

The Darfur Conflict: Assessing Assessments¹

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There are a number of bodies of knowledge concerning Darfur about which assessments can, and should, be made. These include: ecological dynamics relevant to the conflict, mortality levels resultant from it, the war itself, its representation in different media, humanitarian efforts to mitigate the violence, peace negotiations and conflict resolution measures to resolve it, health issues generated by combat, migration/refugee problems consequent upon war, plus wartime changes in cultural dynamics, influencing questions of identity formation. This is an enormous corpus of knowledge to inspect, beyond the confines of a thirty minute talk. So my goal in what follows is to highlight particular areas of assessment of especial importance -the ecology, war, and its mortalities- to suggest research initiatives of significance, both with regard to understanding the Darfur situation and more general issues. Other areas of assessment are considered in Appendix A. Let us begin with the ecological dynamics.

ECOLOGICAL DYNAMICS

The claim has been made by a number of authorities that ecological dynamics were important contributing factors to the Darfur War (UNEP 2007: 60, 74-88; Mamdani 2009: 4; Assal 2009: 285-86). Specifically, it is suggested that drought dried up water sources, ruined pastures and resulted in '*mass migration, mostly from north to south*' (Daly 2007: 230), which brought

¹ This talk was presented at the seminar, DARFUR, ASSESSING THE ASSESSMENTS, of the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute. University of Manchester. Manchester, UK. May 27 and 28, 2010.

herders and farmers into intense competition over pasture, water, and land resources; and that this competition, resulted in struggles over control of the regional government, that provoked the warfare. This explanation might be called a ‘circumscription hypothesis’ because its heart is the assertion that rainfall decrease reduced resources needed for subsistence especially in North Darfur, thereby circumscribing the places in which people could subsist into smaller spaces; generating competition, which competition eventually became so great that it provoked violence.²

Darfur is a vast area with a complex ecology and it needs to be recognized that the extent of knowledge of this complexity is unknown, though limited.³ Many judgments seem based upon anecdotal evidence. One UN report, for example, claims that the ‘scale’ of Northern Darfur’s climate change is ‘almost unprecedented’ (UNREP 2007: 62). Do they really know this? However, evidence *is* strong that since the 1970s there has been more frequent drought across the entire Sahelian region of Africa from Senegal to Ethiopia than in the first half of the 20th century. The question is why?

Two major answers to this question currently circulate. The first is that the frequent droughts are a manifestation of increasing global warming. The second is that the droughts are the result of

² The view that environmental circumscription could be a causal force in social transformation was first developed by Robert Carneiro (1970) in his theory of state-formation.

³ There are only 3 continuously monitored precipitation stations in Darfur for an area of 0.8 million square kilometers (UNEP 2007: 62)

desertification. If the problem is global warming, its causes lie in the economic practices of capitalist enterprise, and little can be done about it in Darfur. If the problem is desertification, its causes are in part the result of human activities of farmers and herders in Darfur, especially as these have been modified by the introduction of capitalist forms of food production and population growth. Desertification has been argued to be a cause of environmental problems in the African sahel since colonial times and became prominent in the development literature since the droughts of the 1970s (see Raynaut 1997, Gorse and Steed 1987). It is hypothesized to be a process of environmental deterioration provoked by over-use of pasture and farm-lands by herders and farmers employing extensive range and soil management techniques. Alter the herding and farming systems and the environmental problems can be solved. There have been criticisms of the desertification hypothesis, especially in the 1980s from the Institute for Development Anthropology (Horowitz and Little, 1987). However, too little is known about the dynamics of Darfur ecology to provide any answer to the question of what caused the droughts.

This preceding discussion suggests two research projects. The first would be to gather and analyze evidence bearing upon the role of the concentration hypothesis in the Darfur War. The second research project would analyze Darfurian environmental transformations. Such a program would be a major enterprise requiring field and theoretical specialists in climate and arid lands ecology. The goal of the research would be to evaluate the role of global warming and/or desertification in Darfur's ecological dynamics. Such research while of direct interest to the situation in Darfur, would be equally of a more general interest to those concerned with environmental problems in developing areas.

MORTALITY LEVELS

Understanding of the war-related mortality in Darfur is fundamental because it, along with visual depiction of the fighting, has been terribly important in determining the representation of the war and this representation, in its turn, has been vital in stirring the pot of the politics surrounding the conflict. Estimates of the mortality levels of the Darfurian War widely vary. In addition to the Sudanese government's low figure of 10,000 (Crilly 2010:185), Eric Reeves, an English Professor at Smith College, claimed in January 2005 that there had been in the order of 400,000 excess deaths. He further claimed that there were about 450,000 excess deaths by April 2006 (Reeves 2006, Cherry 2009). 'Excess deaths' are those above the normal mortality rate and are believed in the case of Darfur to be the result of violence as well as disease and malnutrition provoked by the violence of the warring. The Coalition for International Justice, in a study prepared by John Hagen, a Northwestern University sociologist, assessed the level of excess deaths at 400,000 in April 2005 (Hagen et.al. 2005). The Center for Research in Epidemiology of Disaster (CRED) of the Université Catholique de Louvain argued that there had been 118,142 excess deaths through June of 2005 (Guha-Sapir et. al 2005). The US State Department approximated that there had been between 63,000 and 146,000 excess deaths by 2005 (Department of State 2005). Finally, the World Health Organization proposed that there were between 35,000 and 70,000 excess deaths for seven months in 2004 (Nabarro 2004).

The General Accounting Office (GAO) of the US Congress performed an assessment of the Darfur war fatalities conducted by 12 experts in epidemiology, demography, statistics, and the Darfur crisis. It evaluated the five studies discussed above plus a sixth. The specialists reviewed

the quality of source data; methods, including extrapolations and assumptions; researchers' objectivity; and transparency concerning study procedures. The reviewers obtained supplementary information from those who conducted the research when necessary. The GAO report's verdict was,

'Although none of the death estimates was consistently considered accurate or methodologically strong, the experts we consulted rated some of the estimates more highly than others. Overall, the experts expressed the highest level of confidence in CRED's estimates and slightly lower levels of confidence in State's and the WHO's estimates. They expressed the lowest level of confidence in the three estimates that report the highest number of deaths, citing multiple shortcomings, such as a reliance on unrealistic assumptions about populations' level of risk over periods of time'(GAO 2006: 3).

The GAO's conclusion implies that *no* solid assessment of the excess deaths in the Darfur conflict exists, though the higher estimates are not credible. The situation described for Darfur is not unusual. Accurate knowledge of mortality resultant from warfare in developing countries is hard to come by. There are political reasons for this and there are methodological ones.

The preceding warrants the idea of a research project to analyze existing, and develop new information concerning Darfur War mortality levels. The project would evaluate existing data, while developing new methods of assessing war mortalities in isolated areas. There would be two goals. The first would be to more truthfully know how many died in the disasters of the

Darfur fighting. The second would be to contribute to the development of more accurate techniques of studying the deadly consequences of war.

THE WAR

‘Is that it? Is that *all* they do? We do it far better, far better!’

(Response of a German uncle to his young social scientist nephew, on having been told about the different practices of corruption in African states.)

We will get to the above comment in a moment. I have reviewed much of the literature seeking to understand the Darfur War. While this literature is considerable, I believe it exhibits two failings. First, it remains unclear in certain areas what actually happened and when. This is because: 1. information is wanting concerning the actions of external state actors, especially Chad and the US; and 2. information is absent concerning elites’ motivations and intentions. A second failing is that certain explanations of the Darfur War tends to reflect the ‘barbarization’ of the African state fashionable in much current Africanist discourse, especially that coming from the North.

African states in this perspective are stigmatized as neo-patrimonial (Schatzberg 2001); corrupt, criminalized operations (Bayart, Ellis, Hibou (1999); full of ‘juju warriors’ (Kaplan 1994); practicing a ‘politics of the belly’ (Bayart 1993); all the while instrumentalizing disorder (Chabal and Deloz 1999). The crux in this literature -elsewhere criticized for Chad (Reyna 2003a, 2003b), for Sierre Leone (Richards 1996), and Darfur (Mamdani 2009)- is that there is

something ‘barbarously’ wrong in the African state that accounts for its problems. One iteration of the barbarization perspective as applied to the Darfur War is what de Waal terms the ‘center-periphery hypothesis’, in the stronger version of which it is proposed that, ‘...*that there is a deliberate and consistent conspiracy by an administrative, military, and commercial establishment to exploit the provinces. The country’s wars are a logical continuation of historic processes of asset stripping and proletarianization of the rural populace.... War is but a continuation of primary accumulation...*’ (2007: 8).

The understanding of the Darfur War argued below attempts to unite in a common explanation the two icons of the contemporary moment –that of the janjawid in Darfur and the 82nd Airborne division of the US military. It begins by judging the barbarization perspective to be not so much wrong, as naïve. Now contemplate the comment of the uncle, a man-of-the-world businessman, to his young, anthropologist nephew, ‘We do a far better job of it’. In other words, corrupt barbarism is not restricted to the African state, but is widely distributed among First World states –think of the criminal war the UK and the US just fought in Iraq, and of the various corruptions, legal and otherwise, in the contemporary American and British financial sector. The further problem with the barbarization perspective is that it tends to focus the explanatory eye entirely on the African state; ignoring other causal forces. Importantly, such a narrow explanatory focus makes it hard to connect the icons, mentioned in the introduction.

A complexity perspective, sketched below, seeks to bring into the analysis forces heretofore absent, especially those of external states like the US, thereby linking the icons. It hypothesizes: warfare in Darfur is explained as the operation of four interrelated domains of structure with political capabilities of increasing complexity over larger and larger geographic spaces. These are local, regional, national and international structures. Because all of the structures have the capacity for different levels of military force, the disaster of war in Darfur might be conceptualized as a ‘complex system of violence’ (CSV). Two characteristics of this approach distinguish it from other accounts of the Darfur War. First, other approaches do, to varying degrees, discuss the different structural levels relevant to the war; but they do not ‘connect the dots’, by which is meant they do not systematically explain how the different structural levels are articulated into a CSV. Second, such an approach explains the Darfur War as a body of phenomena resultant from the *entire* structure of violence and not determined in any way by one of its components, such as the local or national levels. Below I provide evidence to convince readers that speculation according a CSV responsibility for the Darfur War is worthy of further validation. Argument proceeds by specifying the component structures of the Darfurian CSV.

Local

Tubiana has said, ‘*The first field study carried out in Darfur during September and October 2004 show that the prevailing opinion among both non-Arabs and Arabs was that the war was primarily a broad struggle for land that had grown out of earlier, more localized conflicts*’ (2007: 71). The local conflicts originated out disputes within and between different sections of tribes in particular areas over access to resources due to the effects of environmental circumscription. At times these resource disputes were between pastoral groups over wells or

pastures.⁴ But after the 1972-73 droughts these quarrels tended to pit pastoral peoples (like the camel herding northern Rizeigat) against farming peoples (such as the Fur, Masalit, and Daju). Available evidence is supportive of this view. Drought did provoke very considerable migration of northern pastoralists into southern farmer territory (Daly 2007). Additionally, Mamdani provides information about fighting between Darfurian tribal groups between 1932 and 2000. There were a total of 42 conflicts. Between 1932 and 1973 there were three conflicts. Between 1974 and 2000, during the period of higher drought, there were thirty-nine conflicts (2009: 346-347). After 1983 there were 25 such conflicts, the majority of them between pastoralists and farmers. After 1994, each and every year was a year of pastoralist-farmer fighting. The temporal ordering of this data is striking: first in time there is increased drought (1973-1984); next there is the high migration of pastoralists into farmer lands (especially 1986); finally there is continual and increasing herder-farmer conflict (1995-2000). However, as we are about to see, the warring in Darfur became far more than merely tribal sparring, so that local-level narratives of the Darfurian disasters are incomplete.

Regional

The region of interest is that of Darfur itself and its provincial governmental apparatus. There has been conflict over who will control Darfur's regional government. Until recently much of that control was in the hands of the more settled farmers, especially the Fur who as the descendents of the pre-colonial rulers of the Sultanate of Darfur continued to dominate regional administration throughout the colonial and early Independence areas. Arabs –understood not as a

⁴ There had been, for example, a 30 year struggle between certain Zaghawa and some Northern Rezeigat over the Gineik waterhole that began in 1968 (Flint and DeWaal 2009: 5).

particular tribe, but as an alliance of tribes- began to challenge this dominance in the 1980s. Mamdani reports that two years after the 1984 drought in 1986 that 384,010 migrants moved from the north to the south in Darfur (2009: 348). Additionally, as we shall see, Chadian Arab groups migrated into Darfur and helped their agnates (Flint and De Waal 2009: 24). Now the confrontations were not between parts of tribes, but between coalitions of entire tribes seeking regional goals (Tubiana 2007: 70). These goals were of two sorts –for office in regional administration of the three Darfurian states as well as for land in these states. Quarrel became violent in 1987-1989 when it erupted into ‘...*a wide-ranging conflict between sedentary Fur and a broad coalition of both cattle-breeding and camel-herding Arab tribes*’ that became known as the Arab-Fur War (Tubiana 2007: 70). Thus, during the struggle for regional control, militias that had initially been local level organizations gradually developed into confederations of militias with regional interests (Tubiana 2007: 75). By the 1990s this struggle was more intense and being decisively influenced by the third structural level in the Darfur War, the national level of the central government, discussed next.

National

Salah Hassan has said, ‘*The war in Darfur is part of a larger crisis of governance in Sudan and is intricately related to how the ruling classes have managed ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity within Sudan...*’ (2009: 157). The ruling classes of Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir’s central government took a lively interest in the regional conflict in Darfur, using it to increase their power there. This was done through ‘divide and rule’ policies in which Khartoum supported different ethnic competitors in the regional struggle. Since the 1990s, Khartoum has allied itself with Arab groups’ search for office and land in exchange for their support for the

central government. According to M. W Daly, a ‘turning point’ occurred in this politics in 1994 when Darfur was subdivided into the three, North, West, and South states:

‘On its face this seemed innocuous enough, another pendulum swing engineered to increase Khartoum’s control by diminishing the size and power of provincial administrative units. But in Darfur’s case, much more was in play. Boundaries were gerrymandered to make a Fur minority in each of the states. New native administration posts were doled out to ... mostly to Arabs, who assumed territorially based jurisdictions even in non-Arab areas’ (2007: 262)

A year later in March:

‘...the governor of Western Darfur’, appointed by Khartoum, ‘...the state incorporating Dar Masalit, decreed division of the Dar into thirteen “emirates”, of which five were assigned to the Masalit and eight to Arab newcomers. Because the new native Administration arrangements called for “emirs” to elect the sultan, the future of Dar Masalit –as a dar for the Masalit- was suddenly rendered untenable’ (Daly 2007: 262-63).

These changes in regional administration were like gasoline on the flames of Arab demands for farmers’ resources, which further increased fighting. For example, following the addition of the eight Arab emirs in Dar Masalit, there were ‘...ever increasing Arab raids on Masalit herds. In one notorious raid alone 40,000 head of cattle were taken Open attacks on Masalit villages began. When in June 1996 Arab raiders burned seven villages in one day, the government did

nothing. By late that year, all of Dar Masalit was involved' (Daly 2007: 263).⁵ In this situation, farming villages began to form militias, and it was out of these village militias that eventually the larger anti-government SLA and JEM militia developed, with demands they went from the local, to the regional, to the national (Tubiana 2007: 75). On March 14, 2003 the SLA announced in its political Declaration, *'The brutal oppression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide sponsored by the Khartoum government left the people of Darfur with no other option but to resort to popular political and military resistance for purposes of survival'* (in Salah and Ray 2009: 374). This set the stage for the extraordinary violence of the remainder of 2003 and 2004 as the regional conflict in Darfur escalated into a national one, and the al-Bashir government sent Antonov bombers and the janjawid to massacre thousands of Darfur villages, creating a time that was *Umm Kwakiyya* (roughly 'the mother of damnation').⁶ It is time to consider the role of actors coming from international structures in these violences.

International

A number of international actors have had influence both Sudan as a country and Darfur within that country during the time of *Umm Kwakiyya*; including the US, France, Libya, Eritrea, Chad, and Israel. Much of the international intervention is covert. I want to emphasize influences coming from Chad and the US.

⁵ Thirty different Arab tribes are reported to have fought against Fur and Masalit in the Arab-Fur and Arab-Masalit wars (El-Battahani 2009: 52).

⁶ Darfuri originally understood by *Umm Kwakiyya* the violent lawless period that began with the overthrow of the Fur sultanate in 1874, leading to a dominance of Mahdists, and the eventual restoration of the sultanate in 1898. Some contemporary Darfuri speak of the Darfur War as a new *Umm Kwakiyya*.

Chad: There have been two main ways that Chad influenced Darfurian conflict. Both have to do with wars there. Civil war began in 1966 and continues to the present. Two phases in these wars can be distinguished. The first was between 1966 and 1975; the second was after 1975. During the first phase the warring was between the southern part of Chad, which was non-Muslim and which controlled the government under President Francois Tombalbaye; during in the second phase the north had won, and warring was between northern factions over who was to command of the government.

These civil wars in conjunction with periodic droughts generated large-scale, migration from Chad into the Sudan. Two major strands of heavy migration in the last half of the 1970s and the 1980s into Darfur stand out (Haggar 2007:115-119): a more southerly one into South Darfur of a group of Arab tribes called the Salamat; and a more northerly one, largely of different Arab groups (Rizeigat, Awalad Rashid, Missiriya), plus a substantial numbers of Zaghawa, into North Darfur. From the perspective of conflict, the problem of this immigration was that just as the decline in rainfall occurred, the new migrants further increased competition over land resources. This competition was especially grim for the Arab groups because they tended to lack *dar*, and hence were especially disadvantaged regarding places to subsist.

The second way the Chadian civil wars affected the Darfur conflict was more direct. In 1966 the National Liberation Front for Chad (FROLINAT) was formed by northern Chadian Muslim forces to liberate Chad from the Tombalbaye regime. FROLINAT was an alliance of Muslim

ethnic groups. The head of the Arabs in this alliance was Ahmat Acyl, whose group was known as the *Conseil Democratique Revolutionnaire* (CDR). The CDR received extensive military training from Libyians in the desert and became a fearsome militia. Ahmat Acyl was killed in 1982 and was replaced by Sheihk Ibn Omer (a Awalad Rashid). In 1988, the CDR was defeated in Chad and it and its followers immigrated to Darfur. Here earlier Awalad Rashid migrants had formed an alliance with, and settled among, the Um Jalal lineage, of the Mahamid clan of the Abbala Rezeigat. Ibn Omer made an agreement at this time with Musa Hilal, who had just become leader of the Mahamid. Thereafter, especially in the Arab-Fur War, ‘...*the CDR forces fought alongside the Mahamid and other Darfurian Arab tribes to seize control of land in Darfur. When Ibn Omer decided to return to Chad, his fighters distributed their weapons to the Mahamid and other local allies. It was during his war that Darfurians first began to hear the word “Janjawid” to describe the Arab militias*’ (Haggart 2007: 127). Musa Hilal would go on to build by 2003 and 2004 perhaps the largest of the Janjawid groups with on the order of 20,000 soldiers (Flint and De Waal 2009: 40-76). Other Arab militias were formed to the south, especially among the Salamat. Hence, it might be suggested that at least in part the Janjawid grew out of alliance with Chadian Arab militias, especially that of the CDR, and it has been the Janjawid that gave the fighting in Darfur some of its grimmest ferocity.

American Involvement: Since the arrival of Al-Bashir’s Islamist regime in 1989 Washington has been hostile to Sudan’s central government, as Washington believed that Khartoum was on the side of forces challenging the American government’s imperial designs in the Middle East and Africa.⁷ Sometimes US hostility had been expressed in open acts of violent pique, such as the

⁷ Since 1989 Khartoum has embraced Iran, supported Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, alienated Uganda (a US government client) by supporting an anti-Entebbe rebel movement, given aid to rebels in Ethiopia (another US

1998 missile attacks on a Khartoum pharmaceutical company. More often US violent hostility has been secret, especially in Darfur. Nevertheless, it is clear that America has intervened, largely through proxies, since the 1980s. Military operations began first in southern Sudan and then appear to have spread to Darfur.

John Garang formed the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1983 and began serious rebellion against the Khartoum government. The US provided a '*... covert supply of arms to the SPLA...*' (A. Hassan 2009). Support for the south escalated when the Clinton administration, '*In 1996 ... decided to send over \$20 million of military equipment through the 'front-line' states of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda to help the Sudanese opposition overthrow the Khartoum regime*' (A. Hassan 2009). It should be recognized that the US was largely fighting in the Sudan through its proxies, especially Uganda and Eritrea; though there appear to have been, '*...several Operational Detachments –Alpha teams (also called A-Teams) of the US army ... operating in support of the SPLA...*' (A. Hassan 2009). Unclear is the amount and importance of US military involvement with its proxy, the SPLA. At least one of my informants speaks of column after column of trucks coming through Uganda with US military material into southern Sudan. If the US gave \$20 million in one year, how much did they give in total through the 1980s and 1990s? There is some speculation that US military assistance to the SPLA made it impossible for government forces to defeat them. This meant at precisely the time that conflict was intensifying

government client), and befriended Hamas and Hizballah. In the 1990s it sheltered Osama bin Laden. In 1991, during the first Gulf War, Hasan al-Turabi founded a Popular Islamic and Arab Conference to promote rebellion against Arab regimes supporting the US (Daly 2007: 257).

in Darfur in the 1990s, and there was talk of its succession there; it was unclear in Khartoum whether it would be able to prevent southern succession.

Equally, in the early 2000s there is information that the US sought to further militarily destabilize al-Bashir's government by exacerbating rebellion in Darfur. One reason Khartoum may have been so eager to assert control in Darfur was the prospect of oil there. There had been rumors of oil since the 1990s. Flint reports, '*In April 2005, Energy Minister Awad al-Jaz grabbed headlines by announcing discovery of a giant oilfield in southern Darfur that he said was expected to produce 500,000 b/d within months. But announcements of success were premature and proved illusory...*' (2009). The amount of oil in Darfur is unknown. Real, however, was its possibility *at that time* in the minds of both the Khartoum government and American officials. The American military's hand in the fighting that ensued in Darfur is covert. However, '*It is ... well documented that the US through its closest African allies, helped train the SLA and JEM Darfuri rebels that initiated Khartoum's violent reaction...*' (Hennig 2007: 1). Information gathered during my research is consistent with this assertion, and bears upon two aspects of this intervention. Firstly, the Israeli's have been involved in training of SLA members, some of whom were taken to Israel for this purpose. There is a SLA office in Israel. It is unlikely that the Israelis are operating without US collusion. Secondly, one account I have insists that US proxies' training of Darfuri militias occurred *prior* to their assaults on the Khartoum government's installations. It was these attacks that provoked the government to organize the *janjawid* counterattack; and it was the ferocity of this counter-offensive that led to the high war fatalities in Darfur.

There is indication of a US-Chad connection in the Darfur War. William Engdahl writes, ‘...*Idris Déby* [president of Chad]... *has been accused of feeding US-supplied arms to the Darfur rebels*’ (2007). Engdahl goes further and claims, ‘...*supplied with US military aid, training and weapons, in 2004 Déby launched the initial strike that set off the conflict in Darfur, using members of his elite Presidential Guard ...providing the men with all terrain vehicles, arms and antiaircraft guns to Darfur rebels fighting the Khartoum government*’ (2007). It is unlikely that Déby sent many of the Presidential Guard to fight in Darfur. Actually, he needed them to protect himself in Chad, as 2003 and 2004 were insecure times for his own regime. However, it is not implausible that, at US urging, he sent some members. Déby is a Zaghawa, most of his Presidential Guard are Zaghawa, much of the SLA are Zaghawa. Fighting in Darfur for Déby would be satisfying kin obligations, as well as earning the support of the Americans; whose arms, training, and logistical support he needed to maintain his own regime in Chad. This finishes discussion of the international structural actors in the Darfur War and, in effect, offers a preliminary analysis of the different structural levels at play during Darfur War. Let us next draw the strands of the argument together and offer a formal explanation of the Darfur War in the form of a research hypothesis.

The hypothesis: connecting the icons

In the complexity perspective, the Darfur War is characterized by an association between structural scale and violence magnitude. By ‘structural scale’ is meant the number of structural units involved in the conflict; with the scale increasing from local, to regional, to national, to international units. By ‘violence magnitude’ is understood the numbers killed within what areas over some time period; with the magnitude increasing from handfuls killed in village or camp

localities each year to thousands upon thousands killed throughout the entire state of Darfur each year. Roughly speaking the relationship we are interested in is between the early 1980s through the end of 2004. Further, equally roughly speaking, the earlier analysis suggests the relationship between structural scale and violence magnitude is positive: as structural scale becomes more complex, so the magnitude of the violence increases. However, the relationship between these two variables if graphed would not be some straight line. Rather, it would be hypothesized as a twitchy J-curve. This is because, if the horizontal axis is imagined as the structural scale between 1932 and 2005 and the vertical axis as the violence magnitude over that period, then the line of the curve can be imagined as a twitchy J, lying on its back with two twitches.

(editor's note: graph here)

Between 1932 and 1985 the line of the graph would be a straight line of roughly the same low violence magnitude. Then following 1985 the line of the graph would show a first twitch slightly upward, indicating increased violence as migrants moved in southern areas. This twitch would be especially prominent in the period of the Fur Arab and Masalit Arab wars (1987-1999), indicating their sharp increase of violence. Finally, in the period of extreme violence of the *Umm Kwakiyya* (2003-2004) there would be an abrupt and very steep, third upward twitch of the line giving it its J-shape.

The reasons for the upward jerks of this twitchy-J-curve are as follows. The relatively long period of straight line (the flat back of the J-curve) represents the period when only small local groups were involved in tribal warring, a time between the 1930s through the 1970s, when

deaths from local wars were relatively modest. By the 1980s the environmental circumscription had begun to differentially circumscribe the environments, with the area in which one could survive in the north far more circumscribed than in the south. Then the structural complexity of the fighting was elevated. Now not only small local groups fought. Rather, alliances were forged and amalgamations of local groups emerged, seeking to control the region of Darfur. So there were more soldiers fighting and dying over larger areas, consequently causing an upward first twitch in the graph line. Finally, when the national and international structural actors came on the scene, it meant that there still were more fighters, with better killing instruments, using more violent tactics provoking *Umm Kwakiyya*, sending the J in the J-curve rocketing skyward in the graph.

Let us call this hypothetical J-curve, the better to fix it in our imaginations, the Mother of Damnation curve; and understand that it is this curve that needs to be accounted for to explain the Dar Fur War. Further, the curve is the result of no single realm of structure. Rather it is the result of a conjuncture of two forces generated by operations of actors in the different local, regional, national, and international structural levels at different times. The conjunctural forces are those of 'initiatory' causes, which originate the increased fighting, and 'escalatory' ones, which further augment the fighting once it has increased. The chief initiatory forces are the effects of the differential environmental circumscription of the domestic economies of peoples, especially in North Darfur. Here the circumscription due to the droughts, which had reached a peak in the first half of the 1980s, made it extraordinarily difficult for households to produce food. So at the local and regional levels people with enormously stressed domestic economies migrated south

into favorable areas, competed for land in these areas, and out of this competition grew the increased violence of the decade 1986-1996. The escalatory causes came largely from the national and international structural levels. From the operation of different structures in Chad involved in the civil wars, came the first modern weapons to Darfur, numerous migrants, and Déby's hypothesized soldiers to assist the SLA. From the operations of different US structures - possibly the CIA, perhaps Special Forces who probably engaged Israeli and African proxies - came military assistance to the Darfuri rebels. From the national level came al-Bashir's military with its deadly combination of airpower and janjawid militias. It was this conjuncture of the operations of national and international that led to the J in the Mother of Damnation curve. It was the differential circumscription's effects on the domestic economy that led to the initial two upward twitches in the hitherto rather flat violence magnitude line. Finally, it is the conjuncture of initiatory and escalatory forces as more and more structural levels become active in Darfur that explains the entire Mother of Damnation curve.

The preceding explains what happened. It does not explain, why the various structural actors in the complex structure of Darfurian violence fought? Hypothetically, in the case of the local tribal fighting, during the period between the 1930s and 1970s, they fought because they were caught in local circumscription crises, which -given the nature of their domestic economies- put at risk their survival. Similarly, when the circumscription differential began to be severe by the 1980s, larger chunks of land began to be useless for subsistence, and larger amalgamations of allies were needed to acquire access to usable land resources, the struggle was still to control land to maintain subsistence. Otherwise put, at both the local and regional levels, actors fought for

reproduction of their domestic economies in a time of circumscription crisis. At the national level, Khartoum's elites were fighting to maintain control over national politics at a time when this control was at increasing risk. The south seemed to be going, Darfur was in open rebellion. This suggests that actors at the national level were fighting to reproduce their control over the Sudanese state in a time of political crisis. At the international level, the US fighting through proxies like Chad or Israel was seeking to weaken an opponent who has been hostile to its geopolitical position; as such it was trying to reproduce its global imperialism, at a time and place at which it was tested.

Finally, let us link the two icons. Appreciate: you do not understand what has happened in the Darfur War unless you analyze all the structural actors. It is not just what the tribes do, what a nasty Khartoum does, what US imperial schemers do. It is the complex interactions of all the structural players that account for what happened in the Darfur War, which why this is a complexity approach. In this complexity, poor food producers war to eat. Khartoum, whose proxy, the janjawid, are iconic of developing state barbarism, wars so that its elites can eat national power. America, whose 82nd Airborne Division is iconic of imperial barbarism, wars so that its elites can eat global power. In Chad, it is said that as people grow in importance, they eat power. It is also said that the sun eats people. The preceding, of course, is hypothetical but a hypothetical supported by some evidence, and it is an approach that allows one to better appreciate the complexities both of Darfur and developing states in a world of global empire. It deserves further validation.

HCRI AND THE DARFUR PROGRAM

Finally, let us turn to the implications of this exercise of assessing assessments of Darfur—abbreviated as it is— for future HCRI activities. Clearly, there is a hefty literature addressing the disaster that has befallen Darfur. Assessment of this information confirms the need for further investigations both to resolving problems of the Darfurian disaster and to more general concerns of Darfur is iconic—for example, concerns about environmental changes or the nature of war. In order to research these, and other topics, rigorously a long-term, multi-disciplinary research program is advised. Let us outline basic of parameters of such a program at HCRI:

1. It would be concerned with researching what might be called the ‘Greater Darfur’; that is Darfur, and other regions, such as Chad, intimately related with events in Darfur.
2. It would seek alliances with relevant research institutions in Greater Darfur and elsewhere seeking to construct an intellectual combine that builds upon the particular expertise of its component members.⁸
3. Participants in this intellectual combine would design research projects, seek their funding, and perform their implementation.
4. Special attention would be given to securing Greater Darfurian scholars and providing funding for these scholars’ research institutions.
5. HCRI-led research would be in areas of its comparative advantage in the investigation of conflict and humanitarian affairs. Particular research projects would be selected:

⁸ There is a Sudan Project is headed by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Rüdiger Wolfrum, a director at the Max-Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg. Additionally, there is the Darfur: Livelihoods, Vulnerability and Choice program of the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University in Medford, MA..

- i. for their importance vis-à-vis Darfurian realities, and for the significance of these actualities to more general sociocultural challenges facing developing regions in a rapidly globalizing world;
- ii. for their significance in contributing to the resolution of humanitarian dilemmas in Greater Darfur

Appendix A

Representation: ‘Representation’, as here understood, is the re-presentation of certain realities in some symbolic form. What symbolic form? Any symbolic form will do -of language, dance, drama, geometric equation, or what have you. A newspaper account of a football match is a representation of a sporting event. The actualities that are the disasters of Darfur have been extraordinarily frequently represented. Murphy (2007) describes this representation in the US press. Ray describes it in African press (2009). However, there has been little discussion of the war’s representation in the Sudanese press, as well as little investigation of its representation outside of the press by NGO’s, governments, and other sorts of institutions.

One way of analyzing representations that has proved of widespread, but controversial, interest is Michel Foucault’s regimes of truth approach. In ‘Truth and Power’ Foucault announced:

'Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true' (1980: 131)

In this optic '*Truth*', which Foucault puts in quotation marks, because he is aware that he is not talking the epistemologists' truth, is '*...a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements*'; which statements are '*linked in a circular relationship with systems of power which produce and sustain*' them (Ibid.: 133).

Foucault's approach is of general significance because it is an attempt to understand how humans universally go about the task of representing their actualities. It is controversial because it is unclear whether it is useful to imagine 'truth' as some symbolic construct of socio-political regimes. Consequently, Foucault's approach could use some empirical support [or challenge]. This could be done choosing certain 'truths' of the disasters of war in Darfur, and rigorously observing whether these can be understood as Foucault said they could be.

Two truths might be chosen for such analysis. The first is from the West where it is believed by some that 'the disasters of war constitute a genocide'. A second truth is from some Arabs in Darfur who believe in 'Arab supremacy'. Two institutions might be selected for especial attention vis-à-vis the production of these truths. The first is the Save Darfur Coalition which has championed the belief in genocide and called for military intervention to stop it. The second

is the *Al Tajamu' Al Arabi* (roughly translated as 'the Arab Gathering') which has argued for the truth of Arab superiority and called for military action to achieve it.⁹

Two hypotheses would be proposed:

1. The Save Darfur Coalition functions as part of a regime of truth legitimating Western military operations in Darfur.
2. The Arab gathering functions as part of a regime of truth legitimating Arab military operations in Darfur.

Evidence consistent with the hypotheses would be said to exist if observation showed Save Darfur Coalition and the Arab Gathering:

1. were institutional components of a system of procedures for the production, regulation, and distribution of statements;
2. had members whose status legitimated the construction of these statements;
3. were linked in a circular manner with prevailing systems of power.

Such research would be of a double significance: at the level of Darfur it would explain how people came to hold the opinions which they did, and a more general theoretical level it would clarify whether, when humans make of their minds about the truth of things, they do so in a Foucauldian manner.

⁹ Discussion of the Save Darfur Coalition can be found in Mamdani (2009: 48-75) and Eichler-Levine and Hicks (2007). I have found no extensive analysis of the Arab Gathering. A useful introduction can be found in El-Battahani (2009: 60-63) and in El Tom 2009: 448-487).

Peace negotiation/conflict resolution: A considerable literature has emerged concerning peace negotiations and agreements purporting to end the Darfur War (Mohammed 2007; Toga 2007, Hassan and Ray 2009: 301-345; Nathan 2007, De Waal 2007). There has been some concern that the some processes of peace negotiation in Darfur have actually hindered conflict resolution. Sides in the negotiations have learned that if they hold out agreeing to peace they can achieve greater rewards. Whether this is, or is not, correct should be explored. Further, if peoples are to continue to reside in Darfur using herding or farming domestic economies, final peace accords must provide for realistic means of strengthening those economies.

Different peoples at the local level have different 'traditional' and governmental conflict resolution mechanisms (CRMs). These were clearly overwhelmed as the structural scale of the warring expanded. Central to the escalation of the violence magnitude as the structural scale of the conflict moved from the local to the regional level was the failure of local level CRMs to resolve disputes over land resources. When the land tenure system was unable to regulate access to land, the only other way of regulating it was through violence. A useful body of research will be to discover whether local CRMs can be restructured to be relevant for current and future disputes, especially those pertaining to land.

Health: The disasters of war, among other matters, can reduce the nutritional level of populations and the appearance of under- or malnutrition can lead to other illness. It would be

important to know the nutritional state of Darfuri populations. It would be important to know the causes of that nutritional state, especially the role of warfare in it. It would be equally important to know the disease consequences of that nutritional state. This would require evaluation of existing health data pertaining to Darfur.

Migration/Refugees/IDPs: There is evidence of immense population movements as a result of the Darfurian disasters of war. These include the making of large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other types of refugees who become involved in internal and external migration to refugee camps or other destinations. Questions of ethnic cleansing and genocide are related to migration, with it at times asserted that the two former are performed to clear lands for the immigration into them of new populations. Does Darfurian evidence support this claim?

There is data from elsewhere in the world that external migration leads to transnational communities that share political, economic, and cultural relations between 'giving' and 'receiving' areas; which relations can exacerbate or ameliorate the disasters of war. What does the evidence show concerning Darfuri transnational migration? Emigration from a war zone can remove economically significant components of the population. For example, in one Masalit community touched by the fighting of which I am aware most of the fighting age men were absent. This meant that a considerable portion of the agricultural labor force was absent. It appeared to result in decreased food production. Emigration thus can have effects upon the local economy.

So there needs to be some assessment of knowledge about the dimensions of Darfuri population movements. There needs to be some assessment of its relevance to questions of ethnic cleaning, the nature of transnational communities, and to local economies.

Cultural Dynamics and Identity: War kills a lot of people, for those left it tends to change their minds. Some of these changes come to be shared with others. These changes can become novel cultural terms, and such new cultural meanings alter peoples' hermeneutics, the way they interpret and act upon the world. For example, new ideas of friend and foe emerge, as do new notions of rights and obligations towards land resources concerning these new categories of amity and enmity. Fresh cultural notions provoking novel hermeneutics who is friend and foe are altered identities.

Important in this regard appears to be the construction of new racial/ethnic identities in Darfur that oppose 'Arabs' against '*Zurga*' (often translated from the Arabic as 'African' but more accurately 'Blue', understood as 'Black'.) An assertion is made, usually in popular media, by some that Darfur is a case of racial/ethnic culture between Arabs and Africans causing war. A counter hypothesis is that the conflict itself led to the emergence the cultural terms 'Arab' and '*Zurga*' (De Waal 2009: 137-142; Penitsch 2009). This argument proceeds by noting that as conflict went from one or two local groups in a tribe opposing one or two local groups in another tribe to many local groups in many tribes opposing many other local groups in many other tribes, then there was a need for more inclusive cultural categorization to distinguish friend and foe. So when it was not longer a matter of the Um Jalal fighting one small village in Fur territory in the Jebel Marra, but the Um Jalal in the Rizeigat, as well as the Awlad Rachid and the Salamat taking out after many Fur and Masalit villages scattered about in the Jebel Marra and Dar

Masalit, then, it made sense to categorize your friends as ‘Arabs’, meaning Arabs of all the Arab tribes, and your foes as ‘Zurga’, meaning all those farmers whose lands you needed. There needs to be further assessment of what is known about cultural transformations in Darfur due to the fighting and how these transformations, in their turn, influence the conflict.

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