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The militarisation of structural cleavages and the emergence of new political elites in Darfur

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Abstract

The militarization of the structural cleavages, 'clan', 'tribal' and 'racial' differences, in Darfur is the main trigger of the war that erupted in a bigger scale as it did in 2003. Although several factors can be identified that contributed to tensions between several tribal groups, arming particular tribal group resulted in the explosion that engulfed the whole Sudan. In other words, arming a tribal group would mean 'empowering' the group with much advanced means of violence. This advanced means of violence include the AK-47, the G-3, and the RPG. These advanced means of violence changed the way clashes had been conducted from relatively manageable to a disastrous one. Yet, once the war erupted it was no longer about tribal clashes over grazing land, water usage and issues of settlement. Instead, it has become a conflict between well armed Darfur rebel groups and the central government in Khartoum. This was accompanied by the involvement of regional and international actors with different agendas. Therefore, this author argues that the whole scenario of war in Darfur revolves around the militarization of the structural cleavages by various local, regional and international actors.

Introduction

This article analyses the war of political economy in Darfur. In this regard, 'political economy' refers to the production and distribution of power and resources; and war serves as a mechanism, which contributes to the process of production, and distribution of power and resources. This also implies that war as a mechanism can shape the process of production and distribution of power to own – individual relied on 'tribe', 'race' and perhaps 'class' - interest.

In this article, the 'tribal' and 'racial' differences are referred to as structural cleavages. Structural because the 'tribal' and 'racial' categories represent the key constructs of the socio-political and economic divide of the different segments of the societies in Darfur. These structural constructs have for centuries served as mechanisms to determine the nature of power relationships in Darfur.[1] Power relationships change due to various factors; and the argument here is that violent conflict is one factor, which contributes to changes in power relationships. Meaning, when cleavages are created along the lines of the socio-political and economic constructs, shaping and framing power relationships,

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[1] See R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding (1974) *Kingdoms of the Sudan*. Methuen & CO LTD, London

conflict is bound to erupt. What makes the eruption of conflict more disastrous and uprooting is the manipulation of the structural cleavages for an ultimate gain by fuelling tensions into war.

The wide spread availability of weapons and extensive arms supply from different directions into Sudan has played a major role in the struggle over power and resources in Darfur. Arms enabled 'tribal' militias to expand their capacity of inflicting large-scale damages on their 'targets'. This change in the *modus operandi* of violent conflict - from the use of spears, arrows and swords to light and medium weapons - has affected the socio-political and economic structures of the people in Darfur. Land issues, grazing rights, and conflict over the use of water were no longer solved by the local based community dispute mechanisms. The more the militarization of the structural cleavages, the more the change occurred in various levels of power relationships/. The issues of land ownership; the issues of nomad versus settled tribes and, the issues of access to government structures and the issues of interventions by different international actors have been framed and re-framed to the tune of the nature of the structural cleavages.

The militarization of the structural cleavages is the key factor in the whole scenario of the eruption of the war in Darfur. This militarization has been materialised and made effective with the availability of arms (transfer as one mechanism). Therefore, the contribution of arms transfer to the process of militarizing the structural cleavages becomes the crucial ingredient. In other words, the more intensive became the arms transfer, the wider the militarization of the structural cleavages. In its turn, the wider the militarization of the structural cleavages contributes immensely to the changing power relationships.

Besides, arms transfers within the context of militarising the structural cleavages contributes significantly to the process of the shaping the future power relationships between various groups, such as 'tribal', 'racial' or class in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan. Not only the 'tribal' based militia groups grew into well organised military powers, but also these military groups rose in a position which has enabled them to acquire the power to pressure – one way or another - the central government to come to a negotiation table. In similar tone, Olawale (2008) argues that "the capacity for violence and terror by individuals (especially young combatants who were previously marginalised) and armed groups has become a new marker of elitism and a leverage on peace agreements".[2]

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[2] Olawale Ismail (2008) *Power elites, war and postwar reconstruction in Africa: Continuities, discontinuities and paradoxes*, Journal Of Contemporary African Studies, Vol. 26, No. 3, p. 259

The militarization of the structural cleavages in Darfur can be attributed to multiple factors. These factors include the power politics and rivalry of different local, regional and international actors. Local actors include different 'tribe' and/or 'race' based groups as well as individuals. Regional actors include governments of the region such as Chad, Libya and Eritrea. International actors include International organizations, NGOs as well as the U.S. and China.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section looks at the emergence and fragmentation of the Darfur armed movements within the context of the militarization of structural cleavages. The second section will look into how the arms transfer/flow contributes to the militarization of the structural cleavages. This section examines the role of regional and international actors in the militarization process. The third section will analyse the contribution of the militarization – through local, regional and international actors - of the structural cleavages in Darfur to the power relationships in Sudan. This also involves the interventions through the ongoing peace/power negotiations.

Who Represents Darfur?

The phrase 'who represents Darfur' is used here as a question as well as a sub-topic in order to examine the emergence and fragmentation of the armed movements of Darfur. Both the emergence and the fragmentation are used to emphasise the question of representation. Emergence and fragmentation in this context emphasise representation simply because both have been manifestations of 'tribal' groupings and individual power squabbles. As for the emergence, the origin of all the Darfur armed groups can be linked to the pre-existed 'tribal' militias. Here, the reference is not about the cause of the war; but it is about the launch of the armed groups. As for the fragmentation, the main reference is related to the 'tribal' based and 'individual' based power struggle.[3] In short, if both the emergence and the fragmentation of the armed movements were to mean 'for the sake' of the people of Darfur, then it is crucial to analyse the emergence and fragmentation within the context of the question that who then represents Darfur? Is there any of the armed movements which represents the people of Darfur?

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[3] Author interviews with former solders of the Darfur rebel movements – For example, Yaqub Abubaker, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 07 February 2009; Khaled, a young man from Darfur and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 06 December 2009

The landscape of Darfur covers an area of 388, 498 square km.[4] Historically Darfur existed as an independent sultanate between the fourteenth century and early twentieth century. This was followed by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium administration between 1898 and 1956 as a province of Sudan. Since Sudan's independence in 1956, Darfur has remained part of Sudan.[5] Historically, the sultanate of Darfur enjoyed trade relationships with kingdoms of Western Africa such as the Sokoto sultanate.[6] The Darfur sultanates periodically raided the territories to their south, mainly Kordofan, for ivory and slaves.[7] Darfur sultanates were also connected commercially to Egypt.[8] The people of Darfur are composed of various tribes and are controversially categorized as 'African' and 'Arabs'. Those who consider themselves 'Arabs', or so, Include Baggara, Rizayqat, Ta'ayisha, Messeriya and others (see chapter 2). Other tribes such as the Fur, Massalit, Zaghawa Dajo, Berti, Meidob, Bergo, Tama, Mema, Merarita and others are categorised as 'Africans'.

What is important for this study is not whether the categorisation of 'African' versus 'Arab' can be proved based on skin colour and facial features or genetically; and, it is not about whether the war in Darfur is 'genocidal' or not. The concern for this study is the application and manipulation, as a socio-political and economic divide, of such 'racial' and 'tribal/ ethnic' categorisation including the "settler-native paradigm"[9] to own advantage. Darfur, as its name implies *Dar* (home) of Fur, means the 'homeland' of the people known as Fur. Darfur is also a home for various population groups who mostly migrated from the west/ north-west and east/ north-east into Darfur.[10] The Fur people are the key population group of Darfur.[11]

During the sixteenth century, the Darfur sultanates joined the expanding Islamic world that enabled them to establish trade networks with the Sahelian belt and beyond the belt. The Fur tribe expanded from the famous mountain known as *Jebel Marra* down to the plains vanquishing or pushing out the *Bahr-el-Ghazal* tribes to the south. Through conquest, subjugation and assimilation the Fur

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[4] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; p. 2
[5] Prunier 2.
[6] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) *Darfur: A New History of a Long War.* London: Zed Books
[7] See R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding (1974) *Kingdoms of the Sudan.* Methuen & CO LTD, London,
[8] O'Fahey and Spaulding
[9] See Mahmood Mamdani (2009) *Saviours and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror.* Cape Town: HSRC Press; p. 232
[10] See R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding (1974) *Kingdoms of the Sudan.* Methuen & CO LTD, London
[11] O'Fahey and Spaulding

sultanate grew fast and expanded to vast territories. The Fur sultanates' expansion involved socio-political and economic assimilation of various tribal groups into the Fur.[12]

During early nineteenth century, Darfur emerged as a powerful sultanate both politically and economically. During this period, it adopted Islam and Arabic as the official religion and language of the sultanate respectively. The functions of court systems and various administrative and commercial activities started to rely on Islamic law.[13] However, although Arabic became an official language, most of the Darfur tribal groups retained their own languages.[14]

Another important aspect of looking into the socio-political and economic structures of Darfur is the issue of Land. In Darfur, the land use system is known as *hakura*. This system of land grant and land ownership marked partially the nature of power relationship between various layers of the Darfur societies. Historically, courts appointed *hakuras* based on their religious and political status within the structures of the sultanate. The *hakura* holders were entitled to collect taxes from the people lived within the territory under their domain. The *hakura* head, in most cases, became the ruler of the territory under his control. Such a position often led to the formation of an independent ruler surrounded by relatives and members of own tribal group.[15]

In addition to the land use system, it is important to highlight that the mode of production or the livelihood of different tribal groups serve as the divide of the socio-political and economic structures of the Darfur society. Some of the tribal groups are settled farmers or, are involved in cultivation activities; some are nomads and some others are pastoralists. For example, most of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa people – categorised as 'Africans' - are sedentary farmers or cultivators; and groups categorised as 'Arabs' such as the Baggara are semi-nomadic people while Rizayqat, Ta'ayisha and Messeriya are predominantly camel-raising nomadic people.[16] Such discrepancies in the livelihood of different tribal groups often function as structural cleavages, which could be manipulated by various actors in the struggle of political economy.

Darfur remains one of the regions of Sudan that have received little or no attention with regard to government development programs. In the year 2000, a group of anonymous authors published and distributed in the streets of Khartoum a 'book' entitled "The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and

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[12] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; pp. 8-9
[13] See R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding (1974) *Kingdoms of the Sudan*. Methuen & CO LTD, London
[14] Author interview with a Darfurian elderly in Khartoum, 5 July 2008
[15] See R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding (1974) *Kingdoms of the Sudan*. Methuen & CO LTD, London
[16] O'Fahey and Spaulding

Wealth in the Sudan" Part I; and in 2002 Part II was disseminated via the website of one of the Darfur armed movements, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). In the book, the authors emphasised on injustices committed by the central government against the people of Darfur. According to the accounts of the "Black Book", the crises of Darfur lie on the imbalances of power and wealth sharing. The imbalance includes the control of political power by a minority group (just over 5% of the Sudan population); the discrepancies in the construction of roads; the number of schools and teachers, and the number of health care centres and number of doctors per population. Generally, the "Black Book" criticises the government of the National Islamic Front (NIF) for adopting the same policies as its predecessors, all of which have been labelled by the book as established systems of injustice.

The NIF government did not try to identify and solve the imbalances the "Black Book" explains. Instead, it decided to squash any grievances through coercion. This coercive approach involved arrest, torture and the use of military force to subdue any uprising. Nor did the government attempted to solve the ever-growing tensions over the right to access the grazing land and the use of water. Quiet to the contrary, the government has been deeply involved in arming 'tribal' militias;[17] hence the militarization of structural cleavages through arming proxy militias.

The history of arming proxy militia can be traced to the mid-1980s when the then government of Sudan attempted to 'halt' the Sudan People Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/A)'s expansion into provinces outside the south Sudan.[18] This SPLM/A attempts of incursions into the northern parts of the country were seen as a serious threat that needed to be stopped. Therefore, the government decided to mobilize militia forces.[19] However, why did the government opt to 'tribalise' and/or 'racialise' the militia it wanted to mobilise? Why would the group of 'think tanks' or the decision makers within the ruling circle in the government fail to envisage the future consequence of such tribalised militia? Did they 'fail' to envisage the consequences?

There are several answers to the above raised questions. The predominant explanation by respondents during the author's field research in Khartoum in July 2008 is that the government's strategy was to look for cracks that could easily be manipulated. These cracks were the tribal differences already existed for decades. Tribes categorised as 'Arabs' were mobilised to fight the incursions of the

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[17] Author's interview with Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, chairman of the Sudan Development Organization known as SUDO, Khartoum, 01 July 2008

[18] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) *Darfur: A New History of a Long War*. London: Zed Books; p. 23

[19] Author's interview with Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, chairman of the Sudan Development Organization known as SUDO, Khartoum, 01 July 2008

SPLM/ A which was depicted by the government as 'anti-Arab' and 'anti-Islam', a sentiment believed to have enabled the government to trigger 'hatred' towards the SPLM/A.[20]

In the context of the war in south Sudan (1983 – 2005), the usage of 'Arabs' versus 'Africans' was not an arduous issue to identify.[21] However, what was controversial was the portrayal of the war as the Muslim-North against the Christian-South. This depiction was controversial and perhaps misleading as most southerners were believers of African traditional belief systems. Yet, the discontent against the definition of Sudan, mainly by the central government, as an 'Arab' and 'Islamic' has often surfaced within the SPLM/A elements. For example, in an interview given to *Aljazeera* in 2008, Pagan Amum, one of the senior leaders of the SPLM/A, complained against and vehemently rejected the depiction of Sudan as 'Arab' and 'Islamic'. He said, "How can my country be Arab, Islamic when I am not Arab and not Muslim? What am I? How can I belong?"

In the same broadcast of the *Aljazeera* 2008 interview, Al-Tayeb Mustafa, Secretary General of Sudanese forum known as Just Peace Forum, blamed the British colonial administration and external forces for deliberately creating a divide by banning "Arab, Islamic customs language and religion" in the south "while at the same time they opened up to Christian missionaries, the hatred that caused the 50 year war; and today they are using it to expand the south upon the north and Isolate Sudan from the Arab-Islamic world". Yet, John Garang, the leader of the SPLM/A was known for his pursuit of building 'New Sudan', an idea which had been treated suspiciously by many from within the circle of the ruling party (the NCP) in Sudan.

In such a political environment of mistrust and discomfort, the explanation that the government has been manipulating the 'tribal' and/or 'racial' divide to mobilise militia looks convincing. One of the militia forces that was mobilised in such a way, by the government, was the Baggara militia. The government provided this militia with all needed arms and logistical support. Between 1986 and 2003, the 'Arab' militias such as the Baggara and the Rizeigat, supported by the government of Sudan, were involved in raiding, pillaging and killings in the Upper Nile and the Nuba mountains.[22] The mobilisation of proxy militia also gained momentum when tensions over the grazing land and use of water

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[20] Mudawi

[21] During the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium administration (as is explained in chapter two), a cultural separation between the North and the South of Sudan was introduced. This separation did not allow the admixture between the two the process of 'Arabization', at least in perception, did not take place

[22] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) *Darfur: A New History of a Long War.* London: Zed Books; p. 23; also see Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; p. 59

exacerbated due to the recurring drought in the 1970s and later in the mid-1980s, which led to an increasing desertification and the degradation of the ecosystem.[23]

In the case of Darfur, the issue of \tribal' and/or 'racial' divide was mainly manifested perhaps in the divide known as the 'black African belt' versus 'the Arab gathering'. This explanation is used to depict the Fur-'Arab' war of the mid-1980s. However, this explanation is related more to the external intervention, mainly Libya's failed project of pan-Arabism, than to a sentiment, which could have in itself led to hatred. Out of twenty-five Sudanese writers/journalists, activists and ordinary persons whom I interviewed in June - July 2008, none believed that there existed hatred based on 'tribal' and/or 'racial' differences.

During the mid-1980s, Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi was supporting a Sudanese opposition led by Saddiq al-Mahdi against the government of Sudan under the leadership of Nimiety. Besides, Gaddafi decided to put under his control both the governments of Chad and Sudan. One-step forward in doing so was military presence in Darfur. Therefore, the mid-1980s drought was an opportunity for him to make a move. This move had to be camouflaged as humanitarian. Between August 1985 and March 1986, Gaddafi sent hundreds of truck convoys of aid to Darfur. These convoys also included an 800 strong Libyan military force that based in the capital of Darfur, El-Fashir.[24] This intervention marked a huge arms transfer into Darfur.[25]

In addition to its military presence in Darfur, the government of Libya provided with arms and other military logistics mainly to the Mahamid and other Abbala-Rizeigat clans from the 'Arab' population group who are to be found in both Chad and Sudan. The 'homeland' of the Mahamid in Sudan, mainly the um-Jalul[26] camps in Aamo, north Darfur, served as military zone and arms provided by Libya destined for the Chadian 'Arabs' based in Darfur. Since the era of the Darfur sultanates, the Abbala-Rizeigat camel-herder population was marred by inter-clan squabbles and unkind treatment by other population groups, and hence grievances contributed to the inception of the notorious 'Arab'

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[23] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; p. 45

[24] Prunier 55

[25] A view held by many Sudanese the author interviewed in Khartoum; and, a view of many authors such as Gérard Prunier (2005), Flint and Alex de Waal (2008) and Mamdani (2009).

[26] The um-Jalul is a clan within the Mahamid clans of the Abbala-Rizeighat in Northern Darfur

militia known as the *Janjaweed*.[27] Libya also armed the Salamat 'Arab' militia group, which served as the major Libyan ally, the Beni-Halba and other 'Arab' tribes.[28]

During the 1980s, the rising conflict between different tribes of Darfur – mainly between the 'African' and the 'Arab' population groups – was complicated by the government's involvement in arming proxy militias. This put into question the issue of 'strategic' pursuit by the central government, which I discussed above within the context of war in south Sudan. Why would a new government (the NIF) decide to pursue the same 'strategy' as its predecessor - mobilising militia based on 'tribe' or 'race'? In fact, why would a government, which has claimed to be abided by 'Islamic' tenets would militarise structural cleavages?

The above questions could be answered within the context of the evolution or emergence of the Darfur armed movements. During the 1987 – 1989 Fur-'Arab' war, there was a tendency among the Fur militant elements to seeking support from the SPLM/A and the government of Chad then led by Hissen Habré. As a guerrilla movement, Nimeiry's government, under the CIA supervision, extensively supported Habré.[29] Both the Nimeiry government and the CIA saw Libya as an enemy. While for Nimeiry the main reason was Libya's support to Saddiq al-Mahdi, a potential threat to his power, for the CIA Libya was a rouge state that sponsored global terrorism hence needed to be harassed.[30]

This phenomenon was part of the complex created by Gaddafi's obsession of 'geo-politics' and 'anti-imperialism' – such as the U.S. global domination. This was further complicated by the resistance from Habré's Chad as well as changing power squabble at the level of the central government of Sudan. At the centre of such complex was the exacerbation of the Darfur conflict along the 'African' versus 'Arab' 'racial' divide. Libya first created an 'Islamic legion' known in its Arabic version as '*al failaq al Islami'* and then were involved in forming and supporting the 'Arab gathering' known in its Arabic version as '*Tajamu al Arabe'*.[31] Such a divide would later function as an institutionalised 'racial' cleavage that contributed immensely to shaping the conflict in Darfur as 'Arabs' against 'Africans'.

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[27] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books; pp. 40-41
[28] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; pp. 61-63
[29] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; p. 48
[30] Prunier 48
[31] See Mahmood Mamdani (2009) *Saviours and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and The War on Terror.* Cape Town: HSRC Press; pp. 233-235 and see also Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; pp. 60-63

In 1985, a popular uprising removed Nimeiry from power in Sudan.[32] A transition of a military administration, led by General Swar ed-Dahab, promised to hold election after one year. Such a situation created an environment conducive for Libya to support its potential ally, Saddiq al-Mahdi, to win the election. Libya poured several million dollars to fund Saddiq al-Mahdi's electoral campaign. In exchange, Libya would gain full access to Darfur as its base to antagonise the government of Chad. In July 1985, the transitional military government of Sudan signed a military agreement with Tripoli. This agreement was not good news to the relationship between the U.S. and Sudan. In addition, Libya outsmarted the U.S. humanitarian assistance programs by sending more aid convey to Darfur than the USAID did; and, simultaneously, Libya used the situation for military convey as well. More importantly, in April 1986, Gaddafi's ally, Saddiq al-Mahdi's *Umma* party won the national election and seized power. This was followed by strong Libyan support in the war against the SPLM/A in south Sudan.[33]

In 1989, a military junta toppled Saddiq el-Mahdi and seized power. The junta was known as the National Islamic Front (NIF).[34] Instead of curing the wounds – the tribal and 'racial' structural cleavages -, the NIF adopted the policies of its predecessors. Initially, the NIF adventurism was ideological expansion based on 'Islamic' tenets. The idea of treating all human beings equally, according to the Islamic teachings, bought the NIF the benefit of doubt including in Darfur. Locally, it launched a national project of socio-political and cultural engineering based on 'Islamic' law. This was accompanied by an expensive militarization of the whole country. The war against the SPLM/A was 'Islamicised' and thousands of young men were recruited and sent to fight the SPLM/A under the banner of '*jihad*'.

Since the mid 1990s, the NIF policies were in taters and various challenges and resistances started to increase. In 1996, a Massalit tribal armed movement started under the leadership of Khamis Ababikr, former security officer under the Nimeiry government and a personality who had been briefly jailed by the NIF security for open critiquing of the government.[35] The launch of this organised Massalit armed movement was a continuation of the disorganised and scattered self-defence militias of different tribes of Darfur. It was also a manifestation of the growing divide of militarised power relationships

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[32] Prunier
[33] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; pp. 54-56
[34] The NIF was originally called the Islamic Charter Front. It grew out during the 1960s as student support to the Muslim Brotherhood, a replica of the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood
[35] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books; p. 73

between tribal groups. At one stage, the Fur had its own militia group. Similarly, there was a growing tendency of Zaghawa armed grouping. These three tribal groups – the Fur, the Massalit and the Zaghawa – comprise the major armed movements of the future Darfur opposition groups. The individuals, most of them young people with little political or military experience, who organised and led these armed groups, were to become the prospective leaders who would claim representing the people of Darfur.

In 1996, the same year as the Massalit started their organised armed movement, young men from the Fur tribe that included the future to be a prominent leader, Abdel-wahid al-Nur, held a secret meeting in Khartoum. Their concern was the growing tension between their tribe and the 'Arab' tribes. The major concern was the growing of the structure known as the 'Arab gathering'. They also realised that the government was 'failing' to address the growing tension. Therefore, they decided to organize an armed movement and secretly launched money collection campaign from the Fur people in Khartoum and elsewhere in the Diaspora. In 1997, they met village elders *in Jebel Marra*, who led the Fur tribal militia in the confrontation with their 'Arab' counterparts during the 1980s. This meeting laid strong foundation for the future strong-armed movement.[36]

The third group, which is the Zaghawa armed movement, also started building up on the pre-existed tribal self-defence militia. Although stayed out of the 1987 – 1989 Fur – 'Arab' war, during the 1970s and 1980s, the Zaghawa had their own tribal militia as that clashed many times with the 'Arab' and other 'African' tribes such as the Fur over grazing and settlement land disputes respectively.[37] The Zaghawa people are known as successful merchants in comparison to the rest of Darfur's 'African' tribes. As successful merchants, at some point, they were victims of some of the Sudanese security personnel.[38] Some people from Darfur believe the successes in commerce/business of the Zaghawa people was seen by some of the 'Arabs' in the government security structure as a threat to the 'Arab' domination.[39] Besides, it is obvious that the dual presence of the Zaghawa people in both Sudan and Chad should have been a matter of concern to the government of Sudan mainly with the growing tendency of organised armed movements.

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[36] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books; pp.75-76
[37] Flint & de Waal, Prunier, Mamdani
[38] Author's interview with Salah al-Zain, a Sudanese of Darfur origin, Johannesburg , 29 November 2009
[39] Author's interview with Yaqub Abubaker, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 07 February 2009; Khaled, a young man from Darfur and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 06 December 2009; Mohammed Abubakar al-Tounesey, a Drfurian, Johannesburg, 09 December 2009

However, the Zaghawa took side with Idriss Debby of Chad in his fight to remove Hissen Habré from power. This would mean the Fur and the Zaghawa took an antagonistic positions as the Fur were supporters of Hissen Habré.[40] It would also mean that the Zaghawa militia would have received support from both the NIF and Libyan governments as both supported Idriss Debby. This antagonism between the Fur and the Zaghawa somehow changed during the mid-1990s, as all the Fur, the Massalit and Zaghawa concluded that the NIF government has been arming the 'Arab' militias against them, the 'African' tribes. By the end of 1990s, young Zaghawas embarked on forming armed group that served as a stepping-stone for the future bigger armed movement.

The grievance of the African tribal groups were the same: that the 'Arabs' encroached into their grazing lands and water territories; that their areas were marginalised from government development projects and power sharing; and, that the 'Arab' militia's attacks and atrocities were backed by the government in Khartoum-, these young men found a common ground to solidify their armed movements. In 2001 an alliances between the Fur and the Zaghawa armed groups was forged and they started to gather around the *Jebel Marra* Mountain for military training. They called their armed movement the Darfur Liberation Front (DLF). In February 2002, the DLF launched its first joint military operation and attacked government soldiers garrisoned in the south of *Jebel Marra* Mountain.[41]

On the other side of the flaming conflict, there was a growing grouping and re-grouping of 'Arab' militias under many different pretexts. In September 2002, the governor of Southern Darfur, Salah Ali al-Ghali, who was implicated for being a staunch supporter of the 'Arab gathering', supervised a conference known as the 'Conference of Peaceful co-existence for the Tribes in and around *Jebel Marra*. The conference is believed to have demanded for the 'empowerment' of nomadic 'Arab' tribes through 'development' programmes and called for an action to be taken against the Fur militias, who were allegedly supported by relatives from within the structures of Popular Police (PP) and Popular Defence Forces (PDF), and were creating 'trouble'. This was followed by intensive government moves to persuade 'Arab' tribal leaders to mobilise their militias and stand by the side of the government to confront the growing threat from armed movements around the *Jebel Marra* Mountain.[42] The Fur and

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[40] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; p. 61
[41] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books
[42] See Flint & de Waal 86.

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other 'African' tribes such as the Massalit and the Zaghawa saw such a move as an additional and organised support from the government to the 'Arab' tribes.[43]

In February 2003, the DLF changed its name into the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), in short SLA. The change in name came as a result of the growing political tendency that the fast growing armed movement was a resistance to represent all 'marginalised' and 'neglected' peoples in Darfur and beyond in other parts of Sudan.[44] In the meanwhile, the government of Sudan declared war against this rebellion. It launched an intensive ground and air attacks in and around *Jebel Marra* to bring into 'submission' the armed rebellion.

In February 2004, the town of Tawila, in the eastern parts of *Jebel Marra*, was attacked by well-organised military units, which were later identified as the *janjaweed* militia. This military attack was part of several 'Arab' militias' military attacks. Only this time around the attacks have become large and more devastating. The wider destruction included deaths of tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands,[45] burning down of many villages and the displacement of millions of people. Such a large-scale military attack was a sign of the shift from simple 'tribal' clash to more complex conflict along 'racial' line. The complexity lies on the involvement of the government by the side of the 'Arab' militias. The 'Arab' militia units, which were involved in attacking various villages in Darfur were armed and sponsored by the government's intelligence personnel.[46]

In the meanwhile, individual power squabbles and tribal divisions began to shatter down the SLA's military expansion. In order to resolve such internal frictions power sharing arrangement on tribal basis was made. This arrangment was to fill the ranks of the SLA structures along tribal basis. In May 2002, the SLA agreed that a chairmanship would be filled from the Fur; vice-chairmanship from the Massalit; and, the military commander from the Zaghawa. This brought Abdella Abaker, a Zaghawa, to a military commandership while Abdel-Wahed al-Nur, a Fur, became the chairman. After the death of Abdella Abaker, Minni Minawi, a Zaghawa, took over the military commandership. In opposing the leadership of Minni and Abdel-Wahed, a group called itself SLA/Unity launched a separate armed

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[43] Author interview with a Darfurian elderly in Khartoum, 5 July 2008
[44] Author's interview with Yaqub Abubaker, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 07 February 2009; Khaled, a young man from Darfur and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 06 December 2009
[45] According to the UN and various NGOs' account, more than 300, 000 thousand people died, and more than two million people wee displaced. According to the government of Sudan, the number of people died does not exceed ten thousand; and the number of people displaced not more than 450, 000
[46] Author interview with a Darfurian elderly in Khartoum, 5 July 2008

group.[47] Moreover, personal squabbles continued to shape the power struggle along personal and tribal lines that resulted in further fragmentation of the SLA. The leading figures who were involved in belligerent power struggle were Abdel-Wahed and Minni. In November 2005 the SLM/A split into two factions: the SLA/Abdul Wahed faction and the SLA/Minni faction. Minni Minawi signing an agreement with the central government of Sudan in 5 May 2006, in Abuja, followed this. The agreement endowed Minni with a position of an advisor to the president, Omar al-Bashir.[48] In the meanwhile, the split continued. The SLA/ Ahmed Abdel-Shafi faction, the Freewill faction, led by Abdel-Rahman Musa and even the SLA/Minni faction was divided into those who supported his deal with the government and those who opposed to it.[49]

In a separate move, an armed group, known as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), was in the formation process in the beginning of 2003. Many believe that the origin of the JEM can be traced back to the mid-1990s' discontent among various elements within different structures of the NIF government.[50] Overwhelmingly subscribers to the al-Turabi's 'Islamic revolution', these elements were serious threat to the junta in the main circle of the NIF government. This became clear when the "Black Book" was published and distributed in the streets of Khartoum in May 2000. This was followed by the government's action of crack down on al-Turabi's 'Islamist' circle of supporters. Between September 2000 and February 2001, many arrests were made from subscribers to al-Turabi's circle of power.[51]

The case for the movement within the government structures was moulded around the issues of neglect and marginalisation of, primarily, Darfur. Starting in 1996, concerned young people from Darfur and Kordofan were engaged in discussions about the political system of Sudan that had continued for long unchallenged. They identified that exclusively a minority group of people from Northern Sudan dominated the structures of the government. They also identified segregation of groups of people from outside the Northern Sudan. Such discussions and critique were spreading fast across all government structures in different parts of the country.[52] In the meanwhile, the internal crisis within the NIF led to the shattering of the national 'Islamic' project of re-engineering the socio-political and economic

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[47] Author's interview with Yaqub Abubaker, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 07 February 2009; Khaled, a young man from Darfur and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 06 December 2009

[48] In an Interview with a Sudanese journalist, Murtada el-Ghali, Khartoum, 16 July 2008, even after he signed a deal with the central government Minni never visited Darfur. This was a concern and many saw Minni as power hungry person

[49] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books

[50] Author's interview with Salah al-Zain, a Sudanese of Darfur origin, Johannesburg , 29 November 2009

[51] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books

[52] Author's interview with Salah al-Zain, a Sudanese of Darfur origin, Johannesburg , 29 November 2009; also See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books; pp. 102-103

structures of Sudan. It was obvious then; the failure of the NIF national project could contribute negatively to the growing frustration of various elements within the government's structures and among different tribal groupings. It was in such crises that the "Black Book of Sudan" was published and distributed.

Some believe the idea that the evolution of the JEM emanated from the al-Turabi's circle of power is contested.[53] However, there is no doubt that the oppositional politics that was moulded by al-Turabi against the al-Beshir circle contributed significantly to the ideological framework of the JEM. One of the prominent leaders of JEM is Khalil Ibrahim. He served in different capacity within the NIF structures. He served as a minister of health, finance and education in northern Darfur. He was also assigned by the government to raise a battalion of popular defence force, served, and participated in the war against the SPLM.A in south Sudan. Khalil's experience in different government positions and later in various NGOs made him to be a potential personality within the JEM leadership structure.[54]

In its inception, the JEM was identified as an amalgam of 'Islimist' elements and tribal faction mainly composed from a particular sub-clan of the Zaghawa tribe called Kobe. Most of the Kobe people are to be found in Chad; those relatively few who live in Darfur are located on the border between Darfur (Sudan) and Chad. Khalil Ibrahim hails from the Kobe sub-clan.[55] However, some believe that as the JEM begun to grow and take shape as a national armed movement, its members have become diversified.[56] This diversification entails membership and leadership positions with the structures of the JEM. Personalities from the Missiiriya and the Ta'aisha – 'Arab' tribes – as well as Massalit and Meidob – 'African' tribes were given high-ranking leadership positions of the JEM.[57]

However, the JEM was also not spared from internal squabbles. Few months into its official formation, accusation against tribal tendencies of some of the JEM leadership was on the rife. The *Kobe* clan was the target for dominating and controlling important portfolios of the JEM. In the beginning of 2004, a group broke away and formed their own-armed movement called the National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD). This breakaway group was composed mainly of a Zaghawa clan

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[53] Author's interview with Salah al-Zain, a Sudanese of Darfur origin, Johannesburg , 29 November 2009
[54] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books
[55] Flint & de Waal
[56] In an interview given to *Aljazeera* in 14 Nov. 2008, Frost over the World, in which Sudanese Ambassador in London Omar Sidiq and the speaker of JEM legislative assembly Dr Tahir El-Faki defended their side's positions. In one point of discussion, Dr El-Faki, himself from Kordofan, rejected the idea that JES has been a tribal militia and he argued JEM has been a national movement;
[57] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books

called *kapka*. Somehow, this split of JEM was linked to strong link between the breakaway faction and the involvement of Chad to 'destabilise' the JEM. As *kopka* is a clan from within Chad. In addition, the leaders of the breakaway such as Jibril Abdel-Kerim being former Chadian military personnel made the Chadian link not to be ignored. The presence of many *kapkas* within the Chadian and Sudanese governments' structures added the external involvement in the JEM internal crisis. In December 2004, the NMRD signed an agreement with the NCP/NIF government in Khartoum.[58]

The fragmentation of these rebel movements had nothing to do with the people of Darfur. It had everything to do with individual power squabbles. In order to protect their power personalities relied on their clans and/or tribes. There was no clear structure of inclusive representation of the Darfur people. Although the JEM claimed to be much better in representing various segments of the Darfur people, the creation of the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), a coalition mainly composed of Darfur civil society organizations, disputed the claim of representation that has been made by the JEM. Nevertheless, it has become very clear that although the Darfur armed groups built their bases on the pre-existed tribal militias and various factors to support their political cases; once the war erupted it was no longer about the people of Darfur.

Arms Flow: Enhancing the Means of Violence?

Arms flow to Darfur can be related to various sources. These sources include weapons that have already been available due to the Libya-Chad-Sudan triangular war that made Darfur military base. After Idriss Debby was helped to oust Hissen Habré in 1990, Darfur was left with large number of small and light weapons. This created opportunity for the poorly armed militia to scramble for better arsenal. Those who participated in the war in support of Debby, mainly the Zaghawa and the CDR, used the opportunity to arm themselves with better arsenal.[59] Significantly, it can be related to the arming of proxy militias by national and regional governments or regional power politics that involved Libya,

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[58] See Flint & de Waal
[59] Author's interview with Yaqub Abubaker, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 07 February 2009; Khaled, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 06 December 2009

Chad, Eritrea and other external actors.[60] Libya's involvement manifests a pivotal factor in explaining the prevalence of weapons and militarization of militias in Darfur. It also manifests the regionalisation and internationalisation of the Darfur conflict.

Right from the begging of his seizure of power in 1969, Libya's Gaddafi allowed a Chadian rebel movement[61] to have a rear base in Libya. This was an adjunct to the revival of an old border dispute between Libya and Chad, a claim over the *Aozou* strip. Besides, Gaddafi was not happy about Nimeiry's, the then president of Sudan, actions in various regards. Firstly, Nimeiry ignored Libya's call for the integration between Libya and Sudan that was seen by Gaddafi as a first step towards bigger regional integration. Secondly, Nimeiry kicked a Chadian guerrilla opposition, the Frolinat, out of Sudan (Darfur), mainly due to the crisis created in Darfur because of the in-fight between various Chadian guerrilla factions. For Gaddafi, kicking Chadian opposition out of Sudan was tantamount to opposing Libya's stand against the government in Chad.[62]

In 972, in search for allies to instigate his obsession of 'geo-politics', Gaddafi hosted Sidiq al-Mahdi, a Sudanese opposition leader. Such antagonist behaviour by Libya infuriated Nimeiry's government. In what looked as retaliation, Nimeiry resorted to any possible means to annoy Gaddafi. In such a move, the Nimeiry government supported a formation of a Chadian opposition that showed a strong opposition to Libya's involvement in Chad. Hissen Habré, the then potential future president of Chad, led this Chadian opposition. Habre's military forces, the *Arméés du Nord* (FAN), were given a base in Darfur from where they launched their attacks against Felix Malloum's government in Chad.[63]

The Libya-Chad-Sudan geo-politics has always affected Darfur. It, Darfur, has always been treated as a stepping-ground for the triangular conflict between Libya, Sudan and Chad. As is explained earlier in this chapter, this triangular geo-political crisis goes back to the 1970s. Between early 1970s and early 1980s, the Libyan military invaded Chad and controlled vast areas of the country.[64] This

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[60] See Pieter D. Wezeman (2007) *United Nations Arms Embargoes: Their Impacts on Arms Flows and Target Behaviour – Case Study:Darfur, Sudan, 2004-2006 -* Sipri, pp. 2-3

[61] Since 1965, Chad has been involved in one of Africa's longest civil wars. In 1966, a rebel movement called Frolinat (Front de Liberation Nationale du Tchad) was founded at Darfur by the support of the then government in Khartoum. Frolinat remained at the centre of the Chadian civil war and it launched military attacks against the Chad government from its base in Darfur. See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; pp. 42 - 45

[62] See Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.* London: Hurst & Company; pp. 45 - 46

[63] Prunier

[64] This invasion included the control of the disputed Aozou strip which was in 1994 given back to Chad by the order of the International Court of Justice; see Kathryn Sturman (2003) *The Rise of Libya as a Regional Player.* African Security Review, Vol 12, No 2; p. 110

Libyan invasion was backed by the involvement of France and the U.S. by the side of the Chad government. Such wars also involved Chadian opposition groups who were supported by the Libyan government.[65] Libya also trained and equipped up to 1 200 Sudanese militia who, in July 1976, crossed the dessert all the way from the southeastern Libya and attacked Khartoum, the capital of Sudan.[66] In 1990, with Idriss Debby seizing power in N'Djamena, the triangular geo-political crisis relatively changed its shape. This time around, the military confrontation shifted into wars through proxy militias. This in its turn has contributed immensely to the wide spread prevalence of arms and the growing of tribal militias into well-armed factions.

The support from Eritrea is also part of the regional rivalry. The relationship between the governments of Eritrea and Sudan deteriorated in the mid-1990s when the Eritrea's government accused the government of Sudan of supporting Eritrean "jihad' armed groups. In 1995, Eritrea severed its diplomatic relationship with Sudan. This was followed by an intensive involvement of the Eritrean government in supporting every Sudanese opposition group.[67] Although the severed relationship between the governments of Eritrea and Sudan improved after December 2005, Eritrea's support to the Darfur opposition groups and other Sudanese opposition groups continued. The improvement in relationship between the two governments was a calculated move. For the government of Eritrea, it was unlocking its ever-continued isolation from the international diplomatic arena that followed because of its militant approach and spoiler behaviour in the Horn of Africa. For Sudan, it was a strategic move to halt Eritrea's action from arming to Sudanese opposition groups.

Therefore, the governments of Libya, Sudan, Chad and Eritrea can be identified as the main sources of arms flow to Darfur. However, there were also other different sources of arms supply. These include arms received from the SPLM/A in a form of support and arms captured during military confrontations between the rebel groups and government soldiers. Sometimes this included attacking government garrisons to confiscate any thing from the 'enemy' such as goods that can be sold for cash including vehicles and other booties; it could also include trading different goods for arms. The rebels

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[65] Prunier
[66] Prunier
[67] The Sudanese opposition groups received support from the Eritrean government included the SPLM/A, the National Redemption Front (NRF) a group that was formed in Asmara in June 2006 and represented Darfur factions such as the Federal Democratic Alliance, the JEM and a faction of the SLM/A . See for example, Jeffrey Gettleman (2007) *Darfur Rebels Find Refuge in Eritrea, but Little Hope*. New York Times, October 5, 2007

also buy arms through a middleman whom, in most cases, they do not know who he works for.[68] In addition, 'black markets' such as the one which was functioning in Genena supplied 'illegal' weapons. The weapons sold in the Genena market were not something done in a hide. It was done under the government security watch. It was something in which the government security personnel were involved at. Besides, arms captured or looted in a battle would go for sale[69]

The 'rebels' such as the SLA factions and the JEM were on the opposite side to the government. Logistically, the 'rebels' resorted to various sources including predation. They taxed livestock owners in markets; they taxed business caravans; they confiscated vehicles and animals such as donkeys and horses – promising they would return them after peace has been 'achieved'. They hijacked government convoys (trucks and train) transporting different valuable items such as food, cloths as well as fuel. In the early years of the launch of the armed movements, frustrated, angered and unemployed young men flocked in droves to join the rebels. This also included forced conscription. A family, which include three young men, would be forced to send one for conscription. Later on, with the continuous fragmentation of the rebel groups, many young people abandoned the rebel groups and sought refuge in various places within Sudan and in other African countries, the Middle East, Europe and the U.S. Yet, the rebel groups mainly the JEM continued to grow.[70]

The 'Arab' militias known as the *Janjaweed* were under the supervision of the government of Sudan. They have received weapons and a regular supply of ammunition from the security agents of the government including support from local administrative structures of the government. Government supplies were in some cases transported by aircrafts, which most Darfuris have witnessed.[71] Moreover, the *Janjaweed* remained part of the government military structure. In most cases, mainly after the rebels launched their guerrilla style attacks against the government garrisons it became difficult to differentiate between the *Janjaweed* and the government forces.[72] However, in an interview with David Frost of Aljazeera, Assistant to the President of Sudan government, Nafie Ali Nafie, rejected as allegation that the government of Sudan supports the Janjaweed. He said:

> The term Janjaweed is a very loose term. It has different meaning to different people. For us, the government of Sudan, if it [janjaweed] means those bandits people who are not part of the government system that is

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[68] Author's interview with Alfarjoone, former military commander in the SLA military structure; Khartoum 15 July, 2008. Alfarjoone is one of those who joined the government after signing the DPA in 2004 in Abuja
[69] Author's interview with Dr Mudawi, SUDO manager, Khartoum, 01 July 2008
[70] Author's interview with Yaqub Abubaker, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 07 February 2009; Khaled, a young man from the Zaghawa and former soldier of the SLA, Johannesburg, 06 December 2009
[71] Author's interviews with Yaqub and Khaled
[72] See Julie Flint & Alex de Waal (2008) Darfur: A New History of a Long War. London: Zed Books, pp. 35-36

something else. But it has been used to mean some of the Popular Defese Forces that fought alongside with the government of Sudan; we believe those forces [which] are part or hundred percent under the control of the government are not the so called Janjaweed… And, if they are again talking about those whom we call the Popular Defense Forces in Darfur, they are from different tribes. It is also true to say that most of them are from the Arab tribes; simply because most of the rebels are from the other tribes. So it is not that the government is supporting the Arab tribes to massacre or fight the non-Arab tribes. They are all Sudanese; and we all are Africans.73

The arms flow to Darfur ranges from formal or illegal state-to-state arms transfer; state-to-rebel groups/ militia (this could be procurement and/or aid) and, illegal procurement from so-called 'black markets'. In whichever way, the significance of arms transfers to the expansion (formations and fragmentations) of armed groups as examined in section one above is a crucial point of emphasis of this chapter. This is because the expansion of armed groups lies at the centre of the changing power relationships in Darfur in particular and Sudan in general. Controlling Darfur has shifted from the only strong government and weaker militias to multi-actors who posses the means of violence as the government does. As is explained in the following section, the rebel groups posses not only a means of violence *per se*, but also a means of violence, which can force the government to seat on a table of negotiation for power sharing.

Peace for Power, or Power for Peace?

In a war situation - like the one in Darfur - 'peace' process comes partly as a result of a growing 'threat' from rebel groups and partly from the pressure imposed by various international actors on both warring parties. Both the 'threat' and the 'pressure' by international actors are important factors in examining the issue of 'peace' in Darfur. Yet, these two factors are nothing but manifestations of other forms of extended power struggle. The expansion of armed rebel groups in Darfur was resulted by the government's militarization processes of the structural cleavages existed between several tribes. Although the purpose of the militarization of structural cleavages - by fuelling the pre-existing tensions - was to crush any 'threat' and preserve the power at hand, it fired back and the fuel that was teemed down created bigger 'threat'; well armed rebellion. Besides, the humanitarian crises resulted in by the war invited, in addition to those that have been part of the crises, different international actors – with various agendas - to be involved. Therefore, the only platform, which could accommodate all the actors

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73 See Frost Over the World, Aljazeera 02 May 2008, Interview Dr Nafie Ali Nafie, Assistant to the President of Sudan

– the government, the rebel groups and the international actors –, would be talking-peace. Obviously, talking-peace was meant for the people of Darfur, who happened to be in a vulnerable position due to the war. What remains vague is whether the aforementioned actors need peace to settle down their power struggle or they need power to agree on peace.

Bigger armed groups such as the SLA and the JEM have replaced the 'African' tribal militias of Darfur. The 'Arab' militias remained as they were or have been integrated to the government's military structures. In addition to its regular Defense Forces, the NIF military structure includes the longstanding Popular Defense Forces, the Border Intelligence Guard, and the Central Reserve Police. The government has changed its strategy of militarising the structural cleavages to manipulating differences within the SLA and JEM structures to weaken the bigger 'threat'. This strategy includes bribing influential figures within the structures of the rebel groups and promises of positions in the government structures.[74] This strategy is divide-and-fragment to eliminate the 'threat'. This strategy was tried in south Sudan when in 1991 the SPLM/A split into two.[75] Besides, the government also considers that peace could be achieved without engaging with the rebel movements. Nafie Ali Nafie, in his interview with Aljazeera said:

> The government is ready and has always been ready to come to negotiation … and the other part of it, peace in Darfur should not always be linked with the acceptance of the rebel movements to come for negotiations. We can establish peace by providing security, by helping people to go back to their villages and normalise their life and that is what we are doing and this where we need the international community to assist people to normalise their life.[76]

Humanitarian crisis in Darfur has reached a 'shocking' stage in 2003 – 2004. Hundreds of thousands of people have died due to the war, starvation and diseases. Over two million people have fled their villages.[77] Massive international interventions have followed. These international interventions involved actors such as the UN and its numerous agencies, African Union (AU), Union of Arab League

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[74] Author's interview with a Sudanese journalist, Murtada el-Ghali, Khartoum, 16 July 2008

[75] In 1991, the SPLM/A split into the faction led by John Garang (known as Torit group) and another faction led by Riek Machar (known as Nasir group).

[76] See Frost Over the World, Aljazeera 02 May 2008, Interview Dr Nafie Ali Nafie, Assistant to the President of Sudan

[77] See for example the Global Researcher (Sept. 2008) Crisis in Darfur: Is There Any Hope for Peace? CQ Press; Vol 2, No. 9

(UoAL), and various NGOs and IGOs. On the sideshow, governments of China, the U.S., Egypt, Libya and Israel, among other countries, have remained vigilant.[78]

Meanwhile, the NIF/ NCP government was also busy signing peace agreements with the SPLM/A. Between 2002 and 2005, the NCP government and the SPLM/A signed several agreements. These agreements include: the Machakos Protocol, which was signed in 20 July, 2002; Agreement on Security Arrangements, which was signed in 25 September, 2003; Agreement on Wealth Sharing, which was signed in 7 January, 2004; Agreement on Power Sharing, which was signed in 26 May, 2004; Protocol on Southern Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains, which was signed in 26 May, 2004; Protocol on the disputed Abyei Area, which was signed in 26 May, 2004; and culminated by the signature on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 in Naivasha, Kenya. This agreement brought into power the SPLM/A as an autonomous government of the south Sudan. It also provides the south Sudan with a self-determination exercise to be conducted through a referendum in 2011 in which the people of south Sudan will decide on whether to form a separate independent state.

The war in Darfur, within the context of changing power relationships, is not different from the war in south Sudan. In both cases, two main actors, which contend for power, can be identified. In south Sudan, it was the central government of Sudan and the SPLM/A. Similarly, in Darfur it is the rebel-armed groups such as the SLA and the JEM, and the central government. The only difference could be that the SPLM/A won a self-determination to form own separate 'state'. It is very important to underline here that these power struggles are on behalf of the people each side claiming to represent, but not about the people. As is explained in the introduction of this chapter, power refers to the political economy, which determines the socio-political and economic relationships – who controls and who has the say - between various stakeholders within Darfur and beyond.

Between Sept. 2003 and early 2010, several preparations and peace talks have been conducted to 'solve' the crises in Darfur. The preparations included 'efforts' to unite fragmented Darfur factions so that they could negotiate as a united force.[79] The peace talks included various initiatives to bring several Darfur factions – in most cases separately – to the negotiation table with the government. For example, in April 2004 under the auspices of the Chadian leader Idriss Debby the government of Sudan agreed to

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[78] Alex de Waal in his interview with David Morse at talknationradio, 21 November 2006, explained the U.S. and England intervention by the side of the African Union (AU) as a pressure to solve the problem in Darfur
[79] For example, in October 2007 the SPLM/A invited several Darfur armed factions in Juba, the capital of south Sudan, to engage in talks so that they could unify their groups ahead of the Libya talk scheduled for the end of October 2007 (one week after the Juba 'unification' meeting); see aljazeera report by Mohamed Vall, 22 October 2007.

sit with the rebel groups and negotiate. In July and August 2004, two failed negotiation attempts were made in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Abuja, Nigeria – respectively - between some SLA and JEM factions and the government of Sudan. One faction, the SLA/Minni faction, signed a deal with the government in 5 May 2005 in Abuja, which is known as the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). In November 2007, another failed attempt of peace talk was conducted in Sirte, Libya.

In February 2010, the main JEM faction led by Khalil Ibrahim entered into a successive peace negotiations with the government of Sudan in the Qatari capital, in Doha. However, parallel to this peace-talk process the government also entered into a peace negotiation with a newly formed coalition, mainly composed of 'civil society' entities known as the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) in March 2010. The Doha negotiation did not include the SLA/Abdul-Wahed faction, an important representation of the Fur tribe.[80] Abdel-Wahed has been continuously isolated from the military and political activities on the ground and has been living in France for quite long time comparing to its responsibility as a leader.[81]

The fragmentation of the rebel groups can largely be attributed to their internal power squabbles. The disagreements, the agreements and the preparations of the rebel groups to participate in 'peace' talks have always been influenced by the calculations of who gains more out of the deal.[82] The government's interest in participating in the peace talks can be related to the strategy of further dividing the rebel groups by manipulating the rebel groups' internal power squabbles. In addition, the government uses the peace talk exercise as a platform to improve its international reputation. One reason has been to divert the accusations against the government of arming the janjaweed and of being responsible for the humanitarian disaster occurred in Darfur.[83]

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[80] See report by Enough Project (5 April, 2010) *The Darfur Peace Process: Recipe for a Bad Deal*? Accessed online at: (http://www.enoughproject.org/Darfur-Peace-Process)
[81] Author's via-email interview in 23 April, 2010 with a former SLA/Abdel-Wahed faction who has been living in France since 2005
[82] For example, in an interview with David Morse, talknationradio on November 21, 2006, Alex de Waal, who participated in the negotiation processes, explained that in the May 2006 DPA agreement, in signing the deal with the government Minni Minawi insisted in getting the highest position offered to the rebel groups. This position was known as a Senior Assistant to the President, which would theoretically mean number four after the president. This indicated that had Abdul-Wahed been willing to sign the agreement, there would have been a disagreement on who should get the position; or alternatively a similar post would have coined etc.
[83] For example, the arrest warrant issued in July 2008 by the International Criminal Court for the arrest of Omer al-Beshir has left the government of Sudan vulnerable. Vulnerable in the sense that fear of losing power due to international pressure which could mean not only the arrest of al-Bashir but would also mean the personalities surrounding al-Bashir could lose power too. See, for example, Africa Confidential Analysis (23 January, 2009) *Sudan: New Politics, New Threats*. African Confidential, Vol. 50, No 2, p. 6

In the international tune, the author argues that the main factor, which attracted international actors to be involved in the struggle over power in Darfur, is the issue of oil. The issue of oil and the war in Darfur is not that the war has been conducted as a clearing-up mechanism to drill-out the oil as was the case in south Sudan; but the indications that the oil output in the region, in which Darfur is included (large parts of the Horn of Africa including Chad), is expected to increase by ninety-one percent in the next few decades should not be ignored. In other words, the expected increase in oil output in the region will increase the competition to control the oil of the region through every possible opportunity. A war situation is one such good opportunity as it creates avenues for intervention such as the peace-talk processes and the need of humanitarian situation.

The race to control oil-rich regions mainly by the global major powers such as the U.S., UK and China have been reflected in their interventions in the peace process between the government of Sudan and various rebel groups. These interventions, in most cases behind the scenes, contributed significantly to bringing on negotiation tables both the government and the rebels. The U.S. played a determinant role in the peace process between the NIF/NCP government and the SPLM/A that mainly started in 2001 and culminated by the signing of the CPA in 2005.[84] This intervention begun with some closed discussions between the government of Sudan and the George W Bush Administration,[85] which led to the readiness by the U.S. to lift its long held economic sanction against the NIF/NCP of Sudan.[86]

The argument is that such interventions cannot be simplistically seen in peace talks and humanitarian eyes. It should be seen as a long-term strategic approach; and the strategic importance of controlling oil-rich regions is not a short-term plan. That is why, for example, the U.S. and France have recently intensified their race to bring under their control the oil-rich regions of North and West Africa

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[84] In Sept. 2001 the UN lifted the largely symbolic sanction in Sudan. Since 2002, the U.S. led delegation that included the Britain and Norway embarked on intensive and consistent communications with both the Sudan government and the SPLM/A to pressurise them engage in peace dialogue - see for example, Norm Dixon (Aug. 2004) *Crisis in Sudan: Oil Profits Behind Tears in Darfur*. Accsessed online at: http://www.counterpunch.org/dixon08092004.html. Also, in an interview with a journalist in a film entitled 'The Longest War - Sudan' produced by Paul Moorcraft and Irwin Armstrong Nhial Deng, former SPLM Secretary of Foreign Affairs, admits that the role of the U.S. and Britain describing it as 'critical''.

[85] It is believed that in order to ease its tension with the U.S. over Sudan's engagement in sponsoring global acts of terrorism, the NCP government in Sudan started to cooperate with U.S. by providing 'necessary information' – see Gérard Prunier (2005) *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide*. London: Hurst & Company; p. 139. However, cooperation on combating terrorism alone would not be good enough for the U.S. to consider lifting sanction against Sudan and pressurise the SPLM to engage in peace talks with the government. In an interview with talknationradio, James A. Paul, executive director global policy forum, explained that head of Sudanese Intelligence service made a number of trips to Washington for secret talks with the CIA in which oil involved under table somehow

[86] Also see Greg Miller and Josh Meyer (11 June, 2007) U.S. relies on Sudan despite condemning it: The nation accused of aiding the killings in Darfur provides spies in Iraq. In return, it gets access in Washington. Accessed online at: http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg ussudan11jun11,0,2877081.story?page=2&coll=la-home-center

under the cover of military agreements.[87] The Darfur war cannot be seen in isolation from the issues that affect Sudan as a country. Neither can it be a separate issue from the regional and international dynamics. To that extent, some would make a parallel between the humanitarian intervention in Darfur and that of King Leopold II's intervention in the Congo during the late 1800s.[88] It remains obscure, even for some of the rebel leaders let alone the majority foot soldiers, that what direction the war has been following. So many actors and so many invisible hands have been involved in it.[89]

Conclusion

The militarization of the structural cleavages, through arming rival tribal militias, remains the main trigger of the war erupted in Darfur as it did in 2003. This chapter has applied this argument as a point of departure to analyse the war as a mechanism for shaping the power relationships in Sudan. In doing so, it explains that shaping or re-shaping the pre-existed power relationships cannot be a wily Nelly process. Although this chapter puts war as unavoidable mechanism, it does not depict war as a necessary mechanism. In Darfur, where several pre-exited factors had been creating environment conductive to clashes, arming rival groups with advanced means of violence and with impunity made war unavoidable.

What is also important to note is that when the war erupted it did not transform the pre-existed tribal clashes into advanced tribal wars. It turned into a war between the central government and armed rebellion at one time composed of one tribe and at another composed of different tribal groups including from some of the Arab tribes, whom the government prefer to ally with. The government armed rival groups. As a response, the rebel groups declared war against the government. The eruption of the war in Darfur has temporarily shifted the tribal tensions over issues grazing and water rights to comprehensive grievances of marginalisation, neglect and domination. Marginalisation and the marginalised, neglect

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[87] See Julio Godoy (11 August, 2008) U.S. and France Begin a Great Game in Africa. IPS News; accessed online at: http://www.ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=25032

[88] See 'The quest for oil in Sudan', talknationradio, David Morse and James A. Paul, executive director global policy forum, explain on how the humanitarian intervention in Darfur and King Leopold's intervention in Congo could be paralleled: King Leopold used humanitarian agencies to take-over the resources in Congo. There was a lot of talk in Belgium and France that was sponsored by Leopold and his people about the need to stop the 'Arab slave trade' – so it was based on a kind of movement against the 'Arab slave trade'. They refer to Adam Hochschild (1998) who has published a book entitled *A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa.*

[89] Author's interview with Alfarjoone, former military commander in the SLA military structure; Khartoum 15 July, 2008. Alfarjoone is one of those who joined the government after signing the DPA in 2004 in Abuja

and the neglected; and, domination and dominated are none but manifestations of power struggle. This is why the war that erupted in Darfur in 2003 becomes a war of political economy.

The war in Darfur has created an environment whereby many young Darfur with less political experience and exposure to be groomed as the future elites in the politics of Sudan. This has become clear as these future elites were engaged in in-fights of power squabbles that resulted in confrontations and fragmentations. The power squabbles are of personalities. However, as these personalities seek support from own clan or tribe the power struggle takes a wider form. Beyond the internal power squabbles, the war in Darfur serves as a mechanism of power struggle in a bigger form, which is with those political elites who are in control of the government structures.

This struggle over power has never been in isolation outside the global dynamics. Right from its inception, the war that erupted in Darfur in 2003 was accompanied by regional and international involvements. The militarization of the structural differences in Darfur was not the sole invent of the central government of Sudan by the support of Libya. It also involved Libya as well as Chad under the supervision of France and the U.S. Later on, the involvement also included Eritrea. After the war has erupted, the actors involved in the war, directly or indirectly, have increased. Some international actors, including NGOs, civil society organizations, celebrities made their focus the humanitarian crises created due to the war. Other international actors such as the UN, the AU and the Arab League have been busy in arranging and hosting 'peace-talks'. Whereas the major powers such as the U.S. and China have been exercising their veto powers in support or against the government of Sudan while at the same time balance their future interests through under table talks and try to broker peace agreements behind the scenes as they did in the case of south Sudan.