

# CURRENT HISTORY

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*“In causing civilian atrocities on such a massive scale, has the Sudanese government adopted a policy of cultural annihilation, or has it decided to crush a rebellion to protect its dominance?”*

## Sudan’s Darfur: Is It Genocide?

NELSON KASFIR

**H** haunted by the failure of the West to intervene in Rwanda while it was possible to save lives, some Western media and governments now insist that the civil war between the Sudanese government and Darfur guerrillas has resulted in genocide. The urgency of their concern is entirely justified; the label may not be.

Without doubt, the most frightening feature of the unfolding tragedy in Darfur is the scale and ferocity of armed attacks on civilians. Although civilians always form the majority of victims in guerrilla war, the numbers killed and displaced in Darfur—probably more than 2.5 million by December 2004—have been astounding for a war that began only two years ago. The wanton cruelty in these attacks, including massacres of unarmed villagers, sexual violence meted out to women, and methodical destruction of villages, including the poisoning of wells, far exceeds the brutality that characterized the episodic violence experienced previously by Darfur inhabitants.

Virtually all observers—humanitarian and human rights groups, UN missions and local participants—agree that most of the violence is being carried out by the Sudanese military in combination with local Arab ethnic militias, the so-called *Janjaweed* or “evil horsemen.” Despite the difficulties in distinguishing between Arabs and Africans in Darfur, where intermarriage is common and almost everyone is a Muslim, most observers also conclude that these attacks are mainly against Africans.

The US government, so negligently reticent during the Rwandan massacres in 1994, has declared that the killings in Darfur amount to genocide. But others have not, most notably the United Nations com-

missioners reporting on the situation in Darfur to the UN Secretary General. Their January 2005 report (<[www.un.org/News/dh/sudan/com\\_inq\\_darfur.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf)>) condemns the Sudanese government and the ethnic militias fighting with it for the enormous suffering they have caused, but argues that the violent attacks on civilians stem from counterinsurgency tactics.

The violence recorded and condemned in this report, however, is so disproportionate to the actions of the new and relatively inexperienced guerrilla groups in Darfur that it is hard to believe it is simply a tactical response to battlefield conditions. Furthermore, counterinsurgency tactics, however virulent, can only be instruments for the larger ends of war. Could any other purpose besides genocide be driving the Sudanese government to commit such carnage?

Perhaps. Since the government has only a precarious grip on national power, it is constantly mindful of threats to overthrow it. The regime depends on the support of wealthy political and economic interests that represent a small minority of the Sudanese people. Long before the present National Islamic Front (NIF) government took power in a military coup in 1989, national officials feared that their regime would not survive simultaneous rebellions arising in impoverished areas throughout the country. Thus, they may believe their survival depends on striking as hard as they can not only to destroy support for the insurgents in Darfur, but also to ensure that no other guerrilla groups take up arms elsewhere, especially in the northern part of the country.

The unprecedented and generous peace agreement the government made in January 2005 with a different set of rebels, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), to end a 22-year guerrilla war in the south, poses puzzling questions for both the genocide and the regime-threat interpretations

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of the violence in Darfur. Why, if the government intends genocide, does it share power and wealth with some Africans? And why, if it is worried about survival, would the government encourage others to emulate the southerners by rebelling in hopes of compelling equally favorable negotiations?

Does it make a difference which of these views is correct when so many people are dying or displaced from their homes? Quarrels over explanations surely ought not get in the way of providing humanitarian assistance on a far greater scale than is occurring now. Even so, there is a history of repeated government attacks on civilians directly and through ethnic militias throughout the impoverished peripheral areas of the country, not just in Darfur. If the problem is not only to stop this assault but to end future violence by the Sudanese government against its citizens, it is essential to understand better the motives of those who are prosecuting it so cruelly.

### THE RISING TOLL

The rapid growth in casualties and the accompanying savagery in Darfur are startling. While extended wars and local conflicts, sometimes supported by national officials, have resulted in serious casualties and destruction several times during the past 15 years in Darfur, this guerrilla war is only two years old. The first attacks were initiated by a newly formed insurgent organization, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) in February 2003, followed a few weeks later by a second new group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The unprecedented scale of attacks on civilians in response has been compressed into an even shorter time. It started only after an SLA surprise attack on the airport at El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur State, destroyed seven military planes and killed about 100 soldiers in late April 2003. After the attacks, the Janjaweed was formed—mostly from members of previously existing nomadic tribal militias of Arab background—and armed by the government.

For centuries, Darfur's local villages and ethnic groups have been dependent on their own resources, both arms and customary mediation, to keep the peace. In the past 40 years, however, increasing tensions in the area have dramatically changed the nature of conflict and the methods for its resolution. The numbers of both conflicts and victims have grown rapidly. Reports of coordination of militias on the basis of Arab and African identities first appeared in conflicts in the late 1980s and

the 1990s. These conflicts involved attacks that, while similar in character to the current crisis, were more limited in area and involved a few hundred or thousands of casualties, not the hundreds of thousands estimated in the current conflict.

Since October 2004, the Western press has badly understated the numbers of those killed in the latest conflict, invariably using an estimate of 70,000 deaths. This figure was mistakenly taken from an updated version of a World Health Organization (WHO) study of deaths from disease and malnutrition in camps organized for displaced persons; the report covered only the period between March and September 2004. After analyzing five studies of mortality in Darfur since February 2003, Dr. Jan Coeburgh, writing in the February 2005 *Parliamentary Brief*, estimated a range of 218,000 to 306,000 deaths through December 2004. And that number continues to rise, not only from new attacks, but also from disease and prolonged malnutrition. "This year," he added, "looks worse than last." As Dr. Coeburgh told BBC News in February, "the reality is that we just don't know the scale of the problem."

In addition, the January 2005 UN report on Darfur estimated that there are 1.65 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in 81 camps and safe areas, plus another 627,000 "conflict affected persons," and 203,000 refugees in Chad. This means that, out of Darfur's total population of 6 million, and in addition to the dead, approximately 2.5 million people have been profoundly harmed in this conflict.

To the devastation of lives must be added the destruction of communities. In her travels for Human Rights Watch through Darfur with the SLM/A in March and April 2004, Julie Flint observed that the "most striking thing . . . was a completely empty land—mile after mile of burned and abandoned villages." The UN commissioners in their report estimated that "600 villages and hamlets have been completely destroyed, while an additional 100 to 200 villages have been partially destroyed."

Even if we agree that these reports accurately estimate the alarming levels of death and destruction, it is important to determine which of the parties in this war have accounted for them. If these numbers were evenly distributed among the guerrillas, the government, and the Janjaweed militias, they would be just as tragic, but the case for either genocide or regime threat as the motivation for the violence would be harder to establish. It is clear, however, that the guerrillas have inflicted far less

damage to civilians. The UN commissioners declare that “the vast majority of attacks on civilians in villages have been carried out by Government of Sudan armed forces and Janjaweed, either acting independently or jointly. Although attacks by rebel forces have also taken place, the Commission has found no evidence that these are widespread or that they have been systematically targeted against the civilian population.”

Nor should these figures be divided between the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed. They are not operating independently. Outside observers consider the militias to be the tool of the government. As the UN commissioners point out, coordination of aerial bombing and militia attacks demonstrates close cooperation between the Janjaweed and the government. Musa Hilal, the sheikh of Um Jaloul (an Arab ethnic group in North Darfur State), reputedly one of the Janjaweed's organizers, frankly admitted to Human Rights Watch investigators on September 27, 2004, that “all the people in the field are led by top army commanders . . . [who] get their orders from the western command center, and from Khartoum.” As one of several victims told a UN commissioner, “for us, these are one and the same.” The evidence seems to establish clearly that in an extremely short time an extraordinarily large proportion of Darfur residents have been killed or driven from their homes by the government and its agents.

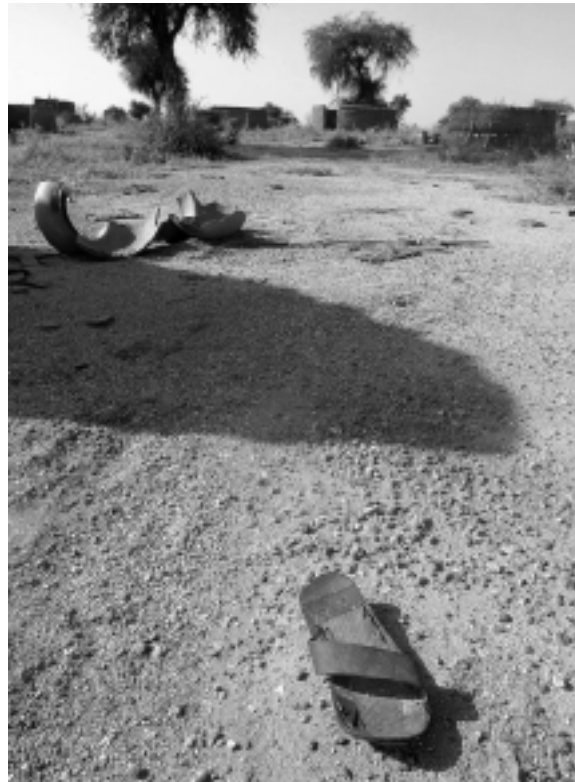
### DISENTANGLING MOTIVES

Though essential to determine whether they have committed genocide, the motives explaining why the government and its militias have engaged in so much destructive behavior are difficult to establish. One problem in isolating the government's motives is that the Darfur crisis grows out of many conflicts at the local, regional, and national levels. These conflicts involve responses to diminished natural resources, to ethnic and cultural conflict, to negotiations and the peace agreement in southern Sudan,

and to the relationship of the national government with impoverished and marginalized groups throughout the country. Consequently, both the government and the guerrillas enlist supporters who have their own motives for participating. To isolate the government's motives, it is important to identify the motives of the other contributors to the conflict.

Darfur, the westernmost region in northern Sudan, is the size of Texas. Even before this crisis began, its fragile semi-desert ecology could not easily support the people living there. A set of customary rules that evolved over centuries governs the sharing of water and land between nomadic herders

and settled farmers. These rules have been deeply strained and increasingly violated because of advancing desertification and population growth. Average annual rainfall has declined over the past 50 years, while markets for peanuts and gum arabic, the main crops grown in Darfur, have shrunk over the past 20. As a result, living standards have fallen rapidly throughout the region. Since the government has never effectively policed Darfur, clusters of villages trained their young men as warriors to defend themselves from outside attack. Armed with spears, neither attackers nor defenders could cause many casualties. In the 1970s, however, rifles



Aftermath: The Remains of a Village in Darfur

became widely available. All these factors reduced the ability of ethnic leaders to mediate ensuing disputes. Their capacities were also profoundly weakened when President Gaafar Nimeiri in the 1970s abandoned official recognition of customary administration in favor of centrally appointed local officials.

In addition to these essentially local conflicts, an increasing tendency to politicize cultural identities has occurred at the Darfur regional level over the past 20 years. The religious process of Islamization and the linguistic and cultural process of Arabization have proceeded unevenly. In Darfur, virtually all inhabitants are Muslims, while also holding different additional ethnic identities that are often multiple

and fluid. Inter-marriage and ethnic switching among local groups have been common throughout the area, even while the status hierarchy has firmly placed Arab above African for centuries. Long before the current civil war began, Africans in Darfur believed that the national government's policy of Islamization hid a policy of Arabization.

Both the idea that Arabic culture is a civilizing mission and the idea that African cultures retain valuable heritages have the potential to mobilize people throughout Sudan. Unfortunately, and entirely unnecessarily, these ideas are perceived as contradictory. Over the past two decades in Darfur, certain intellectuals have styled themselves the "Arab Gathering" to demand greater Arab representation in positions in Darfur state governments. This has led to equivalent demands for African representation in national posts, most prominently in a *samizdat* publication called the Black Book, which was photocopied and surreptitiously handed out in mosques in 2000.

As the carnage has grown and people have had to choose sides, African and Arab identities have gained greater currency, although perhaps only temporarily. Thus, African students and notables, particularly from the Fur, Massaliet, and Zaghawa ethnic groups, formed the SLM/A and JEM, the most important guerrilla groups, while the loosely organized Janjaweed have been recruited primarily from Arab groups in Darfur. The fighting forces in the war have deepened cultural identities that in past years were remote from daily concerns. Nevertheless, there are Arabs fighting with the SLM/A and African ethnic groups that support the government. While the extent to which ordinary citizens have redefined themselves as Africans and Arabs remains unclear, the hardening of more inclusive identities has expanded perceptions of the stakes in the conflict from the local to the regional level.

Both the fighting in Sudan's south and its resolution have also influenced the motives of actors involved in the Darfur conflict. The Darfur guerrillas and the SPLM/A have had close connections. SPLA officers trained some SLA fighters as Darfur hostilities began, and the SLM/A's (and JEM's) basic platform is almost identical with that of the SPLM/A. Furthermore, the liberal terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the separate civil war in the south in January 2005 may have strengthened the prospects for rebellion in many areas of Sudan.

The impact of the peace agreement on other regions is unclear, although deeply contradictory. Its

achievement has been argued to show that either peace pays or rebellion pays. Up to the date of the agreement, the duration of negotiations between the government and the SPLM/A coincided almost exactly with the period of fighting in Darfur. For his part, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan insisted hopefully at a November 2004 meeting of the Security Council in Nairobi that the peace agreement "would . . . serve as the basis and catalyst for the resolution of existing conflicts." In other words, the settlement in the south would lead to settlement elsewhere.

But Darfur notables and guerrillas were excluded from the negotiations between the SPLM/A and the government (mainly because the donors who organized them believed that it was better to avoid additional complications). The lesson that the SLA and JEM took from the success of the peace agreement was the opposite of Annan's—that rebellion pays. To be taken seriously as a negotiating partner, it is necessary to rebel first. No one knows what lesson the Sudanese government drew, as it negotiated with one group while fighting another. But Khartoum surely understands that if it negotiates an agreement with the Darfur guerrillas similar to the generous one it signed with the SPLM/A, it greatly increases the probability of several new rebellions.

## CORE AND PERIPHERY

The relationship of Darfur to the national political economy also affects its civil war. Paradoxically, all the regional combatants are poor relative to those who control the economy from the center. As consciousness of this inequality has spread, the position of the national government has become more precarious.

Sudan presents a classic case of uneven development, which took root during Ottoman rule in the nineteenth century, deepened after 1898 during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, and intensified after 1956 during each postindependence government. For the last century, investment and development measures have been concentrated in the central area located at the convergence of the White and Blue Niles to the neglect of the rest of the country. Under British rule, nominally shared with Egypt, the Sudanese families ruling the two largest Islamic brotherhoods, the Khatmiyya and al-Ansar, were given special political and economic opportunities that they quickly translated into significant wealth. In addition, official capital investment was almost entirely devoted to the cultivation of cotton in Gezira, which eventually provided over half of Sudan's export earnings.

Over time, the concentration of wealth in this core area stimulated schools, jobs, and further investment among the peoples living in the region, particularly those identifying with three riverain ethnic groups: the Danagla, the Ja'aliyin, and the Shagiya. This wealth also created powerful economic interests that acted to protect the advantages of those living in the region. In particular, the profits from Gezira, intended originally as the engine of growth for the whole country, were blocked from investment into development projects in other areas. All other parts of Sudan in both the north and the south have progressed more slowly than the core in economic development, education, and infrastructure. In general, they provide less profitable opportunities for new investment. They have developed commercialized sectors more slowly and, as a result, have become even more peripheral.

Predictably, these growing economic disparities have fed into the construction of African and Arabic identities. Policies of Islamization and Arabization have helped to institutionalize the dominance of core economic interests and vice-versa. In the south, where fears of northern hegemony had existed since the nineteenth-century slave trade, civil war began soon after independence and continued, albeit with a significant interruption, until 2005. But in the north, even though Muslim and Arabic groups in peripheral areas did not share the wealth or power of those in the center, they did not threaten or organize rebellions against the dominance of the core until recently.

One of the important changes in the economy that has awakened political resentment in the periphery was the discovery of oil in the 1970s. The oil is located entirely in peripheral areas, including South Darfur State, but the oil revenues have been controlled exclusively by Khartoum. Oil has undoubtedly contributed to recent demands by political and guerrilla groups that wealth be shared, particularly when it is extracted from their own areas. The lesson of the government's concession in the peace agreement that it would split oil profits with the new southern government is not likely to be lost on other groups.

The common interest of core elites in political and economic dominance never meant that contending members of the leadership group agreed on policies

or even on basic economic or political orientations. All Sudanese governments since independence have been riven by conflicts and frequently overthrown. New leaders often have treated their predecessors harshly. But these leaders have always emerged from the same core group. For all their disagreements, they have chosen to defend the economic and political interests of the core. And their hegemony has always depended on the absence of a challenge by groups living in the periphery.

This began to change in the 1980s. But the NIF, like its predecessors, has unhesitatingly used its formidable economic and political advantages throughout the periphery to appoint replacements for local officials who object to its policies and to disrupt local acts of defiance. Whenever it felt it might be losing control of a local population, it has formed and rewarded local ethnic militias to attack the groups represented by its opponents. The formation of these militias has resulted in splitting

local populations on cultural rather than uniting them on economic grounds.

Darfur represents the latest example in which Khartoum has used its policy of

Arabization in an effort to bolster or restore its hegemony. The groups from which the Janjaweed are recruited are just as marginalized as those the Janjaweed are attacking. Indeed, it has been argued that they have more in common with each other than either has with the groups that have long controlled the national government.

## THE CRIMINAL ELEMENTS

Mass murder in Darfur raises the question of genocide. It does not answer it. Genocide is a complex crime requiring attention to each of its elements. The term and the concept were originally conceived and named by Raphael Lemkin to ensure that the Holocaust in Nazi Germany would never be repeated. When the United Nations made it a crime in 1948, it said that "genocide means . . . acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. . . ." As one international tribunal characterized it, "the crime is horrific in its scope; its perpetrators identify entire human groups for extinction." The strong feelings it arouses can interfere with careful analysis.

Because genocide connotes immoral political activity, it has been applied to disparate events and

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spawned definitions that differ from the UN convention. The most important ambiguities in the UN definition relevant to the Darfur crisis concern the meanings of “in part” and a “group.” The “in part” issue poses the question of how many people must be attacked before an event can be labeled a genocide. International case law makes clear that the “part” must be substantial, such as an attempt to eliminate all members of a group in a region or a country.

The “group” issue raises the problem of how permanent the cultural entities that are attacked must be before they qualify for protection from genocide. Does this category include only groups whose membership can be objectively determined by observers, or does it also include groups whose formation is based on subjective identification by its members? International tribunals have held that if parties on both sides of a conflict share objective traits such as language and religion, the subjective identification of the victims as a separate group can be the basis for establishing genocide. The classic example is the determination that genocide occurred in Rwanda even though Hutu and Tutsi share a language, territory, and various cultural practices.

Whether the Sudanese government has committed genocide in Darfur can be evaluated by considering each of the four elements of the UN definition—an attempt to destroy, a perpetrator, a group, and an intent. The evidence for three of these four elements supports the claim of genocide, though not each to the same degree.

First, an attempt to destroy has unquestionably occurred. The numbers killed, forced from their homes, and facing starvation constitute a substantial part of the regional population. Second, the balance of the evidence implicates Sudan’s government as the perpetrator, acting both on its own and through its agents, the Janjaweed. Third, while it is difficult to distinguish Africans and Arabs as objective groups, since both are Muslims and speak Arabic, the polarization caused by war has heightened victims’ identification with these groups. Although the evidence is not as clear, it seems likely that the victims perceive themselves to be attacked because they are Africans and thus can be assigned on this subjective basis as members of a protected group.

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*Why, if the government intends genocide, does it share power and wealth with some Africans?*

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## IS GENOCIDE THE INTENT?

The remaining element is intent: In causing civilian atrocities on such a massive scale, has the Sudanese government adopted a policy of cultural annihilation, or has it decided to crush a rebellion to protect its dominance? The available evidence can only provide inferences about the government’s motive. Showing that others involved in the Darfur conflict have genocidal motives is not sufficient to establish the national government’s policy. For example, eyewitness accounts of atrocities indicate that members of the Janjaweed often have attacked Africans with genocidal intent. These attacks implicate the government, since members of the Janjaweed have acted as its agents. But more direct evidence is necessary to show that the government adopted genocide as its policy.

In their January 2005 report, the UN commissioners did not find genocidal intent by the government. However, the two arguments they make are not persuasive. They reject genocide because they found cases in which the attackers discriminated among members of the targeted group rather than attempting to exterminate all of them, and because the government allows victims driven out of their villages to live in IDP camps run by humanitarian organizations.

The first point is based on only a few examples without any suggestion that these incidents are representative. The second might be plausible if life were secure in the IDP camps, but it is not. The previously mentioned WHO report showed an extremely high death toll from disease and malnutrition in the camps. Death through starvation would still be genocide. Residents in the camps face frequent assaults when they venture outside to collect firewood and are sometimes attacked inside the camps. The government often forces the IDP camps to relocate. The NGO workers who staff these camps have also been harassed.

Yet the terms of the peace agreement that the government signed to end the war in the south are strikingly inconsistent with the presumption that it acts with genocidal intent in Darfur. Most southerners are Africans, but not Muslims, and are therefore even more plausible a target for a government motivated by genocide. In fact, an estimated 2 million southerners have been killed since civil war resumed in 1983.

And yet the agreement has ended this civil war by giving southerners political control over the region and an equal share of oil revenues. The settlement also permits southerners to choose secession in a referendum that must be held after six years. It makes John Garang, the chairman of the SPLM/A, vice president in the national government and president of a new government for the southern region. Southern officials are to receive 30 percent of the positions in the central government. Garang has announced that he will even use his new position to negotiate an end to fighting in Darfur.

Why did the Sudan government agree to the peace agreement? No one believes it had a change of heart about the southerners. Instead, it appears to have negotiated in expectation of development aid and direct investment from Western public institutions and private companies. The prospects for local wealth through rapid expansion of oil exports are a strong attraction for national leaders. US firms have been prohibited from doing business with Sudan since the country was added to the US list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1993 because it gave safe haven to Islamic terrorist groups, including one that Osama bin Laden formed. China has taken advantage of Sudan's pariah status to invest heavily in its oil extraction. Oil profits already have allowed Khartoum to double its military budget since it began exporting oil in 1999. The Chinese helped Sudan build three new factories to produce weapons in the late 1990s.

The government believes that signing the peace agreement is sufficient to normalize its relationship with Washington and permit direct US investment. It remains to be seen whether Western countries, which made promises contingent on a successful agreement, will respond to internal public revulsion by introducing new demands to settle the war in Darfur first, thereby risking resumption of the civil war in the south. One telltale sign of the West's response is the prompt reopening of the World Bank's Khartoum office just after the peace agreement was signed. The World Bank had pulled out of Sudan several years ago when the government stopped making debt repayments.

Khartoum's commitment to honor the terms of the settlement cannot be taken for granted. Nonetheless, it is hard to argue that it has genocidal intentions toward Africans living in one area of the country when it has settled a civil war in another area on terms that bind it to work closely together with other Africans. While the evidence is

not clear, the government's decision to sign the agreement seems just as consistent with a calculus of greater wealth to protect itself as with cultural annihilation of Africans.

### OR IS IT REGIME SURVIVAL?

If holding on to power is its primary motive, why does the government persist in causing so much devastation to civilians in Darfur? The most likely reason is the threat the government faces if rebellions were to spread throughout the periphery. Since the Mahdist revolt against the Egyptians in the 1880s, the government has never faced insurgency throughout the north. To prevent the emergence of simultaneous rebellions, the government is sending a message to potential guerrillas everywhere that if they rebel, civilians in their region will face atrocities on a scale similar to those in Darfur. As John Ryle noted in the August 12, 2004, issue of *The New York Review of Books*, "The ruthlessness of the government's response to the Darfur insurgency is a sign of fear: any hint of weakness is liable to encourage other insurgencies. . . ."

Aside from the long-running southern rebellion, there was little violent opposition from the periphery after independence until the 1980s. The first southern civil war, begun shortly after independence, was fought over political control of the south. Southern rebels did not question that the core elite in the center would continue to rule the national state. This assumption became the basis for the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement, which ended the first civil war in the south.

When the SPLM/A began the second civil war after that peace agreement broke down in 1983, it proposed a radically different objective by calling for a "new" Sudan in which all peripheral areas would share power and wealth equitably with the center. Rebel leaders demanded an entirely new political and economic system in Sudan, not merely changes in relations between the center and the regions. This is why the "S" in SPLM/A stands for Sudan and not for Southern.

The national government was forced to take the SPLM/A's perspective seriously, because the southern guerrillas held most of the rural areas in the south and, for short periods, some areas in the north. The SPLM/A's ideas have spread to political activists in other peripheral areas. They form the ideology of the SLA and, to a lesser extent, that of the JEM. Leaders of both Darfur guerrilla organizations also argue that the government's policies discriminate in favor of peoples from one part of northern Sudan at the expense of

those living everywhere else. They insist they are fighting for a change in Sudan, not for secession or for political autonomy on a cultural or racial basis.

Rebellion throughout peripheral areas in the north has been spreading for the past two decades. In the late 1980s revolts broke out in the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan State and in Blue Nile State as a result of alliances formed with the SPLM/A. The government responded in the Nuba Mountains with attacks by local ethnic militias coordinated with Sudanese troops, just as it has now in Darfur. The devastation to civilians in Nuba areas was also called genocide by some outside observers. There are signs of revolt in other parts of Kordofan as well. Notables have recently demanded that the government share the profits from oil pumped from their areas. In addition, a new rebel group has emerged in western Kordofan, which borders Darfur.

Guerrilla outbreaks also occurred in the 1990s in eastern Sudan. The SPLM/A has had a military presence in this area for several years. In January 2004, the SPLM/A signed an agreement with the Beja Congress, one of the groups involved in both political and guerrilla activity in the east. In an action in January 2005 suggesting the government's continued nervousness, police fired on peaceful demonstrators in Port Sudan following their presentation of a memorandum to the Red Sea State governor that demanded wealth and power sharing for the peoples of eastern Sudan. Nineteen protesters were killed and several more wounded.

All of these rebel groups are making the same demand: power sharing in a united Sudan. Paradoxically, the use of disproportionate violence by the government to quell each of them has led to new conflicts, greatly increasing its own insecurity.

## IN SEARCH OF SECURITY

Explaining why governments engage in mass atrocities is important for identifying the remedy most likely to prevent their repetition. The recent history of Sudan demonstrates that the government has repeatedly engaged or been implicated in massive attacks on its citizens in region after region. Both genocide and threats to the regime's survival provide plausible motives to explain the Sudanese government's vicious behavior.

But they frame the issue differently. Genocide focuses attention on ending the violence in a spe-

cific place: Darfur. Threats to the regime's survival call for a political solution bringing peace to the entire country. Different frames mean different solutions. Intervening with enough external force could stop the killing and destruction in Darfur. And forcing the parties to develop new bases for sharing wealth and power through a national constitutional conference could bring lasting peace to the nation. Finding a solution that will not only stop the attacks in Darfur but also ensure they are not repeated elsewhere is clearly superior to ending the violence in Darfur alone. Neither solution is conceivable without sustained Western and African intervention.

If genocide were established and if international intervention were sure to follow, responding to attacks in one area might be considered the better solution, since intervention for other reasons would be less likely. The UN Genocide Convention does require intervention once a determination has been made. But the absence of effective involvement following the US announcement that genocide occurred in Darfur has stripped away the illusion that a mere declaration would lead to significant action.

Two major concessions by the Sudanese government provide a possible path forward. First, it has agreed grudgingly to cooperate with an admittedly undersized force of African Union peacekeepers in Darfur, financed and facilitated by the West. Expanding the peacekeepers to other parts of the periphery would provide an opportunity for serious negotiations involving all the parties. Second, it has responded, also grudgingly, to sustained Western and African pressure by accepting the peace agreement with the SPLM/A.

The premises underlying the agreement's new arrangements for the south are basically those that the guerrillas in Darfur and elsewhere in the north want for the whole country. The national government is not about to liquidate its hegemony willingly—especially not when it has China, with its considerable Sudanese oil stake, as its ally in the UN Security Council. To achieve a nationwide peace settlement, the Western powers would have to build aggressively on their commendable role in bringing about the peace agreement. If the Western media and public opinion could turn their attention from declaring genocide in one region of Sudan to bringing sustained pressure on Western governments to insist on all-party negotiations, security for civilians might have a chance. ■