and racism between ethnic Arabs and Africans.

With a population of 36 million (600 tribes, 80 with their own militias), five hundred languages, and nine neighboring countries with porous borders [Chad, Central African Republic, Uganda,

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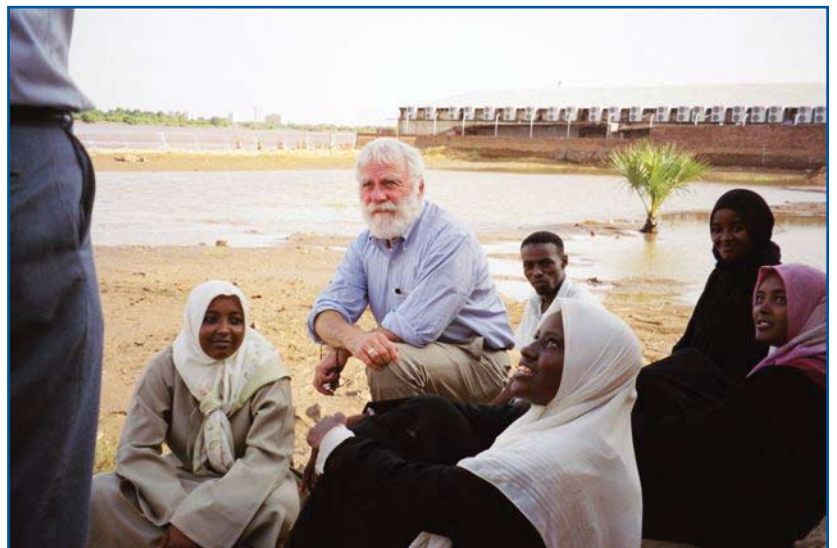


Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Libya], these asymmetrical and complex aspects of Sudan are more often than not in the one-dimensional portrayals of the international media.

Despite the fact that Darfurians are fellow Muslims, the oil-rich states of the Middle East have ignored their plight. However, the global exposure of the Darfur crisis is now forcing the Arab League to at least begin to formulate a joint strategy for strengthening the African Union military mission, declaring that the solution in Darfur must be an African solution.

THE CONTEXT

The Islamic-Arab world intersects with Africa in Sudan. Its oil and resource-rich provinces in the South, whose citizens mostly embrace Christianity or animism,² have for decades been resisting the authoritarian government of the North with its strong Muslim base. Overlapping traditional religious tensions are the roving groups of armed bandits, blood feuds, tribal hatreds, con-



Maghan in Sudan

licts between cattle herders and farmers, availability of weapons, and an ongoing competition over shrinking natural resources. Such is the landscape for the civil conflict, taking place on and off since the early 1950s, which has decimated Sudan as surely as the Hundred Years War once destroyed Europe.³

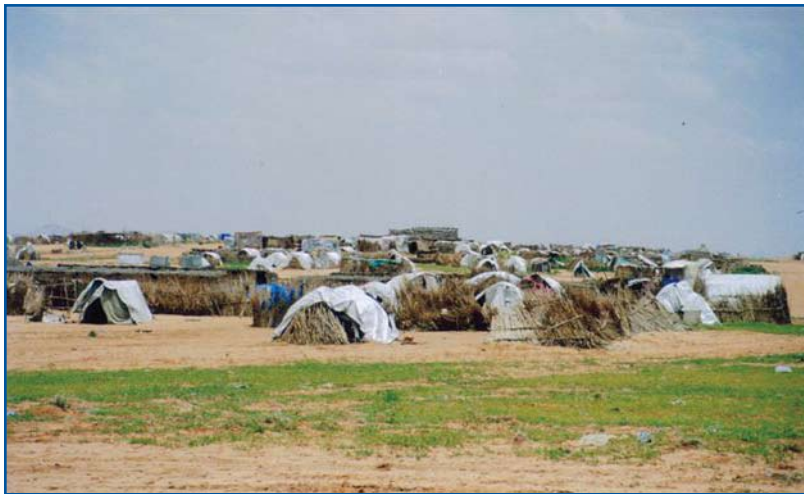
As for Darfur, which constitutes the western part of Sudan, it is administratively divided into three federated states running from North to South. **[Dar (home) of the Fur]** is more heavily populated than other regions of Sudan (with around eight million people). The black-African Fur tribe makes up over half of

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the population of the province, and the rest is divided between fifteen different ethnic/linguistic groups. All the inhabitants are Sunni Muslims. Historically, Darfur was populated by “African” tribes (who were mostly sedentary farmers) and “Arab” tribes (who were uniformly nomadic shepherds).

Critical to understanding the issues of oil development and revenues in Sudan is the country’s geography: all current oil development, exploration, and production occur in southern Sudan or along the traditional North/South border. Concession rights for oil development are virtually sewn up by China, followed by Pakistan, India, and *TotalFinaElf* of France. Given the wealth of oil in the South and the concern with national sovereignty, the



El Fashir IDP Camp - Darfur

Khartoum government has done everything possible to prevent the entry of foreign troops via the United Nations.

Anti-Western radicals argue that the UN is nothing more than a front for “imperialist powers” intent upon “re-colonising” Sudan. Anti-Western rhetoric has increased and the negative press suffered by Sudan is attributed to “Jewish control over the media.”⁴ Such charges are mostly seen as self-serving (but growing) propaganda.⁵

What impact the entry of UN troops might have on a singularly multi-cultural nation the size of Sudan is impossible to predict. But it is possible to imagine that a national resistance will take shape and that refugees living in the camps will find themselves caught in the middle.⁶

THE ROOTS OF THE DARFUR CRISIS

Darfur’s history is inseparably linked with insurrection and foreign forces. The fatal path of Charles George Gordon, Britain’s Governor General of all Sudan, in **1884**, with Mohammed Ibn Ahmed el-Sayyd Abdullah (the long expected Mahdi), epitomizes this history. General Gordon was beheaded in the battle of Khartoum and his head displayed on a spear at the juncture of the Blue and White Nile – through the years, be-

heading has remained as the ultimate stamp of the jihadist on the invading non-believer.

In the middle of the First World War, **Darfur** was (again) almost absent-mindedly annexed to the Anglo-Egyptian colonial empire in **1916**. Since the territory was determined useless, it remained ignored and dormant until the **1970s**. By then, Darfur had become embroiled in the **complicated center-periphery** games that Sudanese elites and their subject-people had begun to play with each other after independence in **1956**.

The **Chadian-Libyan factor**: The Sudanese government accuses Chad of supporting the Darfur rebels, and Chad’s government accuses Sudan of supporting the rebel groups menacing the capital. Chadian rebel groups have operated openly inside Sudanese territory, using Darfur as a base, and Darfur rebels are similarly brazen in their use of Chadian territory to regroup, rearm, and organize.⁷

The “African” rebels point out that in spite of being a loyal part of the Muslim north, Darfur is in fact as badly off in terms of lack of infrastructure, neglect of education, and economic underdevelopment as the Christian south. Economic deprivation, cultural spite, and administrative marginalization are the key causes of the conflict. Some have inferred that it would be best for all concerned **if the southern region of Sudan and Darfur were to secede**.

Darfur is poorer today than in pre-colonial times because the pre-colonial trade is dead. The population is larger, and years of drought and over-grazing have made what used to be abundant land supply into

a problematic one. The trade of the independent Darfur Sultanate depended on a number of items which are today outside the scope of possible economic exchange, namely slaves, ivory tusks, and ostrich feathers.

THE KEY POINT TO UNDERSTAND

Radical Muslims came into power in Khartoum in **1989** and the Southern situation began to be seen as largely of their making and, increasingly as an example of Muslim-Christian conflict, with radical Islam the prime motivating factor. In **1992**, after proclaiming a *jihad*, it bombed and deported and detained thousands of civilians, selling many of them as slave labor to the large Arab-owned farms in Kordofon. Mosques were bombed, Muslims were deported or killed along with their Christian and “pagan” brethren, and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) penetrated the area to defend the population.⁸

Since **February 2003**, Darfur has again been the site of violent conflict between the province’s nomadic Arab tribes, supported by the government in Khartoum and the African settled peasant tribes. Central to the rebellion is the ingrained legacy (and residue) of the thousand-year slave trade manifested as incremental racist attitudes among both Arabs and Africans.

Khartoum and Darfur - Since independence, the government in Khartoum had been run by Nile valley "Arabs." After making a peace deal in the south that exempted Sharia law and providing for elections and political-succession, Khartoum



expected U.S. sanctions would be lifted. Khartoum felt it had proven that it was not fundamentalist or even Islamist since its new government of national unity also included southern Christians and other non-Muslims. Khartoum was left feeling betrayed by the United States.

There is no room for self-delusion: a true negotiation about the future of Sudan can only come after political-military controls have been redefined by the combatants themselves, rather than being artificially manipulated by outsiders. The compromise of an expanded African Union force, whether labeled UN or not, is still the best option. **Having African Union troops handle African problems has profound symbolic, cultural, and political value.**

SUDAN-CHINA

There is in all of Africa no more destructive bilateral relationship than that between China and Sudan. Beijing's relentless military, commercial, and diplomatic support of the National Islamic Front is invasive and chronic.⁹ Amnesty International has documented that China continues to allow military equipment to be sent to Sudan despite killings by government armed forces and ad hoc (Janjaweed) military groups in Darfur.¹⁰

China is now securing deals with African governments at a pace that has unnerved the region's traditional partners and its former European colonial rulers.¹¹ A vast petrol infrastructure has been built with Chinese laborers consisting of highways, drillings, storage, laboratories and research centers, augmented via a vast "security" enterprise nurtured by a shadow illicit trafficking sup-

ply of weapons and arming of "African" forces. Human Rights Watch has also concluded that China has made easy financing available for these arms purchases.¹²

China offers a model of development, driven from above and powered by high-tech investment, vastly more gratifying and reassuring to third-world elites than the Western gospel of unleashing growth through democratic and marketplace reform. According to China's official African policy, published earlier this year, China seeks "a new type of strategic partnership," which, among other things, "respects African countries' independent choice of the road of development." **China invokes this doctrine of non-interference when defending the grossly abusive regimes in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, and elsewhere with which it carries on a flourishing business.**¹³

American sanctions have not kept firms from China, Malaysia, India, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates from making direct foreign investments of \$2.3 billion this year alone. The American embargo is having little effect as long as Asian countries are eager to trade with Sudan despite its human rights record. Oil has turned Sudan into one of fastest growing economies in Africa. The oil boom is strengthening Khartoum's hand at home, although wealth is not evenly shared. Darfur and much of Sudan remains desperately poor while in Khartoum, young, rich Sudanese shop at city's first real mall, supermarkets, and cafes.¹⁴



CONCLUSION

U.S. SANCTIONS - Osama Bin Laden spent five years in Sudan before being expelled in **1996** when terrorist threats led President Clinton to withdraw the U.S. ambassador. (Although the embassy remains open, there still is no U.S. ambassador in Khartoum.) In **1997**, the United States imposed economic sanctions, prohibiting trade with businesses in Sudan and prohibiting investment in Sudan by U.S. businesses.

November 02, 2006 - President Bush renewed U.S. economic sanctions on Sudan for one year and left open the door to imposing new ones

linked to the violence in Darfur. "The United States is going to work with the international community to come up with a single plan on how to address this issue and save lives," Bush said following a meeting with his personal envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios.

President Bush's remarks were widely seen as opening the door for a **compromise solution** involving a beefed up African Union force, or the deployment of an Arab-or-Muslim-led mission more to Khartoum's liking. Another option discussed by U.S. officials involves offering **new incentives** to Khartoum to accept

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a more robust peacekeeping force, including lifting existing U.S. sanctions on Sudan.¹⁵

UN's THREE-STEP DARFUR PLAN

1) AU \$21m support package

2) Deploy several hundred soldiers and police

3) Hybrid force with substantial UN command and control


January 15th 2007 – Veteran Sudan Peace emissary, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, worked-out a joint statement with President Bashir in which Sudan agreed to a 60-day cease-fire to allow peace talks to resume, provided Darfur rebels go along as well. President Bashir also agreed that Sudan would prosecute rapes and stop painting its military aircraft to look as if they belong to the United Nations.¹⁶

Listen to the Morse code clicking under the global Sudan-Darfur pyrotechnics.

A “fundamentalist” regime represents forty-eight percent of the population and Sudan considers itself “Arab,” while seeking to control regional African areas in the East, South, and West.

Will Sudan remain a unified and centralized state or a fragmented country with the South and West pushing for independence?

THERE ARE DEEP SYSTEMATIC PROBLEMS IN SUDAN THAT CANNOT BE SOLVED MILITARILY.

International mechanisms, with effective enforcement components, should be devised so that Sudan's oil revenues (**Sudan is now the third-largest oil producer in Africa**) are directed equitably and efficiently to Darfur. Other international aid will be required, but the Sudan must be forced to accept responsibility for the economically devastating consequences of their brutality and savage conduct of the war. 

NOTES

1. Gerard Prunier, *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide*, Cornell University Press, 2005:162-163.
2. See the “Sudan: International Religious Freedom Report” that was released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 09/15/06.
3. Stephen Bronner, “The Sudan and the Crisis in Darfur.” *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture*, 2006.
4. More credence was given to anti-Western voices when it became public that the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff is pressing for the creation of an American military command focused solely on Africa, *Reuters*, 09/23/06.
5. Elzobier, Ahmed, “Pathological Delusions,” *Sudan Tribune*, 10/5/06:3
6. Note the interesting discussion by George Packer, “Letter from Sudan” in *The New Yorker*, 09/11/06.
7. Lydia Polgreen, “Rebels Take Control of City in Eastern Chad,” *The New York Times*, 11/26/06:A28.
8. Ibid, Prunier: 161.
9. Testimony by Prof. Eric Reeves (Smith College) before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission: 08/03/06 - Russell Senate Office Building
10. Amnesty International, “People's Republic of China Arms Accelerates Conflict and Human Rights Abuses,” 8/11/06.
11. *Mail & Guardian*, “Beijing's Race for Africa,” *Guardian Newspapers, LTD*; 11/01/06:4
12. Human Rights Watch, “China's Involvement in Sudan: Arms and Oil,” 11/20/03 (hrw.org, 10/20/06)
13. James Traub, “China's African Adventure,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 11/19/06:74-79
14. Jeffrey Gettleman, “War in Sudan? Not Where the Oil Wealth Flows,” *The New York Times*, 10/24/06: A1.
15. *Mail and Guardian*, South Africa Press, Ltd., “Bush Renews Sanctions on Sudan,” 11/02/06:1A.
16. Nicholas D. Kristof, “Car Washes and Genocide,” *The New York Times* (Op-Ed), 01/16/07:A31

sudan facts

REFUGEES (country of origin): 110,927 (Eritrea) 5,023 (Chad) 7,983 (Uganda) 14,812 (Ethiopia)

IDPs: 5,300,000 - 6,200,000 (internal conflict since 1980s; ongoing genocide) (2005)

CURRENT SITUATION: Sudan is a source country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Sudan may also be a transit and destination country for Ethiopian women trafficked for domestic servitude; boys are trafficked to the Middle East, particularly Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, for use as camel jockeys. Small numbers of girls are reportedly trafficked within Sudan for domestic servitude, as well as for commercial sexual exploitation in small brothels in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The terrorist rebel organization, “Lord's Resistance Army” (LRA), continues to abduct and forcibly conscript small numbers of children in Southern Sudan for use as cooks, porters, and combatants in its ongoing war against Uganda; some of these children are then trafficked across borders into Uganda or possibly the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Children are utilized by rebel groups and the Sudanese Armed Forces and associated militias in the ongoing conflict in Darfur. During the decades of civil war, thousands of Dinka women and children were enslaved by members of Baggara tribes and subjected to various forms of forced labor without remuneration, as well as physical and sexual abuse. With the cessation of the North-South conflict and the ongoing peace process, there were no known new abductions of Dinka by Baggara tribes during 2005. However, inter-tribal abductions of a different nature continue in Southern Sudan and warrant further investigation.