

RESOURCE CONFLICT AS A FACTOR IN THE DARFUR CRISIS IN SUDAN

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Abstract

The paper will deal with the broader understanding of the current crisis in Darfur, Sudan. A special focus should be on the major adaptational groups in Darfur and we should seek to develop a perspective that allows us to see the dynamic interrelationships of Darfurian agro-pastoral communities, and how varying external and internal circumstances may produce peaceful relationships as well as violent ones. It opens for an understanding of the distribution of groups, seeing their migration around the region. We can see how adaptive processes, such as coping with drought, shift between agriculture and pastoralism etc. have been not only adaptive processes, but have also been characterised by shifts in identities. And we can see how such links affect the boundaries between groups, making them fluid rather than fixed and how the groups, seen as "moral communities", might not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of ethnic groups or eco-zones. Furthermore it allows us to see the development of the contemporary states in a wider perspective, seeing how national boundaries have interfered with existing links between groups, how problems between groups on the borders become nation state problems, and how commercialisation and general modernisation shape the adaptive responses of groups. We also see innovative processes, e.g. smuggling, becoming important strategies for people living on the borderland. Similarly the arming of the states as well as local groups, give many problems an escalating character. Applying the perspective will also show that the groups have not been static entities, captured within their "history" and "traditions". Contrary to claims from the GOS there has always been differentiation, people who succeed and people who fail. Poor people are vulnerable during droughts, rich people might benefit from the same drought. Following up on such points would require discussions on land tenure issues and the extent to which traditional land tenure systems can be adhered to or modified in order to return to a more peaceful situation in the area. Can IDPs return be able to use their lands without major confrontations with whoever moved into their territory after they left? The return of refugees and the revival of local economic life, both in agriculture and in the sense of opening of pastoral migration routes are keys to normalization but this requires a platform that the parties can accept. Agricultural land has been destroyed, and irrigation ditches smashed and these are more than technical issues. Such structures signify that land is being used, and when such signs are gone land grabbing can go on.

Introduction: the current conflict

The general focus of this paper is the conflict in Darfur. The humanitarian disaster unleashed by the conflict in Darfur has led to the dislocation of over a million people. The escalation of the crisis has attracted the attention of the international community and the international media. The conflict has led to allegations of acts of genocide in Darfur and the dispatch of UN/AU observers following the issuance of a UN Security Council resolution on the conflict in Darfur. Several heads of state and government have voiced their serious concern about the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. For the first time, two US Secretaries of State and a couple of other leaders have visited the area. The African Union has also dispatched a force of Peacekeepers to the area. These international interventions and the recent signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) have added a new impetus to the negotiations between the main rebel groups in Darfur, namely, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Government of Sudan. On July 5, 2005, the representatives of SLM/A, JEM and the Government of Sudan signed a "Declaration of Principles for the Resolution of the Sudanese Conflict in Darfur," under the auspices of the African Union (AU). However, progress is slow and the negotiations in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, is continuing.

While the signing of the Declaration of Principles is a major step towards the resolution of the conflict, there is concern that the tendency to simplify the issues, especially in the international media, may undermine the search for a sustainable solution. It is felt that there is a clear information gap to show the complexity of the situation, the diversity of the actors and stakeholders, and the local peculiarities as well as the broad national dimension of the causes of the conflict in Darfur. Part of the problem lies in the fact that some of the conflicts, at least as argued by some of the parties involved, is a reaction to the general peace agreement between the North and South of Sudan. Or rather, a reaction to the fact that the agreement was allowed to be concluded by the two major warring parties, GOS and SPLM/A themselves, excluding the other political forces. There are many reasons for why this had to be the case, but the short term result is a situation in which we clearly see that there is a difference between ending the civil war in itself, and the provision of an overall political solution to the country. But it could also be argued that whereas the north-south conflict had its roots in a political ideology, based on the late John Garang's "New Sudan" vision, the new conflicts, as exemplified by the Darfur situation, are characterised by the absence of a unified political demand. Rather, they are characterized by a complex situation in which national political claims of some go together with local, regional and ethnic claims of others, and they are all mixed with a variety of non-political dynamics such as tensions between tribes over land, a long history of criminal behaviour such as former highway robbers now being among the fighters, and protection and expansion of economic interests of new

groups that have benefited from the emergence of the new and globalized economies. All this creates a situation in which violence becomes contagious, and spreads through many processes and channels. A top-down solution to this type of conflict, based on the logic of the north-south agreement seems to be doomed to run into problems. Hence, it is no surprise that the on-going negotiations in Abuja, and the calls from the international community for a political solution, seems to be in trouble.

We are back, then, with a focus on the need for a solution to the Darfur problem that is also an acceptable solution within the overall national situation in Sudan. This is important as the conflict in Darfur is a direct challenge to the national unity of the country. Several important conclusions arise. First, there is a need to address the spread of the means of violence. Many armed groups have emerged that are not controlled by the state. They have their own organizations, administrations, leadership etc. This has led to a spread of the means of violence across a landscape that can not easily be controlled. Second, these violent organizations all compete for state power, which means that the state or the regime must react to their existence. And as they have limited control, state violence is the only means by which they can react. If the state wins, fine, if they do not, such movements tend to weaken the state, and might also take over the state and start a re-building of the state according to their own logic. Chad shows this logic, and is now in a rebuilding phase after Idris Debbey won against Hissen Habre and got control of the Chadian state. In Sudan the war in the south, as well as the problems in Darfur can be seen as the types of wars that challenge the state, and which will influence what type of state we will see in the future. All the warring parties in Darfur operate as such independent violent groups, they tax people in the areas in which they have their bases and they engage in commercial activities in the region or they tax commercial groups engaged in their areas, thus appearing also as “state-like” actors not only in their use of violence but also in their claims to civilian power. The organizations also have economic interests of their own, and are involved in economic activities such as cross border trade of various sorts. Areas controlled by violent organizations therefore appear as organized units with a lot of regular activities going on. And the participants may also come from the state sector. Due to the various crises that have hit the states during the 1980s and 90s (debt burden, Structural Adjustment Packages etc) the state sector has shrunk and left many civil servants and military people as free floating individuals with competences that can be exploited in such border situations. But these are not local games only. International support from global and regional powers is crucial, in terms of financial and military assistance, and of neighbouring states turning a blind eye on cross-border activities. An important part of the analysis must therefore also be focused on the strategic interests of various players in the region. As for Chad and Sudan themselves, they have always played a part in each other wars, by supporting rebel movements or by supporting regimes and allowing them to use bases on each other’s territories. USA with a view on the geopolitical position in a region close to the Middle East, with their interests in oil, their anti-Libyan stand in the 1980s and now also their “war on terror”. France, as an old colonial power in the region with political and economic interests. Libya as a

neighbour, but also as an Arab and Muslim country, Nigeria, Cameroon etc. etc. Thus we see a dual development, in which external powers have helped in building military force and arming organizations, and local, regional and national developments have provided situations that have created a need to use them.

It is at this point that the discontent among local pastoralists and cultivators, their discontent with government tax levels, their anger at the land grabbing of non-regional political elites, and their animosity against their neighbours due to resettlement, changed migration routes and other drought-produced effects can get an outlet. Which brings me to the central theme of this paper.

The local and regional level – adaptations, land and land tenure

The paper represents an attempt to deal with one, arguably one of the most important, factors of the crisis, the one of land, land tenure and the relationship between various adaptive groups in the region. In the following I seek to develop a perspective that allows us to see the dynamic interrelationships of Darfurian agro-pastoral communities, and how varying external and internal circumstances may produce peaceful relationships as well as violent ones. It opens for an understanding of the distribution of groups, seeing their migration around the region. We can see how adaptive processes, such as coping with drought, shift between agriculture and pastoralism etc. have been not only adaptive processes, but have also been characterised by shifts in identities. And we can see how such links affect the boundaries between groups, making them fluid rather than fixed and how the groups, seen as “moral communities”, might not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of ethnic groups or eco-zones. Furthermore it allows us to see the development of the contemporary states in a wider perspective, seeing how national boundaries have interfered with existing links between groups, how problems between groups on the borders become nation state problems, and how commercialisation and general modernisation shape the adaptive responses of groups. We also see innovative processes, e.g. smuggling, becoming important strategies for people living on the borderland. Similarly the arming of the states as well as local groups, give many problems an escalating character. Applying the perspective will also show that the groups have not been static entities, captured within their “history” and “traditions”. Contrary to claims from the GOS there has always been differentiation, people who succeed and people who fail. Poor people are vulnerable during droughts, rich people might benefit from the same drought. Following up on such points would require discussions on land tenure issues and the extent to which traditional land tenure systems can be adhered to or modified in order to return to a more peaceful situation in the area. Can IDPs return be able to use their lands without major confrontations with whoever moved into their territory after they left ? The return of refugees and the revival of local economic life, both in agriculture and in the sense of opening of pastoral migration routes are keys to normalization but this requires a platform that the parties can accept. Agricultural

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Traditional agricultural production systems in Darfur.

Darfur has a current population of some 3.5 to 4 mill. people who are engaged in five major production systems (Swift and Gray 1989). There is what they call the qoz/wadi farming of North Darfur and South Darfur, both being similar in household based millet cultivation and animal keeping, but with the more reliable rains in the south permitting larger and more stable yields, and more varied crops. In the Jebel Marra area mixed farming is found. Terracing and concentration of runoff water, as well as the existence of some perennial streams, allows simple irrigation (shadouf) systems to work. People cultivate millet and sorghum, combined with irrigated citrus, onions, chillies and okra, small quantities of wheat and also groundnuts. The pastoral systems in the region also vary along a north south axis. The pastoralists in the north are mainly depending on camel sheep and goats, whereas cattle pastoralism dominates the south. The major cultivating tribes in Darfur are the Fur, the Berti and the Masalit. Two major groups of camel nomads to the north are Zagahwa and Meidob, the dominant cattle nomads in the south are the Baggara, such as Rizeigat, Habbaniya and Beni Halba.

Still the dominant economic unit involved in agriculture is the family farm, consisting of husband, wife and children. Millet grown on qoz-soil and sorghum grown on the alluvial soils, were and still are staple crops. However, the risk of crop failure is always there, due to drought, locust and pests. Therefore alternative income possibilities are important, primarily livestock, but also other agricultural crops as well as gathering fruits, seeds and roots from wild plants. The rotation of cultivated plots was an important characteristic, as no chemical fertiliser was available, but due to population increase people are forced to stay longer on the land, thereby creating processes of degradation. Time studies have shown that about half of a man's labour and most of a woman's labour was taken up with millet (dukhn) and sorghum (dura) in the rainy season, which then is a major constraint on what other crops can be cultivated and other activities engaged in. In the areas where irrigation is possible labour input is balanced out on more crops. For the individual unit the access to land was primarily through descent, and the land was allocated by the shaykh. Although rotation of land was common in earlier times, increasing population pressure has led to a situation in which people cultivate their plots more or less continuously.

Usufruct rights in land and one's own capacity to work are thus the two factors that are under the control of the units themselves. But the management is not only dependent on those factors, but are also interrelated with a host of other factors. The market links have allowed for a certain regional division of labour, in which different economic units have been able to exploit the most favourable

environments, and then get access to other crops through the market. Exchanges of crops, live animals, meat and milk between cultivators and pastoralists is one example. When it comes to labour, the existence of the famous *nafir* (see Barth 1967, Manger, ed, 1987) allows the farmers to solve bottlenecks in the production, particularly weeding. However, this system also carries constraints, as it was not possible traditionally to buy labour for weeding, a fact that worked as a check on differentiation, but at the same time also limited capital accumulation. In the traditional system animals constituted the main investment link. It is documented for the Fur, for instance, that people accumulated animals locally and thereby had a buffer against crop failures, or if they got a number of animals that created problems for local production certain units would opt for a strategy of nomadisation, joining a Baggara group and migrate with them (Haaland 1972).

The basic elements of this cultivation system is still existing in the regions, although changes are also occurring. Commercialisation has made people introduce crops such as sesame, okra, hibiscus, chilli, onion, mango, and oranges, requiring irrigation. Such units may then opt to buy consumer goods instead of growing them themselves. Fruit growing in Jebel Marra is part of this transformation. One of the major characteristics of this transformation is that the basic economic system is being marginalised, keeping people engaged in that system trapped in a poverty spiral produced by all the constraints on the local production system. This dual system has evolved in the Sudan for many decades, and the result is marginalisation of some, relative success to others.

General land tenure situation in Darfur

In Darfur there were independent sultanates until the Turco-Egyptian conquest in the 1870s, then they rallied to the Mahdi, and then against the Mahdist regime when the oppression from Omdurman became too much. The sultanate was revived after the Mahdia, but was finally abolished in 1916 by the British. But many of the institutions from the old sultanate were retained under Native Administration, based on earlier systems of *magdumates* divided into recognised tribal areas, *dars*. In addition the Sultan could distribute fiefs, *hakura*, to supporters and give them documents of ownership, very often on the best land. Although overwhelmingly Muslim, Darfur is not Arab, a fact that also plays a role in the ethnic based conflicts. The various groups have different land tenure systems. Some based on the Fur model with very special allocation of parcels for local kinship groups, and with outsiders getting access to land by paying rent, a rent that was shared among the landholding families. With the development of gum arabic the collection of such rents increased in importance. The *hakura* system is based on direct allocation from the Sultan, and could be for a tribe or be more private and hereditary (as long as the political patron was able to protect the rights). Once a leader was is overthrown, rights would lapse. In the land of the pastoral groups, such as the Baggara in the south and the camel nomads (*Zaghawa*, *Meidob*) in the north, the above system was absent. The

movement of the nomads of course make this system impossible. Instead we get the normal communal system, based on common tribal rights within a dar area, and then rights along migration routes. As the difference in land use follow ethnic and racial lines, the conflicts emerging from this become particularly complex. Through the British policies of Native Administration the Arabs strengthened their hand in the competitive game over the Darfur resources, although on a larger level the area lost out in the national political game and remained a region primarily based on traditional, subsistence activities. However, in spite of the existence of a multitude of land rights, a Darfurean based administration managed for long periods to keep reasonable stability between the Fur and incoming Baggara and other Arab tribes.

Land tenure issues were also complicated through commercial developments. As the pastoralist Arabs came from outside, the main commercial groups, primarily jellaba traders, were also outsiders, from the Nile Valley. Such groups operated out of the new urban areas in the province, controlling auction markets for cash crops such as groundnuts, gum-arabic, sesame, kerkade and melon seeds. Such traders got credit, they had access to transport and they also came to control the trade of imported goods like sugar, textile and salt. The commercial groups were organised in networks in which big merchants in towns related down-wards to agents at regional and local levels. Through this they were able to control trade from the production level to the export level (Manger, ed. 1984). This organisation was common both for cultivated crops as well as animals, the latter being linked to the export markets in Omdurman. Today private investors export animals to Saudi Arabia (Hamari sheep). Through these processes commercialisation took hold at a local level (e.g. Barth 1967) and introduced new patterns of land use in certain areas, as well as over time transforming productive relations and affecting local and regional stratification systems. It is through these developments that the link between the commercial groups and the administrative layers of government, and also that of politics, developed. Both groups could benefit each other in enriching each other and establishing themselves as elite groups.

The abolition of Native Administration in the 1970s and the introductions of the council system did not have much impact on the village level, but higher up in the system it helped undermined the tribal elite and gave power to the commercially based groups mentioned above. As many of them were outsiders it created problems vis-à-vis the Darfureans. But the system also opened the way for new individuals and groups within Darfur itself to establish themselves in positions of leadership. Such a development, combined with the drought and political violence in Chad, led to large population movements from Northern Darfur and Chad into the central belt of farmers, just as the local cultivation was expanding through commercialisation etc. And as temporary movement developed into permanent residence, leading to conflicts, the legitimatisation of the administrative system eroded and left no-one in control. The regionalisation of the 1980s left the top levels of the regional administration in Fur hands, but there was a developing friction in tribal politics. At the same time regional

authorities did not receive revenue enough from the centre to deal with the drought, and no foreign aid was coming due to the central governments denial of the facts, and the governor of Darfur resigned in 1983.

Tenure situation in Sudan

The situation in Sudan is not unlike the general African situation, in which indigenous land tenure systems are specific to particular ethnic groups, and has evolved in the interaction of culture and environment over the centuries. They have been defined by factors discussed above: local climate and ecology, the quality of land resources, population density, level of agricultural technology, crops, markets, kinship organisation, inheritance patterns, settlement patterns, political organisation, religious significance of land, and patterns of ethnic conquest, dominance and rivalry. Tenures are often “communal”, but this does not mean that everyone has equal access. Rather, there is a hierarchy of rights, available to members of the group at different levels, from the rights to individual plots at a local level, rights that may vary with the type of land use (cultivation versus pasture, irrigated land, land with trees etc.), to the rights in a general territory (dar), being available at a tribal level. There are also rights within traditional political units, originating in pre-colonial states, such as the hakura system in Darfur or wathiga in Funj. The different levels are tied together by rules of descent, or ethnicity, defining insiders and outsiders. But there are also secondary tenures, so-called derived rights, such as share-cropping arrangements, rights of way and water and rights of wives in their husbands’ land. Many conflicts occur as a result of outsiders’ infringement on the insiders’ rights, but conflicts may also arise as a result of tension within the group itself. Such internal conflicts of interests are based on the different types of positioning, and different types of interests among the units and individual actors themselves. Young men may want to work as hired workers to earn money for bride-wealth rather than work for their fathers, as the fathers obviously would like. Young, unmarried women may want to work selling tea etc. While married women may want to allocate time for their own fields, rather than work the joint household fields.

It is unlikely that a farmer or a pastoralist has an academic understanding of this as a system in the way it has been explained above. Rather the rights are understood as being very concrete and located in time and space, and have to do with a person’s chances of survival. Hence the heat in many of the conflict. In this type of situation we can get access to this thinking only through concrete cases, in which we see the specific ways any person acquires rights. Questions such as what is the first farming experience (on parents land), what is the first land right in the person’s own right (at marriage), what is the base of current rights, plans for the future, are questions that take us into this concrete world of the user. This requires a time dimension that shows how units are established, how rights are acquired over the generations. What is a likely outcome of this is a situation full of local compromises, of

situational give and take, rather than strict rule enforcement. This personal basis is important also because land tenure changes often starts as individual deviance from the norms, as we see in the early establishment of gardens on communal lands, introducing elements of private ownership rights that later can be developed. Such systems have been dynamic and have changed with use and time. It is likely therefore that some of the types of conflicts we see today also have appeared earlier, and that people have been able to deal with them in the past. This of course gives cause for some optimism in looking backwards in order to learn from the past, but contemporary conflicts also have their own dynamics and must be related to a wider, contemporary environment. And it is at this point that the general context of a national land tenure system comes in.

Local tenure in wider contexts

The general situation described in the above section, in which we showed the rationality of the various units in Western Sudan is an example. The various local developments also produced new local tenure situations, but due to external interventions, primarily Colonial rule and the subsequent independent regimes in Sudan, change was brought about that went in certain directions. A commercial sector was developed with tenure arrangements inspired by Western forms, coexisting with traditional forms that remained under subsistence agriculture. A problem in this development was that the outsiders saw traditional tenure, as it was based in kinship rules, as being ‘private’, and did not recognise the way the kinship and descent systems were interwoven in larger systems defining political units. Western inspired systems were seen as under public law, thus producing a basic inequality in the systems within the emerging nation states. With colonialism, and Native Administration, the higher levels of this tribally based system were given status as “native elites”, making tribal leaders part of the public system, whereas other, lower level parts remained “private” and received little attention. This also created a situation in which Native Administration leaders could acquire more power to interfere in the system than what traditionally was available to them. We see this clearly in the Nile Valley, where the British registered agricultural land, and where the traditional elites of the day could acquire estates. In the Central Rangelands the British introduced “grazing lines” to divide pasture land and cultivation and local orders stipulated how the rules of the game were to be played out. Special dar areas were designed with specific rights for those who belonged there, and for those who were passing by. The system was controlled by the Native Administration leaders of Nazir, Omda and Sheikhs. Water points were also open and closed to regulate movement. This period represents a flourishing of pastoral development in the central rangelands in the Sudan.

The period of independent regimes saw a lot of land tenure legislation, and also reform. Various patterns were chosen in different countries, individualisation of tenure (Kenya), co-operativization of production (Tanzania), re-institutionalisation of indigenous land tenure (pre-revolutionary Ethiopia),

reform of inheritance law, nationalization and bureaucratization of land administration (Sudan). The last one covers Sudan, with its declaration of state ownership of nearly all land through the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, an act which also instituted a leasehold tenure system. In the Sudan case traditional tenure continued, but the state used its powers to acquire land for development of modern schemes. The choice of models was related to basic ideological outlook, and the Sudanese law introducing this came in the early, socialist oriented years of the Nimeyri regime (1970). The argument was that a leasehold system was more consistent with the traditional situation in which the state was supposed to operate as a “super-tribe”, playing the same role as the tribal leaders had done. However, the state did not develop as a neutral factor, but rather became an operator in its own right, using the laws and the system to establish enterprises that benefited the supporters of the state. The Mechanised Farming Cooperation (1968) was one mechanism with which to achieve this. Other parastatals were created to deal with other sectors. In spite of the Islamization efforts in the 1980s leasehold remained the tenure on which the government makes land available for development projects, both in irrigated and rainfed areas. Rents are nominal, and lack of political will to deal with slack conservation and husbandry requirements and the lack of will to stop mechanised cultivation outside scheme areas, have added to the problem in the traditional sector, particularly for the pastoralist using the areas. This also fuelled conflict. Rather than providing order, the policy has facilitated processes of further land grabbing by the elites. With the various policies followed the pastoralists were marginalised through the introduction of schemes. With the abolishment of Native Administration in the 1970s the various grazing policies disappeared, adding further problems.

Various reorganisations of government institutions also took place with SCLUWPA (Soil conservation, land use and water programming) divided into two, Range Management Administration and Rural Water Development Corporation . The effect was of course to create a bureaucratic barrier between the co-ordination of policies relating to range and to water. In 1980 the tribal homelands were also abolished, making it difficult for people to keep outsiders out. This happened at a time in which the need for movement into certain areas became more important as a result of drought and war. The Range and Pasture Management Administration was also progressively marginalised within the government system, losing out in many cases to the Forestry Department which prioritised tree protection to pastoral usage. And it should be said that this development also relates to the strong lobbying by the international community through the various desertification initiatives. With the current regime, and its policies of decentralisation and federalisation (spelled out in the National Comprehensive Strategy, 1992-2002), there is pretty much complete institutional chaos as far as dealing with the pastoralists is concerned. Schemes have blocked pastoralists, grazing corridors do not function and the legal system is not protecting the rights of pastoralists. Policies of privatisation have led to a situation in which people do not get services they can not pay for themselves. And the land grabbing goes on through the privatisation policies now dominant. Rich farmers and pastoralists can

develop strategies with scheme owners for their own benefit, but the ordinary pastoralist is losing out. At the national level the federalisation of the regional system has further divided the areas into smaller administrative units. Hence, the logic of a local administrator, being concerned with his small, administrative unit, is not paralleled with the logic of local people, particularly pastoral ones, who derive their thinking from the totality of their adaptive systems.

The above situation, characterised by land tenure chaos, combined with institutional chaos, was also paralleled by a crisis in agricultural financing. All this had repercussions also on productivity. Studies from Kordofan (Kevane 1999) show that wealthy farmers have a higher productivity per unit land than do poor farmers. This in spite of similarity in technology used. The richer farmers do not apply methods that the poorer farmers do not use (ridging, fertiliser, hybrid seeds, the use of tractors is limited and animal traction non-existent, extension services are limited for everyone, as is agricultural research), and they all cultivate the same combination of crops. Nor is it likely that individual differences in skills should systematically be linked with wealth. And as the differences in yield are significant (almost twice), one wonders why the poor farmer do not imitate the rich one. The answer must be sought both in the insecure tenure situation and in deficient credit institutions and insurance which relates to the breakdown in financial markets. Hence in a poor farmer's reasoning it is better to work for others, securing a low but secure income from an agreed input of labour, than put in a lot of efforts on own land that may turn out not to be his after all. Since they cannot obtain secure credit they have to rely directly on others. As farmers become poorer they worry more about risk, and choose to cultivate as much area as they can, relative to labour available, with minimal labour input. Hence lower yields pr. unit land. The poor farmer cultivates as much as he can because if he does not, others might take the land. And he does not put in a lot of labour because he might not control the outcome of the investment. Similar developments are reported from attempts at IDPs in southern Darfur to involve Dinka in the cultivation of their own plots rather than engaging in exploitative share-cropping arrangements with local land-owners.

Tenure becomes insecure the moment one rents out land, since renters might claim rights for themselves. And they can succeed by pledging support from village sheikhs who may use this in political games. Renters do not pay rent, claiming the land is theirs. If land is along water courses and can be used for irrigation such land may be sold, and thus also enters into the calculus of private investments by people in the commercial sector. In spite of this there is a lot of land rentals going on.

Financial markets normally perform poorly. Traders may lend out money, as can the Agricultural Bank. But people avoid the bank as they fear they will confiscate assets if loans are not repaid. Government Islamic policies of no-interest loans and no-usury may also have contributed to the limited availability of credit.

Periods of drought tend to aggravate the situation, with crop failures, with rising prices of grain, and the drying up of employment opportunities. Rich people may help poor ones, but

they may also use the opportunity to invest in irrigation on land not cultivated during drought years, and in livestock that they buy cheap from the poor who need food.

Earlier attempts to deal with this have failed. Large-scale credit programs, large-scale land reforms, sweeping legal changes in tenure, all failed to achieve the aims set for them. On the contrary, they often added to the problem, and created a lack of trust in government interventions as well as international interventions. But now there is some optimism related to the NGO-type of interventions with small scale inputs like village insurance schemes, rotating credit and savings institutions and market based land tenure reforms and local public employment projects. Few of these appear in the Sudan.

Understanding Native Administration

One strategic element that is of importance to the way conflicts evolve, and which also will be important for future peace and reconciliation activities in Darfur relates to the question of how to involve local and regional groups of people and their organisations, traditional and modern. It is probably not possible to see long-term solutions here without the involvement of local groups of people and local and traditional socio-political structures. As many such structures have been marginalized by several Sudanese regimes, an important challenge is the chance of restoring the legitimacy of such structures, not in order to restore a traditional system for its own sake, but as a channel for the necessary basis of legitimacy for the many difficult decisions that will have to be made in order to establish a viable peace process. Although people in such positions played important roles in dealing with land tenure issues, it is important to keep in mind that it was as mediators in conflicts they played this role, not as interveners in the productive life of people. Hence, we should keep in mind that although restoring some of the authority of such local figures might be an avenue for development, we should acknowledge the limits of their authorities, and also remember the historical lesson of how such local elites could play exploitative roles vis-a-vis their own population. We see this also in the contemporary situation. During the period of the current government many Chiefs have been sacked and replaced by others who revealed a considerable "Islamicist commitment" and it is this Islamicist commitment together with loyalty to the regime which is now the precondition for holding a tribal office. It is important to discuss to what extent such traditional, local leaderships can play a role, and it is important to be aware of the constraints. The sharing of interests between local elites and a

government, or the co-opting by the government of the same elites may be one such problem area. Another is the fact that over the years it is no longer clear who these traditional leaders are. Individuals from the same families may play different roles in the political game, and we need to look at individuals rather than institutions. Part of the problem here is that the traditional elites have been challenged by new elites who have questioned the legitimacy of the traditional ones. GOS seems to put special emphasis on these structures in their attempts to organize “All Darfur Conferences”. One was held in Khartoum, 11-12 August 2004, in which calls for the re-establishment of Native Administration (Idara Ahliya) were issued. At the same time we see that GOS has replaced the Fur Maqdam of Nyala (Feb, 2005), and they have created a new Naziarate for Ma’aliyya (to intimidate Rizegat of Ed Daein). *Mediation, or “judiyya” is established tradition in northern Sudan and can be in the person of a faki, a wise man, a traditional leader, the leader of the cattle camp or a Native*

Administration leader. They all represent mediating roles – ajawid. Common to all is their accepted roles as wise people with knowledge of the traditions. And as we have seen many types of conflicts appear, all engaging the ajawid. A judiyaa session ends with establishing a settlement and agreement that re-establishes some sort of balance and social harmony between the parties. Hence the aim is less to find the particular truth in the situation but to reach a point where both parties can live with the definition of what has been going on. To do this rhetorical skills are important, appealing to the wisdom of the parties and to their honour, but the process is also political in which pressure is put on the parties to agree.

In the colonial period law enforcement institutions such as courts, police stations and prisons were established, but also traditional, native administration courts that were closer to the local situation. At a lower level of conflict local mechanisms are still in use, and it is possible to work with such mechanisms. In many cases people refer their problems to such institutions rather than government courts, a fact that shows the lack of legitimacy enjoyed by the government.

The colonial government as well as independent ones also organised larger conferences to settle disputes. Such conferences were for larger tribal conflicts, and the practice has continued. One example is between the Kababish of Kordofan and the Zayyadiyya, Meidob and Berti of Darfur who have had a number of such conferences (1932, 1957, 1982, 1996, 1998). In government sponsored conferences of mediation the government decides time and venue for the conference, it asks the parties to select representatives, it chooses an ajawid and it appoints the chairperson for the conference who is then assisted by a team of specialists from the attorney general, the magistrate, the police, local government officer etc. But the involvement of government in the settlement processes have become more complicated as the government itself is party to many of the conflicts. It is no longer a neutral arbitrator, but has its own interests in the process. One of these interests is the basic one of controlling the tribes themselves, but as we have seen described above their involvement in commercialisation

processes, in the running of mechanised schemes etc. make government people into key actors in conflicts. In one case, in the Arab-Masalit reconciliation conference in Darfur the government denied the ajawid the right to dig deeper into one root cause of the conflict, the partitioning of the Masalit Sultanate into Emirates. Also, ajawid without local backing and respect can be chosen. One particularly serious form of government intervention in tribal conflicts has been through their support for tribal militias, murhaleen, among the Baggara. Ever since the days of Nimeyri the state has been helping in providing arms to certain groups in order to help the state do its job. The Baggara murhaleen can be used against the Dinka as part of the civil war, but we also see that the same militias can be turned against other groups in the north, as the Rizeigat-Ma'alia conflict, the Rizeigat-Masalit and Rizeigat-Zaghawa as well as the Arab-Fur conflicts show. The integration of such groups into the structure of the Popular Defence Forces has not helped ease the situation by providing government control. Rather, it has provided government legitimatisation for their activities. The establishment of emirates in the tribes has undermined the position of the traditional nazirs and omdas, giving power to new individuals and groups whose position is legitimised by their links to the government rather than their links to their people. The federalisation of the country has further undermined national action and also people's participation in national processes. Increasing taxation without any visible return further adds to the reduction in government legitimatisation.

With all the type of problems that we see, the main focus is on the historical and traditional rights of a group to its territory, rights that have been undercut by the abolishment of the dars. But it is also the problems related to a variety of derived rights in which visiting groups can do certain things within the area. Here we enter into a situation of what type of titles are in an area, whether they are traditional rights based on local customary practice, or public rights with registers of holding and certificates of occupancy issued by the state. Such rights may be by delegations from the owners, loans or use rights, or monetised renting and share-cropping. Such derived rights often suffer from unclear agreements. There may be "legal insecurity", that old agreements are no longer accepted by the parties; "institutional insecurity" in that local bodies of arbitration are not accepted outside the local system; and "contractual insecurity" in which new agreements have unclear clauses that create future conflicts.

Promoting development.

Focusing on the Government's ability to respond to some of the problems I have outlined, the situation looks bleak indeed. The public structures are in serious crisis and are developing away from the local and regional matters they are meant to serve. This development can be seen on many levels. First of all, the local government, and the various technical departments or field agencies that deal with pastoralists (Soil Conservation Department, Range and Pasture, Forestry, Animal Health Departments

and the Rural Water Corporation) are in a crisis. This relates to a general process of centralization within the government structures. These processes of centralization of the administrative system can be seen in different ways. Local revenue raised is often under 25% of the local budgets, indicating a strong dependence on central government contribution. Major sources of revenue in the region, like schemes and gum arabic, are controlled by parastatals which are under the direct control of the centre. Revenue from both flow directly to the central ministries in Khartoum; the region getting little back through their development budgets. Furthermore, such resources are primarily spent on social services, and mainly on salaries. The pattern is a situation in which the lion's share of budgets goes to the maintenance of people employed, and to the maintenance of ongoing activities. Very few resources are allocated for investments in development and offices providing agricultural services, and soil conservation, range and pastoral management are hardly operative.

The centralization is also seen in the function of chief executives. The Sudanese Local Government system was changed in 1981. Prior to that date the 1971 Local Government Act was operating, and it contained a deliberate attempt to create an integrated field administration at the provincial level. By contrast, the 1981 Act restricts the power of the commissioner to one of supervision of the police, prisons, fire brigade and Area Council Executives. Other public servants at this level are field agents attached to regional departments or in Khartoum. The current system further strengthens these ties to the centre. This relates to the question of legitimacy of this system, and the extent to which ordinary people have access to it and are allowed an opportunity to argue for their interests. Through the 1981 People's Local Government Act the participation of local people was greatly reduced. The local councils and market councils established through the 1971 Local Government Act, which all had an elected membership, were abolished. The 1981 Act created councils in which the members were appointed by the authorities. The ability of this new system to get information about events such as the drought of 1984-88 was thus greatly

Reduced, and according to local people in the areas in which I have worked, they were not particularly interested. Yet another problem is the lack of ability to coordinate planning. Since important resources are controlled by parastatals, the regional and local administration has no possibility of coordinating planning.

Summing up this discussion we may easily end on a note of despair. There is not much hope in the situation in Sudan for a process that might facilitate development. And there are no short cuts to development, and simple models based on "popular participation" may seem as far-fetched in solving problems as is government coercion.

But local people are at centre stage of these problems. They are victims of large processes and struggles through which they become marginalized and neglected. But they are there! And they represent a basic resource for any effort to overcome the problems. Their indigenous “development planning” that is embedded in their social organization must be tapped. Their socio-cultural organization, which also represents the experience of previous generations must be utilized; not because it constitutes a perfect management system, but as a starting point. Pastoralists have broader agendas that do not particularly fit with those of the powerful groups, nor the development planner. The meeting between pastoralists and professional planners again and again provides surprises for the planners; surprises that can be interpreted from within a particular project as lack of interest, lack of will to participate or lack of understanding about what benefits will come from this project. Much of this tends to fall into place if we adopt the pastoralist’s point of view, regarding the project not as the most significant aspect of reality, but rather as only one, among all the other resources that they can depend on and exploit, for various purposes.

Such participation of pastoralists seems like an obvious thing to advocate, and on a certain level nobody will disagree. But taking a look at the realities within projects, regional administrations and other public structures, there is not much evidence for real participation. Whatever we suggest should be informed by these realities and point to the need to engage with local problems in ways that may enhance local participation and also in ways that show a modesty as to what goals can be achieved

Development and governance.

The various processes outlined above go together in various ways. One is the way the political problems and dilemmas also constitute important dilemmas for development agencies. Since 1989 the present Sudanese government has used international relief to further its aims in the war, and also used agencies through the ideology of development itself. This has been possible in spite of the embargo on development following the coup in 1989 (1907 mill dollar in 1985, 127 mill in 1993/4) but over time the government has been able to transform relief into development oriented programs. Hence agencies may be seen as patching up the negative consequences of the government’s policies, without having any chance to influence it. The Peace and Development Foundation established in 1992, now the National Development Foundation, has been the main instrument for this. But there are longer lines. Nimeiry’s Breadbasket Strategy created a debt burden, and dislocated people in the areas of the schemes. The shift from subsistence cultivation towards cash cropping and export oriented production set in motion movements, dynamics and processes that are still there in the so-called Transition Zone, in South Kordofan, South Darfur and Blue Nile. The evidence is the erosion of customary rights to land, erosion of pastoralist rights, and the creation of a large force of agricultural wage labourers, workers who also were displaced in the wars of the 1990s. Hence a root cause is lack of secure land

tenure, legal protection and political entitlements. And the re-emergence of tribal militias has re-introduced tensions and conflicts into areas where some earlier mechanism existed to overcome tribal disputes. Splits within SPLA worsened the situation, as did GOS strategies of war. And institutional chaos and eroded legitimisation fuels the same situation. In short – wars are replacing feuds. And the agencies are left with the problem of dealing with the effects of the disaster-producing activities of those who at the same time are their counterparts, GOS and SPLA.

There is thus a series of unintended consequences of aid that should be addressed at a higher level, some which directly relates to issues of governance. The relationship between aid and government makes aid complicit in various forms of conflicts. One argument is for instance that through IDPs they contribute to the creation of de-ethnicised individuals, resonating with policies of de-culturation (Duffield 2002). Through developmental ideas of self-sufficiency they articulate with commercial need for cheap agricultural labour (the southerners are here taking over from the role the Fellata played in earlier periods). In the past, development was combined with notions of modernisation, driven by investments in technology and trade. In to-days liberal discourse, development belongs to those who can help themselves through the market. Those below are at best cheap labour power, but may fall outside all systems and be left with humanitarian aid only. But such aid also fell in quantity during the 1990s, as a consequence of a belief that it would be bad if the populations became too dependent on it. Which further added to the humanitarian crisis. The power of categorisation also works through statistical categories. People ceased to be people and became “IDP”s, “households” (HH) etc., thus abstracted into categories that furthered homogenisation and dehumanisation. People were/are no longer seen as people, but as statistical categories characterised by economic disparities that can be redressed through development inputs. But as we have seen, the problems addressed are political in the first place. Hence the new call for a human rights based approach to development.

Escalating violence

It is agreed that the inter-group conflicts in Darfur are closely related to political developments in the center, namely, authoritarian governance and policies of decentralization. The authoritarian rules that greatly fanned the fires of inter-group conflicts are the May regime (1969-1985), the democratic interlude (1985-1989) and the present regime (1989-2005). They affected the conflicts in the following manner: i) In 1974, Darfur was divided, for the first time into northern and southern Darfur provinces, with EL- Fasher and Nyala as their capitals, respectively. The Arab identity groups in southern Darfur felt they constituted a clear majority and thought that if they organized themselves, they would control the political and administrative leadership of the province. Hence, they coined the words ‘Arab’ and ‘Zurga’, with ‘Zurga’ meaning black or non-Arabs. ii) In 1980, the regional government system was enacted for northern Sudan, with Darfur becoming one region with two provinces, and a governor was

appointed for the region. Some Arab elite felt if they organized themselves regionally, they could secure the post of the governor. They used the

Arab/non-Arab divide to mobilize their Arab constituents behind them for political action. Unfortunately the grassroots communities are divided along tribal lines of Arabs (who are herders around Jebel Marra massifs) and the Fur who are farmers. Their otherwise limited resource-based competition acquired an ethnic dimension. Hence the (1982-1989) bloodiest Fur-Arab violent conflicts were fought. iii) In 1989, the National Salvation government came to power and the Fur felt that it was taking the side of the Arab nomads against them, causing Daoud Yahya Bolad, a leading NIF member, to sever his relation with the government and join SPLM/A in order to support his victimized Fur tribe. The government mobilized Arab tribes, who were mostly new immigrants from Chad, and they succeeded in stemming the Bolad incursion. These militia came to be known as the Janjaweed, whose presence is not limited to the Fur homeland. They are also found in the Masalit country to the west of Fur Land. One of the leaders of the Bolad incursion was Abdal Aziz Adam Al-Hilo, who was a Masalit native. For undeclared reasons, the western Darfur State Wali, created Arab emirates in the Masalit sultanate, without consulting even the Arabs. The decision gave rise to Masalit anger as well as Arab resentment. iv) The Fur and the Masalit regarded the government of the Sudan as their real enemy, as it enabled the Janjaweed to plunder them. Some of their youth mounted Jebel Marra and waged a war against the government. They were joined by a section of the Zaghawa, who had grievances with their tribal leader and the government over homicides caused by an Arab faction. They named their movement SLM/A. v). Another section of the Zaghawa joined the armed opposition, naming itself as JEM. vi) The two movements are joined by natives of several Arab and non-Arab tribes and are continuing to fight against the government. On the other hand the so-called Janjaweed continued to fight on the side of the government, committing atrocities that caused international outcries. The USA even calls it ethnic cleansing. vii). The war resulted in a large-scale internal displacement and migration from the region to neighboring Chad as refugees.

Weapons represent a special problem. Chad was a battleground through which the Zaghawa got arms. Libya armed Arab groups, a practice that Sadiq al Mahdi continued while in power during the late 1980s. With the NIF take-over these militias were entered under the umbrella of the Popular Defence Forces. And the Arab-Black dimension of the conflict surfaced as a racial and religious one. Non-Arab groups joined forces to a certain extent, but Darfur leadership's use of old Sultanate rhetoric also made other non-Muslim groups afraid for their land. So the focus was on land, and attempts were made to carve out dars, home territories, on land leased from the Fur sultans through the hakura system. In conflicts orchards, farms, fields and villages were destroyed, in addition to loss of lives. One particular conflict that shows all these elements was the Fur-Arab conflict of the late 1980s (Harir, 1994). This is a series of incidents that show how conflicts over resources can escalate into warlike conditions. The

conflict was between the Fur and the Arabs, and it dominated Darfur in the period 1987 to 1989, and keeps erupting from time to time. During the period of armed conflict the sedentary Fur lost 2500 people, 40 000 heads of livestock, with 400 villages containing 10 000 residents burned down. The Arab groups saw some 500 dead, 3000 heads of cattle lost and about 700 tents and residences destroyed. Mosques, schools and dispensaries were burnt down. The national government at the time favoured the Arabs, until 1988, when a change in governor in Darfur also changed the sympathies. Mounted razzias were used, and people on both sides made the most of any chance they got to kill people from the other side. The Arabs looked to Libya for military, ideological and political support, the Fur looked to the “SPLA model”, to Hissen Habre in Chad, and to the Americans and

Egyptians as anti-Libyan forces. Peace attempts were tried in 1988 and 89, and when peace was established we have already entered the period of the present NIF regime (30 June 1989).

During the negotiations the Fur argued that the Arab assault was like a genocide and that the aim was to eradicate them totally from their land. The basic driving force is racism, dividing the Darfur people into “Arab” and “Black” populations. The Arabs talk about a history of peaceful coexistence, but with occasional eruption of problems. The current problems started, claimed the Arabs, in the late 1970s, when the Fur started to talk about “Darfur being for the Fur”, and that the Arabs were foreigners who should leave. Furthermore, Arabs claimed the Fur had trained militias in order to extend “the African belt”. The government’s position, as expressed by the Governor of the province was that history showed that conflicts could be solved locally as had happened in the past between Rizeigat and Maalia, Gimir and Fellata, Northern Rizeigat and Beni Helba etc. When the current conflict got out of hand it was due to “external forces”, particularly the effects of the war in the south, i.e. SPLA involvement.

Within months after an agreement that was negotiated, the conflict erupted again. And peace was not to come easily. And the way the conflict evolved tells yet another story. A story that further shows us how complicated these issues are, and to what extent the positioning of the players in the game is a result of many factors, not only one. This is illustrated by the story of Dauod Yahia Bolad. Bolad was a leading Fur Muslim Brother, with years in the leadership of the student union in Khartoum while he was studying engineering. Hence, the NIF takeover in 1989 should suit him just fine. He was already an insider. But Bolad’s experience with the Arab assaults against the Fur, and the subsequent alliance between the Arabs and the new NIF government led Bolad to join the SPLA. He led troops in Darfur against the government and the governor of Darfur. Bolad was captured after a battle in Southern Darfur in late 1991 and killed.

Apart from the story of Bolad the battle in which he was captured also is an example of government troops being assisted by Arab (and Baggara) militias. And we know the continued war also led to new strategies from this Government. The Khartoum regime has been staging a military “jihad” campaign to fight a war, but also to force their version of Islam and Arabism upon various groups of people, denying them access to land necessary for survival, and relocating them to so-called “peace villages”. Two basic themes stand out in this struggle: the one of territory, and the one of identity. Both combining in a constant struggle of regional populations for their sovereignty and for their right to deal with their own development.

As a result of all this the government has continuously reasserted its control over Darfur, in a direct military sense, although with governors mostly from within the region, interpreting incidents of unrest as security problems. Wider social implications are not looked into, the land issue remains unsolved, fighting goes on, but explained by the authorities as banditry carried out by outlaws. The government use the Army and the Popular Defence Forces to maintain control, some Fur formed the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance and joined the NDA. With this the developments in Darfur also becomes part of the then (a peace settlement was established in January 2005) civil war in the country.

In spite of the ongoing violence indicated above, a new phase of the conflict was set in motion by the SLM/A attack on a police station in Tour, near Kass, in 2002. The SLM/A, which is a Zaghawa-Fur based organization, spelled out their demand in a first manifesto with claims for local autonomy, and for a secular state, and with formulations and a language that underlined the Arab-African dimensions of the problems. Claims that were close to the SPLM/A claims in the north-south negotiations, and perhaps indicating an early link between the two processes ? In February 2003 fighting takes off, with the SLM/A organizing itself from a base in the Ein Siro mountain near Kuttum. In March 2003 there is a second manifesto, which is better formulated, but which spells out the same claims as the first one. The Jenjawid enter the scene, as do the Justice and Equity Movement. With this the Darfur developments take off and start to run their own course, and can no longer be easily compared to the north-south conflict. ICRCs evaluation of the Darfur situation indicates that what is happening is a “Somalization” of the conflict in which there is an ongoing fragmentation of the fighting groups, with conflict lines that are constantly changing. The links to the north-south conflict is a negative one. Since the Darfur conflict was never allowed to be directly linked to the north-south negotiations this led various groups to seek their own military solutions by occupying certain areas as a part of their bargaining positions. Rather than a unified political and military process, local commanders have taken over the control of the events on the ground, and in spite of attempts at negotiations and reconciliations armed clashes with violence against civilians and the rise of banditry makes unified strategies increasingly difficult. These developments make it necessary to focus more on the process

of proliferation of fighting groups, what their agendas are and what constituencies they have on the ground. The major ones are:

- SLM/A – primarily with a “Darfur focus” – led by a Zaghawa-Fur/Masalit leadership. Chairman is Abdel Wahid Mohamed el Nur (a Fur), Abdalla Bakr (a Zaghawa) was commander in chief, but was later killed. Juma Hajjar took over August 2003. Mini Arkoi Minawi (Zaghawa) is secretary general. In July 2004, the Masalit got representation in the leadership.
- JEM – with a “national focus”, with talk about power and wealth sharing and a problematic demand about “renegotiating Naivasha”. JEM is led by Khalil Ibrahim, a Zaghawa with NIF allegiance, including links to Turabi.
- *Jenjaweed*, are armed pastoralists (but not of the big nomadic tribes of Rizeigat, Habbaniya and Ta’aisha). Rather, they are recruited from among other tribes, such as *Rizegat al shimal* – Abbala, Jalul, Ereigat and Mahriya under leadership of Musa Hilal; Beni Halba *Fursan*, which is a mobilized militia from 1991 (related to the “Bolad fighting”); Terjam group near Nyala; Chadian Arabs; some Baggara *murhaliin* and segments of the Popular Defence Forces.
- There are also new groups, indicating a spread of violence into Kordofan. Particularly some new Islamist oriented front in Western Kordofan, called *Al Shahama*, (Movement for the Elimination of Marginalization), established by Musa Ali Mohamadein (who died).
- There is also The National Movement for Reform and Development with forces north of el Geneina. This is a splinter group from JEM, headed by Jibril Abdel Karim, also known as “Tek”, who is also Zaghawa, with links in diaspora-Holland.

But there are variations in Darfur also when it comes to conflicts. Kebkabia which is an area with reported conflicts is an area with a mixture of local groups, Fur and Tama and Arabs. The “Rizeigat al shimal”, i.e. Rizeigat “of the north” (made up of the tribal groups of Etefag, Eregat, Mahriya, and Jalloul) move through the area on their seasonal migrations, a fact that is increasingly becoming problematic. Commercialisation in the area has led to extensive individual ownership to resources, with cultivation going on using animal traction, and there is irrigation along wadis. The expansion of intensive cultivation has also resulted in the physical enclosure of land areas. According to the local population the passing Arab pastoralists are “trespassing” on gardens and plots. However, as many of

these enclosed gardens are on land that was earlier cultivated by rainfed cultivation and therefore available to pastoralist usage after the harvest, conflicts arise as the pastoralists themselves conceive the areas as part of their traditional pasture land. The conflicts that arise are difficult to handle as there is no agreement on what local authority should handle them. And a further complicating factor is the way the conflict is being conceived by the involved parties. In one way the conflict is a classic example of the marginalisation of pastoral groups, and also an example of how the contemporary lack of attention to pastoral migrations create local conflict situations. However, the way the conflicts are being conceived by the involved parties also indicate that the conflicts are taking on a dimension that must be related to the general situation of conflict in northern Darfur. The Arab pastoralists no longer come in small groups, seeking agreement with local families and local leaders about their movements through an area. Due to insecurity they come in larger groups, and carry weapons, that make them appear as a threat to local farmers. The local farmers, and the Fur in particular, conceive of these conflicts in ways that bring us back to the Fur-Arab conflict mentioned earlier. Fur leaders talk about “ethnic cleansing” when they speak about the conflicts in Kebkabiya, and see it as a conscious assault by Arabs against the Fur, aimed at displacing the Fur altogether and take over their land.

Other conflict areas show different developments. In Malha, for instance, which is a pastoral area divided between the pastoral Meidob and Berti cultivators, a reported conflict seems to be related to local *mahaliya* politics. In Malha the Berti-dominated *mahaliya* seems to receive support for local inputs like schools, whereas the Meidob *mahaliyas* are perceived as getting nothing.

Masalit is another area with ongoing conflicts between the local Masalit and the Arabs. Rising insecurity appeared in the area during 1998-99 when the locals were in disputes with the Rizeqat. There was a reconciliation conference between Arabs and Masalit at Gineina in 1997 in which the following losses were reported - 1995-96 – 213 persons, 84 injured. 3758 cattle and 142 camels confiscated, 14 villages burnt. 1996-2000 1781 deaths, 397 injured, 30 000 heads

The root causes reported (Ahmed Abusin and Yusif Tekana, 2001) are competition for power (in the form of seats in regional assemblies), the tension between the government and native administration, the tribal, armed militias, dar owners vs. nomads, the undercutting of local

authority by the establishment of new emirates, direct conflicts over water resources, politicised laws for farming and pasture conservation, and also the increasing taxes that are needed to cover the costs of the government.

Hence the Darfur situation shows a variety of conflict types, and causes. All this has to be taken into consideration while trying to deal with the conflicts themselves. Also in the types of conflicts we are

talking about here we see how the modern Sudanese state is more and more becoming an independent player in these conflicts. Part of the crisis that led to the downfall of Nimeiry was his denial of the drought related disaster that developed during the 1980s. In stead of helping people he persecuted those who claimed there was a problem. Sadiq al Mahdi, with his special relations to Libya (he was indebted to Ghadaffi for his support of the opposition against Nimeiry's regime before the "reconciliation" in 1977) intervened actively in various conflicts, as did the following NIF regime. Sadiq al Mahdi supported "Arabism" in the conflicts in Darfur, and shocked the Fur by not being willing to be neutral. But the Fur themselves also harboured ideas of reviving the Darfur Sultanate (about 1640 to 1916), with it's "hakura" system of people getting access to productive resources through special permissions by the Sultan. This type of arrangement threatened the Arabs as they would be defined as "outsiders" in Darfur, but it also worried other non-Arabic groups in the region, for instance keeping the Zaghawa from supporting the Fur on a "non-Arab" ticket.

And the issue in Darfur was actually among the issues mentioned by the new Salvation Regime of Omar Beshir as a cause for removing Sadig el Mahdi in 1989. The new regime blamed the conflict on the scramble for political power that followed the Regional Government Act of 1982 thus underlining the new regime's claim that they were saving the country from chaos. In Darfur the change of regime in Khartoum brought the Arabs to go for peace, as a "present" from them to the Revolution of National Salvation. A clear statement about how they saw the role the new government might play in the Darfurian conflicts.

The end result of this is the crisis we see. People are squeezed by drought or by war. The general political development is unfavourable to nomads and lead to increasing problems between local people. However, there are also people who benefit from the developments. These are civil servants, military people, politicians and big traders who are in the political game and who can exploit their relations within the privatised state. So called development inputs are not based on proper planning procedures but rather on the private interests of individual actors. Political representation is based on elections only to a limited degree, more and more we see that key officers are appointed, an appointment based on loyalties to the state rather than legitimacy from the people. Although these developments still to a certain extent have an ethnic dimension the general development is towards a group of winners who are close to the state apparatus, and an increasing group of losers who are not. Winners and losers are represented in most groups in the Sudan. This is truly a vicious circle!

In present day Sudan the above processes are being interpreted within the discourse of Islamism. The terms for new administrative units, for new administrators etc. are taken from classical Islamic history (wilaya, wali, amir etc.) The concept of dar al-islam and dar al-harb become the way to conceptualise ongoing events. And when Islam is under threat *jihad* is the way to deal with the problem. Such *jihad*

is of course directed towards infidels, but also against “nominal” Muslims who have left the right path. Hence also attacks on mosques. In this process arises also the more intensified focus on racial issues in the Sudan. The term of *abid* becomes part of public language in new ways, thus bringing the issue of race from the informal slurs and prejudices to the level of public political discourse.

What is special about this regime is not its Islamism nor its position on key issues in Sudanese politics. We have known about these things for decades. What is special is the way these political-religious positions have been played out within the umbrella of Sudanese state power. Hence the dynamic is not deriving from the religious field in itself, but rather in the peculiar way religion and state power have been meshed together and employed to further the interests of a specific group of people. Thus the GOS attack on the Fur can be seen not as a religious attack against their fellow Muslims, but as a punitive action against fellow Muslims who failed to support the regime and its Islamic policies. The problems are to be found in the field of politics, not the field of religion. But still, over time such a situation will contribute to the evolving “Arab-African”-dimension of the conflict, transforming the understanding of conflicts into a racial and religious one, defined as Arab/Muslim against Black/non-Muslim (for instance, on 14 April 2004, a meeting was held in which Arab tribes and the GOS were distributing “African land” in Darfur). The regional historical picture is important, with civil war in Chad and general political unrest in the border areas. In such a situation weapons have been brought into the area in large quantities, particularly through Chad which supplied the Zaghawa with arms, and Libya which helped arm Arab groups. Links to the national politics are also important, with Sadiq al Mahdi’s continued support to the Arabs while in power during the late 1980s and with the NIF take-over and the adding of militias under the umbrella of the Popular Defence Forces, just to mention two examples.

Regional and cross border dynamics

An important factor here is the regional game in what is known as the Chad Basin and which makes Darfur a part of a larger economic regime that dominates the border areas of Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Chad, Central Africa and Libya. The evolving contacts across boundaries relate to how nation-states interact (political dimension), how pastoral groups interact (ethnicity), but also how boundaries established on the basis of age, gender and class play roles in how the adaptational processes unfold. In addition there is the crucial new development of such border areas of new and globalized economic structures dominated by new forms of accumulation and power. Some see these relationships as undermining the nation states, but it is also possible to see these processes as a reconfiguration of the same nation states, in which new sources of wealth, authority and welfare are emerging in close interaction with state structures. Part of this economy is “illegal” and is defined by new concepts of wealth (spoils) and manners of appropriating such wealth (rights-in-seizure). This

may be seen as a local and regional adaptation to the problems created by the financial and structural problems of nation states, with the debt burden and Structural Adjustment Programs and with the bottom falling out of earlier nationalized cash crop economies (cotton etc.). The ensuing problems implicated both the border populations as well as state functionaries, and they all got involved in “economies of the bush”, or in “garrison enrepot economies” through which hard currency, scarce luxury goods and modern technology were made available, and through which markets in small arms, minerals, gems and drugs evolved. Traditionally called “suq Libya” in the Sudan such markets and such economies provide new rents for the management of internal conflict and the redistributive logics of national politics, and a means of insertion in the world economy. They also represent new flows of arms (e.g. from Eastern Europe), and mercenaries from many places. High-placed government officials and military personnel is often involved in such structures. Poverty stricken populations serve as important labour power, and laid-off soldiers and state employees serve as semi-skilled managers and groups of traders and other entrepreneurs specialize in risk taking. Such emerging economic structures may well play an important role in the way the Darfur conflict evolves, and we may assume that the political interests expressed by key actors are also shaped by the economic interests of the same actors. A mushrooming of local mosques might testify to the availability of economic resources in these areas that can not be related to the local agro-pastoral economies nor to remittances from regular labour migration.

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