A New Paradigm for Understanding the Roots of the Conflict in Darfur

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The conflict in Darfur, which raged most intensely between 2003 and 2008, is the latest in its long history of intertribal struggle for natural resources (Mamdani, 2009, p. 4). To the average Westerner, whose awareness of monolithic “Africa” is usually shoddy at best, Darfur is a faraway land full of violence and injustice heretofore unseen in its history. Mamdani (2009), specifically discusses the way US media portrayed the conflict there, focusing on its distortion through the lens of America’s post-9/11 consciousness. He highlights the simplification of the conflict, the ease with which it became a matter of good versus evil, and the nebulous assertions that genocide was ongoing between 2004 and 2007, after which Darfur as a whole faded from public view (pp. 48-51, 67-71). Made evident by US miscalculations in managing ethnic tensions in Iraq—decisions made during the same period—the need to deeply understand the cultural fabric of a region before attempts can be made to stem its bloodshed is obvious, if not mandatory. That understanding drives this discussion. It is predicated on the fact that intercommunal conflict has been a feature of Darfur’s life for generations, brought about by the overlap between the two dominant modes of life in Darfur—pastoral and nomadic on the one hand, agricultural and settled on the other. Using analyses of the historical body of work on Sudan and Darfur, a new paradigm for understanding its modern conflict is presented below. It begins with a layered analysis that starts from the historical foundations and then adds thematically consistent modules, which have affected the social, political, and economic structure of the region. The dramatic transformations in narrative and worldview are the building blocks of the conflict that has been in progress, at varying levels of intensity, for the past 12 years.

Keywords: 2003 war, Darfur, Sudan, paradigm, causal layered analysis, conflict

Methodology

The inquiry and analysis presented here was born out of in-depth content analysis of the most prominent narratives of the Darfur conflict. A number of highly reputable works analyzed the events leading up to its outbreak and the events that unfolded thereafter. The current conflict began in 2003, the Government of Sudan’s scorched earth counterinsurgency campaign began shortly after, and the international press coverage peaked between 2004 and 2007 (Mamdani, 2009, p. 33). The main sources comprising the bulk of the content were published between 2005 and 2009, reflecting the saliency of the topic in academics and among the West’s general population. An effort to understand the conflict, brought about by interest in the first-ever joint United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur led research to Idris (2005), Iyob and Khadiagala (2006), Prunier (2007), Flint and De Waal (2008), Mamdani (2009), and Natsios (2012). Study of their works precipitated an

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understanding of the dominant themes of Darfur's history: climatological shaping of human activity, the legacy of identity politics, and the impact of the features of modern conflict on long-standing disputes. The threads common to each work were shaped into an analytical paradigm through use of techniques taken from the field of Futures Research. Causal Layered Analysis is a futures research technique often used for projecting long-term prospects given a particular context and analytical question (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 1). Its application involves taking the phenomena in question—small scale social dynamics, economic features, etc.—and delving layer by layer into their proximate causes, the mid-scale societal dynamics that drive them, and the deepest layer of cultural “Myth and Metaphor” that forms the worldview that makes them possible (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 8). The findings of such analyses are then applied to projecting future scenarios and determining what influences need to be fomented to achieve the desired short, middle, or long-term outcome in the given system. In the context of Darfur, the new paradigm developed from this analysis and illustrated later in this discussion clarifies the dynamics of the current conflict as the proximate phenomena, and delves backwards in time, peeling off and analyzing each layer. The findings indicate the fundamental influence of climate on patterns of subsistence and conflict—the “Myth and Metaphor” that set the stage of Darfur, and all of the major influences that act upon it. The most recent conflict in Darfur is not new in the way that Western media has portrayed it. Rather, it is the product of an intricate tapestry of social dynamics, native and externally imposed societal constructs, and disruptive legacies of modern modes of conflict, cast together as the foundation of this example of modern conflict.

Discussion

The climate of Darfur is semi-arid and sparsely vegetated (Mamdani, 2009, p. 207). Modes of subsistence developed into two main streams—pastoral and agricultural (p. 167). The pastoralists would migrate seasonally with their herds, while the agriculturalists maintained a presence on land inhabited for generations. These two lifestyles undoubtedly created divisions between the groups, yet symbiosis was beneficial to the point of being indispensable. Inter-communal cooperation was indigenous to the Darfur for centuries, as pastoralists would migrate south during the winter and dry season, grazing their cattle on what remained on farmers' fields after the harvest. Settled farmers would also entrust their cattle or camels to these nomads, creating a system of mutual dependence in which all parties shared a stake (Flint & De Waal, 2008, p. 4; Mamdani, 2009, pp. 207-208, 243-244, 247). Scarce resources caused tension and often conflict between tribes—which were basically identifiable by mode of subsistence—and judicial systems developed to cope with them. Payment of blood money, inter-tribal reconciliation, and tribal councils have long been staples of Darfur's indigenous justice system (Burr & Collins, 2007; Flint & De Waal, 2008; Mamdani, 2009). The nature of this system indicates that its inhabitants have always recognized the danger of putting cooperation at risk with long-term unresolved disputes.¹ In this way, communities took it upon themselves to stem violence, punishing those who would threaten mutually beneficial interactions.² Resource-driven conflicts should be seen as the base layer of

¹ Author's communication with Ambassador Dr. Dennis Jett (ret.), September 17, 2011.

² Flint and DeWaal (2008), provide a characteristic example of this judicial construct. In 1968, a fight began at Rahad (Lake) Gineik between Zaghawa and Rizeigat (an Arab tribe) herders that ultimately lasted for three days before government troops and police intervened. A tribal conference in 1969 was presided over by the sultan of the Masalit, a non-Arab tribe, and the chief of the Mahamid, another Arab tribe. They sentenced twelve Zaghawa and twelve Arabs to ten years imprisonment each. One of those sentenced later commented that, while harsh, the punishment was fair. The magnitude of the punishment indicates the threat that all sides saw in starting conflict at a common source of water (p. 5).

the 2003 war, and indeed of every conflict in Darfur. The key to understanding its place in the current conflict is that the majority of the pastoralists are Arab, while the majority of the settled farmers are non-Arab.³ These titles have been imposed by the outside world, and their artifice calls for explanation.

Historically, identity in Darfur has been a fluid concept. For example, the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur report (2005) states that because of intermarriage, “Arab” tribes—Rizeigat, Beni Hussein, Beni Halba, etc.—and “African” tribes—Zaghawa, Masalit, Fur, etc.—“can hardly be distinguished in their outward appearance” from each other (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, 2005; Mamdani, 2009, p. 311). Physical differences between the “two races” can thus hardly be considered significant factors for creating distinction between them. Lifestyle, furthermore, has historically determined identity. As Flint and De Waal (2008) point out,

If a Fur or Tunjur villager accumulated a lot of animals and chose to move with them seasonally, he might well prefer to call himself “Zaghawa” or even “Arab”, in line with his livelihood. (p. 3)⁴

These examples present identity as a functionalist construct, unfettered by any other distinctions defined by a person’s place of origin, local culture, or any divisions their practices may impose. Furthermore, international coverage of the 2003 conflict bolstered the polarization of Arab/African identity, belying the region’s history of “socioeconomic and political interaction... interdependence, and intercommunal marriages” that formed a triple African-Arabic-Islamic heritage (Iyob & Khadiagala, 2006, p. 135). The Arab/African divide does not carry the weight of the years into the context of the conflict—understanding it from a deeper, more fundamental level is therefore required.

Overview

Survival in an arid semi-desert with limited resources is the fundamental driver of life in Darfur. The geography and climate of Darfur has defined how its inhabitants have lived and interacted since before recorded history. In the past 400 years, layers have been added to this indigenous foundation of existence—in the form of institutions, systems, ideologies, and technologies. Each has built upon and interacted with the others to create Darfur’s modern context. It is through this lens that the character of violence in Darfur becomes more clearly defined. The construct presented here has six main features, which compose the recipe for the current conflict. The first two can be discussed as legacies, while the latter four are proximate and explain the dynamic and character of the situation since 2003 more directly. The legacy of slavery informs the narrative of racial identity in Darfur. Following it is the period of British control of Sudan, which entrenched the lexicon of race into national governance and imposed a non-native system of land management. These form the architecture of racial identification in Darfur, creating the identities of “African” and “Arab”.

The modern factors have had more significant effects on the conflict, yet they also build upon the

³ The terms “African” and “Arab” are largely synthetic, politicized, and inappropriate for describing the people of Darfur. While the term Arab is used by many of the tribes in the region, the primary mode of identification is by tribe. Fur, Tunjur, Masalit, Rizeigat, Beni Halba, Habbaniya are all tribes of Darfur—and not nearly all of them—and whether they are Arab or African is much less important than whether they own land or how their past interactions with each other have shaped them. Tribal identity is much more important than either ethnic or racial identity.

⁴ Mamdani also describes ethnic identity as a function of livelihood. Quoting the work of social anthropologist Gunnar Haaland, although “a move from one group to another is politically risky, requiring, [in this example] the Fur farmer to establish relations with “groups that he can trust for support”, “Fur” could become “Arab” and vice versa. Haaland’s impression was that “the Fur, Masalit and Daju were identified with grain cultivation and sedentary village life”, whereas “the Fulani and Baggara ideologies show preferences for pastoralism”. This work clearly supports the claim that identity was fluid in Darfur (Haaland, 1972).

historical legacies. They speak to its intensity and the way the crisis has been perceived in the outside world. The infiltration of Arab supremacist ideology in the 1980s contributed inflammatory rhetoric (Flint & De Waal, 2009, p. 49). It represented an indigenous conflict over resources as an epic struggle for racial purity and domination, and facilitated the mobilization of Arab tribal militias. Additionally, the drought of the 1980s and the accompanying famine changed the ethnic map of Darfur, providing the tension between farmers and pastoralists that sparked the 1987-1989 Arab/Fur war (Iyob & Khadiagala, 2006, p. 136). The government's economic and political marginalization of the region, a policy informed and shaped by racial ideology, also factored into this period. Finally, the influx of modern small arms and light weapons, which occurred in conjunction with the events of the 1980s, revolutionized the conflict. Easily accessible force multipliers—assault rifles, for example, brought a new level of violence and destruction to Darfur.

The features and character of the 2003 conflict can be traced to each of the aforementioned topics. The discussion below speaks of them conceptually, summarizing with a general description of what drives almost all parties involved.

Historical Legacies

Slavery

Slavery was a feature of life in Darfur since before the founding of the Darfur Sultanate in 1650 (Burr & Collins, 2007, pp. 2-21). Slaves were not only used for service by the Sultan and the royal elite, they were a form of profit. The slave trade functioned by raiding in the south and west of Darfur, penetrating into present-day Chad, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. The Darfur Sultanate was, at its height, the most powerful actor in the region, and it capitalized on its location by raiding south and trading north with the Egyptians and the Mediterranean nations (Flint & De Waal, 2008, p. 6). The significance of the source of slaves and the sultanate's trade cannot be understated. As multiple authors observe, the Arabic words *abd*, or slave, and *zurga*, used for "black" Africans, became interchangeable in this region (Flint & de Waal, 2008, p. 27; Idris, 2005, p. 39; Prunier, 2007, p. 55). This was due to the slaves being taken from Sub-Saharan Africa and being traded in the Arabic-speaking world, where their owners associated any dark-skinned African with slavery. As Darfur was consolidated into the British colony of Sudan, prejudice against "*zurga*" became a part of government policy.

British Colonial Rule

The primary effect of the British administration of Sudan was to entrench the rhetoric of race and politicize racial identification, with grave implications for Darfur. Howard MacMichael, the intelligence secretary for the British imperial administration, instituted race as the key identifier through his organization of the British-run Sudanese census. He organized societal groups by race, ethnicity (or "groups of tribes") and tribe (Mamdani, 2009, p. 147). MacMichael was archetypical of British Orientalists, whose fascination and preference for Arab and Arab tribal hierarchy shaped colonial policy (Flint & De Waal, 2008, p. 11). The British also instituted the policy of indirect rule, which imposed a political hierarchy among the tribes of Darfur. It was intended to separate Arab from non-Arab and establish order, all the while enabling the British to elevate the Arab culture of central Sudan and the Nile region.⁵ British rule transformed "Arab and African... from

⁵ Mamdani (2009) spends a good bit of time discussing the racial ideology of British colonialists, who instituted the narrative of settler vs. native upon Sudan to understand the "impurities" they saw among various Arab tribes. He also details the system that

flexible cultural identities to rigid political identities” (Idris, 2005, p. 21). As it gave way to anti-colonialist nationalism in the 1950s, the new governments, largely led by *awlad al-bahar* (“people of the river”), Sudanese Arabs from the northern Nile region, inherited this system (Burr & Collins 2007, p. 283). They were educated and urbanized because British resources had been aligned to their benefit. The leaders of the new Sudanese state therefore conducted the process of state formation with no attempt to create a unified Sudanese identity, since their power was assured if the fabric of identity remained unchanged. As Idris (2005) summarized, because of “the persistence and institutionalization of [racial and] ethnic identity as a criterion for economic, social, and political entitlements, the realization of inclusive citizenship in the postcolonial period has become impossible” (p. 43). This inability to achieve a united Sudanese identity under a system of fair governance is the lasting legacy of British rule.

Additionally, both Idris (2005) and Flint and De Waal (2008) note the economic inequality between the central Sudan Arabs and the Darfurians that began under the British administration. Flint and De Waal (2008) specifically notes that the British neglected Darfur in order to prevent well-educated Darfuri merchants or administrators from challenging the native administration (p. 12). The postcolonial state inherited the policy of neglecting development of Darfur’s services or infrastructure, which was simply a prudent policy of saving limited government resources, overlaid with the disdain that central and northern Sudanese Arabs had for their rural countrymen.

Proximate Factors

Arab Supremacist Ideology

Sudan and Darfur especially, did not exist in a vacuum during the Cold War period. It was continuously involved in turmoil involving Chad and Libya. As Colonel Moammar Qaddafi spent the late 1970s and 1980s pursuing his Pan-Arabist agenda in Africa, Darfur took on the status of contested support territory for his forces and those of his enemies in Chad. As Libyans infiltrated into northwest Darfur, they spread pan-Arab ideology that was virulently anti-African. Arab nomads were recruited into Qaddafi’s Islamic Legion, *Failaq al-Islamiya*, while another Libyan-sponsored group in Darfur, the “Arab Gathering”, received training in Libya proper (Flint & De Waal, 2008, p. 77). There is a distinct dynamic involving the Arab herdsmen, Qaddafi’s goals, and ideology that explains the effect the ideology had on Darfur. When Libyan forces entered the region, regardless of whether Khartoum had consented to it or not, they looked for local allies. The Arab herdsmen were the natural choice, for at the very least they shared the understanding of life in and around the Sahara (Prunier, 2007, p. 55). The Libyans also identified them primarily as Arabs because it suited their purposes, thus adopting the institutionalized system of racial identity that the British created. In order to mobilize these tribes to their cause, the leadership promulgated Arab supremacism, applying the Arab/non-Arab narrative to the natural breakdown of Darfur’s inhabitants into herdsmen and farmers. The intensity of perennial conflicts over land and resources thus increased, becoming the Sudanese manifestation of the larger Pan-Arab struggle. Rhetoric of Arab supremacy emphasized that the struggle was for Arab unity and primacy in Africa, which naturally highlighted what Mamdani (2009) calls the “zero-sum game” of struggles over natural resources in Darfur (p. 4). In this way, indigenous conflicts became monumental struggles, integrating the violent rhetoric that proved so motivating to their combatants.

MacMichael created through organizing the census as he did, as well as the policy of “retribalization” as a method of imposing separation between Arabs and Africans (pp. 78-81, 145-152, 174-180).

The Famine of 1984-1985 and Its Effects

While patterns of drought and famine are facts of life in Darfur, the drought of 1984-1985 was especially harsh. The drought's effects brought a new urgency to normal conflicts between Arab herdsmen and non-Arab farmers. As the latter saw the encroaching desert and the nomads driven south to feed their flocks, they began to block access to migration routes and grazing lands (Prunier, 2007, p. 57). Tragically, this famine was preventable, the apathy of the central government of Sudan allowed it to happen. Additionally, Darfur's administrator at the time was perhaps the only responsible governor it has ever had. Ahmed Diraige was a native Darfurian, who had made an honest attempt to reform the state's system of governance in the early 1980s. His administration was "the first to care for the ordinary man since independence", he recognized the impending famine and petitioned the government to intervene. His pleas fell upon deaf ears, and he was forced to flee the country at the end of 1983 (Prunier, 2005, pp. 51, 57). Khartoum denied there was any problem, and approximately 95,000 people died as a result. While protests spurred by the famine brought down General Nimeiri, the man who replaced him, Sadiq al-Mahdi cared even less for Darfur, and the suffering continued.

In the context of traditional interdependent modes of subsistence, the famine corroded the legacy of intercommunal cooperation. Pastoralists desperate to save their starving herds violated age-old seasonal restrictions by driving cattle into farming areas out of season. In the face of dwindling resources, farmers and herders eschewed the traditional means of conflict resolution so prominent up until that time and resorted to force (Iyob & Khadiagala, 2006, p. 144). It is here that the famine can be seen in conjunction with the other events occurring in Darfur.

While Darfurians were starving, Libyan forces set up shop to have access to Chad, bringing along the house special, Arab Supremacism. The Arab pastoralists who were seeing their flocks dying and their grazing lands cut off by "African" farmers quickly adopted the Arab-versus-African narrative. In conjunction with the severity of the famine, it cast the struggle for limited natural resources in an increasingly ideological light. With the introduction of modern small arms and light weapons the "moral order" of Darfur changed forever (Flint & De Waal, 2008, p. 46). Inter-tribal tensions began to rise from time of the famine until the Arab/Fur war of 1987-89, and there is little evidence to claim that they eased between then and 2003.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

Qaddafi's forces brought another game-changer to Darfur with their virulent ideology—guns. The AK-47, the most widely used assault rifle in the world, forever changed Darfur. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are a deciding factor for the duration of, and the destruction wrought by, intrastate conflict.⁶ They are generally cheap, easy to acquire and operate, and powerful. The AK-47, for instance, fires thirty 7.62-millimeter rounds in a matter of seconds—one person could potentially kill 30 in less than a minute. Other weapons—semi-automatics, sub-machine guns, heavy machine guns, and the ever-present rocket-propelled grenade—enable parties to a conflict to visit extreme violence on each other. It is with this dynamic in mind that implications of this influx can be fully understood.

⁶ SALW have been noted to be a significant factor in intrastate conflict, precisely because of their low price point, increased lethality, and ease of acquisition and operation (Boutwell, Klare, & Reed, 1995). Furthermore, light weapons proliferation polarizes societies and intensifies inter-communal violence. Within such conflicts, SALW distribution to selective groups is a central element in the process of identity construction, as is the widespread use of such weapons by one communal group against another (Dhanapala, Donowaki, Rana, & Lumpe, 1999).

The introduction of SALW completed the formula for violence in Darfur. The farmers and herdsmen always had disputes; the nature of their interactions in the context of Darfur's climate made them inevitable. Darfur's tribes, however, had always understood such conflicts and created the systems of reconciliation necessary for settling disputes and keeping the peace. In the 1980s, the drought and famine alone would have made such resource-driven clashes more frequent, but did not in themselves guarantee their intensity. This assertion can be proved historically: the *Julu* famine of 1913-1914 had not reduced Darfur's villages to burning hulks (Flint & De Waal, 2008, p. 10). However, upon the introduction of Qaddafi's ideology, the Arabs began to see themselves as struggling for their rightful primacy. Stemming from this newfound belief, the idea of clearing Darfur's land of African tribes became the logical extension of the struggle for natural resources. The combination of drought and ideology did not guarantee ultra-violence on their own. Most forms of weapons, up to and including the first generations of firearms, did not enable large-scale attacks. As Flint and De Waal (2008) state "in the era of spears and swords, and even the early rifles, a killing was a deliberate and individual act... fights rarely had more than a handful of fatalities" it stands to logic that old weapons limited the extent of violence (p. 47). Modern weapons had an opposite effect.

A reductionist description of the conflict, and a concept taken from the engineering disciplines, clarify the role of SALW. Group A and Group B are in conflict; the central issue raises the intensity of the conflict to a critical magnitude. This magnitude is greater than or equal to a certain threshold of intensity, at which point the parties use force against one another to resolve the conflict. The tools with which they are armed have limited the amount of force available to them per person, which can be called "specific armed force" (SF).⁷ For instance, the SF of a spear would be one, as it can only be used to attack one person at one time per use. For a long time available weapons limited the extent of violence, as few people could be injured or killed because the average SF was so low. However, the introduction of new technology raises the SF of all of the parties involved—i.e., lethality per person increases. The clashes become more destructive as a result, since each person can now injure or kill many. The magnitude and lethality of violence in the conflict increases to proportions that traditional conflict management apparatuses, which had relied on the payment of blood money to curtail violence, cannot handle.

Conflict in Darfur, between herdsmen and farmers, had always reached the critical magnitude needed to foment violence—a result of the life-or-death struggle over limited natural resources. Actors had been restricted by what was available: spears, swords, and single-shot rifles prevented high casualty rates in armed clashes. Enter modern weaponry: the automatic rifle, propelled explosives, and high caliber projectiles. SF increased exponentially, as one person could thus carry enough force to kill scores of people, even with just one weapon. In the 1980s, thousands of herdsmen received SALW along with ideological indoctrination. Combined with the severity of the drought, the stage was set for a new mode of violence. With the system of tribal reconciliation unable to cope with this new reality, the fabric of Darfur's civil society was thus torn asunder, and did not recover between 1989 and 2003.⁸

⁷ The modifying word "specific" is used in physics and engineering to denote an intensive property—that is, a property that does not change based on quantity of matter present. For example, specific heat is a value that describes the amount of energy required to raise a *unit mass* of a substance by one degree. The value is thus applicable to the substance in general, and is not dependent on the amount or volume of the substance present at any one time. In the same way, this new concept of "specific armed force," while a qualitative concept, denotes the magnitude of violent force *per person*.

⁸ Both Flint and De Waal (2008), and Mamdani (2009) discuss the breakdown in Darfuri society that resulted from the experience of the 1980s (Flint & De Waal, 2008, pp. 43-54; Mamdani, 2009, pp. 243-249).

Continuity: 1989-2003

Between 1989 and 2003, the new reality of this paradigm stayed fairly consistent—no new phenomena altered the context leading up to the revolt in 2003. The 1989 tribal reconciliation conference in 1989 that ended the Arab/Fur War lessened violence in the region, and the 1990s saw the mobilization of geographically peripheral groups pressuring the hegemonic rule of Khartoum at the center (Iyob & Khadiagala, 2006, p. 149). While the means of Darfur's pressuring the government remained political, all efforts towards fostering greater inclusion failed throughout the 1990s. There was one significant conflict in Darfur during this decade, which Natsios (2012) terms the "Second Darfur Uprising", placing it in between the 1987-1989 Arab/Fur war and the 2003 revolt. This conflict resulted from the Government of Sudan's "heavy-handed" tactics in marginalizing the Masalit tribe, whose sultan was the traditional ruling power of western Darfur. The prologue to this conflict exhibits another instance of deeply-entrenched identity politics playing out in the region. The rise of Omar Al-Bashir's government in 1989 presented the marginalized Darfuri Arabs the chance to seize power. The impact of the 1980s still loomed, as the Masalit had blocked humanitarian aid to Arab tribes who had migrated during the famine. The Bashir government approved a move to disempower the Masalit sultan, putting that position's appointment in the hands of a council of overwhelmingly Arab local appointees (p. 130).

By 1995 the Government of Sudan's "reforms", combined with the polarized relations between Masalit and Arab tribes in western Darfur, had fomented armed conflict. No new factors emerged influencing the conflict in 2003. Arab-versus-African narrative, political dynamics, and resulting patterns of military assistance resulted in the devastation of the Masalit homeland. The Government of Sudan had, in part, turned to arming the Arab tribesmen to fight the "African" rebels, foreshadowing the counterinsurgency tactics that would wreak such devastation between 2003 and 2006 (Natsios, 2006, p. 131; Flint & DeWaal, 2008, pp. 60-61). While the conflict ended with Khartoum acceding to instituting more equitable representation in local and regional government in 1999, it became another fresh wound in the Darfuri psyche. Between 1999 and 2003, the efforts of Khartoum to maintain its hold on power and marginalize all peripheral groups continued unabated, resulting in the rise of the Sudan's People's Liberation Movement/Army, and the destructive war that unfolded in the international spotlight.

The Darfur Conflict Paradigm

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Figure 2. Visual representation of thesis paradigm.

Summary

This Darfur Conflict Paradigm is meant to provide clarity by breaking down the roots of current conflict in Darfur to the aforementioned issues. While other factors do exist, these had the most revolutionizing effect on the region and nature of conflict. Slavery and the British Administration began the narrative of “Arab” versus “Black”, but since the postcolonial government was unable or unwilling to forge a common Sudanese identity, their legacies have never been addressed, much less put to rest. The famine of 1984-1985 cleaved Darfuri society in a way it had never experienced, putting a heretofore unseen level of stress on traditional dynamics of life and conflict—though it could have been prevented. Into that wound was poured the acid of Arab supremacism and the force multipliers of modern weapons. In this light, Darfur never had a chance for a peaceful existence. The conflicts of the 1980s have never been resolved, yet the issues that spawned them persisted, setting the stage for the latest round of conflict, which has yet to end.

While the Paradigm is specific to a certain region, the analytical method is not. Viewing the present as a product of the past and then identifying historical events and features with the greatest impact is nothing new. However, when conflicts develop quickly and, as often happens, outside actors weigh in, well-informed decisions are not the norm. Analyzing a conflict to find what nuanced narratives may be present can change the way attempts are made to manage it. In Darfur, knowing that the Arab/non-Arab divide was artificial and that

indigenous conflict management institutions existed could have changed the way outside actors, especially the United States, participated in the ill-fated negotiations that did not end the conflict. With intercommunal conflicts occurring worldwide, efforts to end them must emphasize expert understanding over good intentions.

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