



## **Darfur in Context**

*December 2007*

Until recently, Sudan could be described as a country at war and at peace. Since gaining independence from Britain in 1956, Sudan has suffered near continual civil war and has been ruled by a series of military dictatorships. While there are many different fronts to Sudan's current conflicts, the two crises that receive the most attention from international media are the genocide in Darfur and the North-South conflict. This Africa Action report outlines current circumstances and explains the linkages and distinctions among conflict areas across Sudan and addresses a series of misperceptions and myths that have impeded an effective international response to the crisis in Darfur.

---

### ***A nationwide view of Sudan***

Viewing any of the conflicts in Sudan in isolation will lead to misguided policymaking. The U.S. government must lead the international community to pursue a comprehensive approach to resolving Sudan's crises, recognizing the connections between Darfur, the North-South conflict and other marginalized regions of the country. At the same time, international pressure should employ distinct strategies that address the unique circumstances of each situation

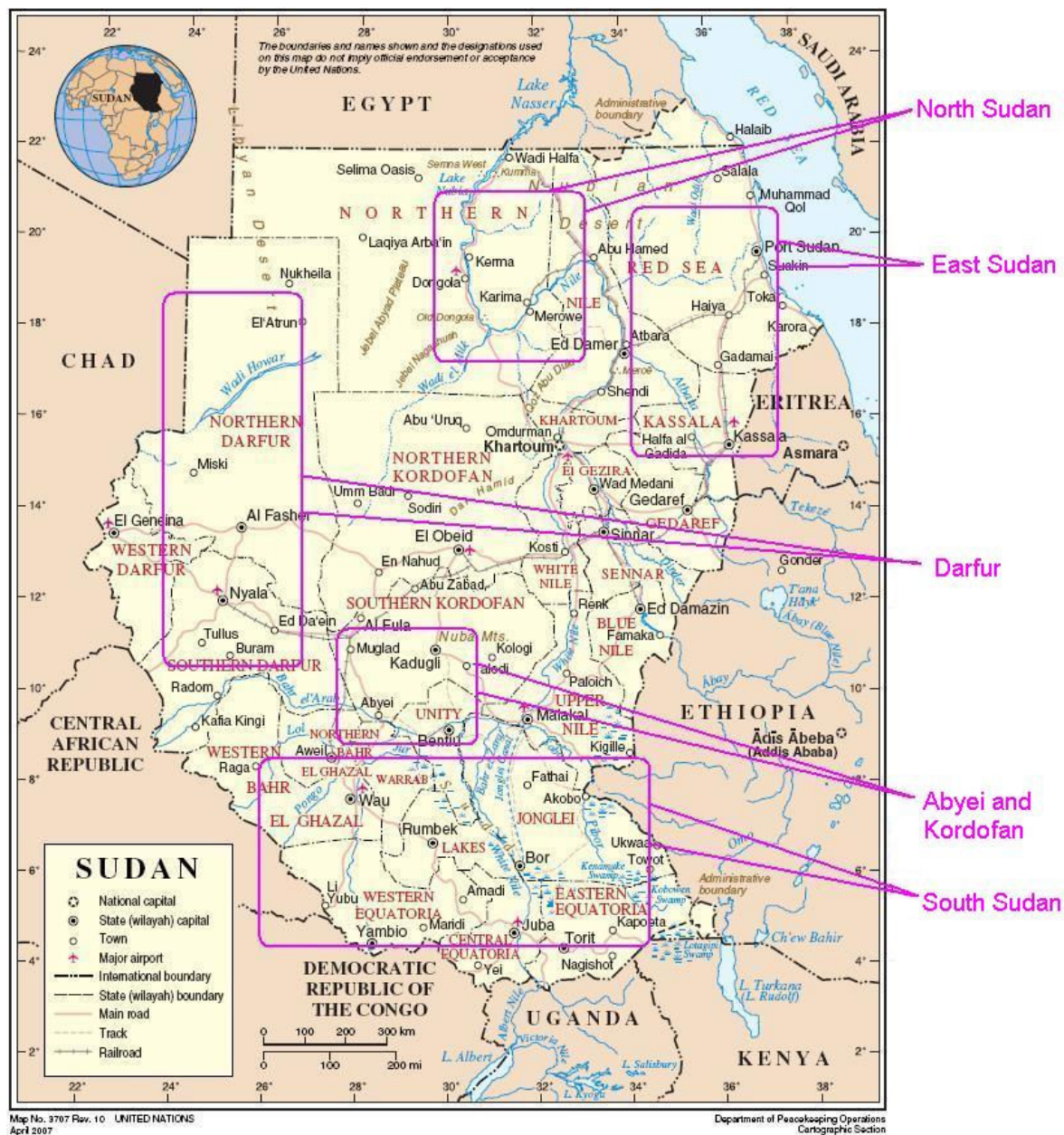
In 2005, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Southern Sudan and the National Congress Party (NCP) regime in Khartoum signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ending decades of civil war and achieving what the Bush administration claimed as a major success for American diplomacy. In the two years since the CPA was signed, the U.S. government and the international community have essentially ignored its implementation, but global policymakers are beginning to see that through their inattention the agreement has become a fragile treaty in danger of collapse. Pressure from the international community is needed to bolster the CPA and prevent a return to war between the North and the South, a scenario that would create a humanitarian disaster and deal a serious blow to peace and stability in Darfur, Sudan as a whole, and the region more broadly.

Simultaneously, violence in Darfur continues without a meaningful peace process that engages all necessary parties. Over two million people have been displaced as a result of the conflict, including around 250,000 in 2007 alone. The humanitarian crisis is worse than ever, and security is nonexistent. Despite a new United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution passed in July 2007, no effective peacekeeping force has been deployed to the region.

*Africa Action*

1634 Eye Street, Suite 810, NW ♦ Washington, DC 20006 ♦ (t) 202-546-7961 ♦ (f) 202-546-1545 ♦ [www.africaaction.org](http://www.africaaction.org)

Beyond Darfur and the South, other areas in Sudan have been seriously marginalized by Omar al-Bashir's government and have the potential to explode into violent conflicts on a tragic scale. U.S. policymakers should learn from the missed opportunities of the past and address all of these conflicts before they intensify into even deadlier humanitarian crises or a new national civil war.



(United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, April 2007)

## **(a) Southern Sudan**

The first North-South war in modern Sudan was already underway when Sudan achieved independence from Britain in 1956. This conflict lasted until 1972. After a decade of uneasy peace, war broke out again in 1983 when Southern troops revolted and the government declared Islamic law to be the only legal framework for the entire country. Both wars stemmed from Southern resistance to ethnic and religious discrimination as well as economic marginalization by the central government in Khartoum. Government policies of neglect and exploitation towards the South only intensified when Omar al-Bashir's National Islamic Front (NIF – known as the NCP since 1998) seized power in 1989.

The 2005 CPA that ended Sudan's second civil war was an important achievement that granted South Sudan substantial autonomy. It created a government of "national unity" in Khartoum that was to share power between the NCP and the SPLM. In reality, while the treaty put a stop to outright hostilities, it has done little to address the human needs and political grievances of the impoverished population of the war-torn South, the NCP dominates the government. Few steps have been taken to implement critical CPA programs like military demobilization, a national census, resolution of border disputes and fair oil-revenue distribution, and key deadlines have come and gone unfulfilled. The details of the CPA are not widely known by the broader population of Sudan nor have there been national dialogues about the implications of this agreement.

The CPA mandates that national elections be held in 2009. Unless the NCP-dominated national government acts quickly to conduct a nationwide census, this will simply be impossible. Even more important to Southerners is the CPA stipulation that a referendum be held in 2012 for Southern citizens to decide whether they want to remain part of Sudan or declare an independent country. With the peace agreement "staggering like a drunk person" as South Sudan leader Salva Kiir put it in November 2007, fears are high that the CPA timeline is falling apart and popular pressure in South Sudan is rapidly building to declare unilateral independence. The late SPLM leader Dr. John Garang was both the architect of the CPA and the visionary behind the dream of a peaceful unified Sudan. Since his death in 2005, South Sudanese leaders have increasingly struggled to maintain the patience of their frustrated population in the face of barriers to economic development and the NCP regime's unwillingness to follow through on its promises.

In order to avoid a return to civil war between the North and the South, it is vital that the U.S. government use increased diplomatic leverage to strengthen the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. As Africa Action states in this recent [press release](#), it is important that international pressure concentrate on genuine implementation of the CPA framework, rather than negotiations for any new North-South agreement on issues already covered in the 2005 treaty. Khartoum has been allowed to ignore its commitments to the CPA for two and a half years without experiencing consequences. The U.S. must not allow the continued perception that the NCP can violate the terms of the CPA with impunity – this will require increased diplomatic pressure and leadership to bring other international actors to bear on the government of Sudan with equal vigor.

## **(b) Darfur**

The Western region of Sudan, Darfur has suffered decades of economic neglect and political marginalization by the elites who have controlled Sudan's central government, and its population has experienced exacerbated pressure on natural resources such as arable land and water as a result. In 2003, local frustration at this exploitation grew violent when two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice Equality Movement (JEM), began attacking government assets. Khartoum responded to this threat by launching an extraordinarily brutal counterinsurgency campaign designed to eradicate not just these rebel groups but the ethnic communities in Darfur from which they drew their popular support. The genocidal violence against targeted Darfuri communities by government forces and proxy militias known as the Janjaweed has resulted in 450,000 – 500,000 conflict related deaths since 2003.

At present, the humanitarian situation in Darfur remains dire, and civilians face daily threats to their security from government forces and militias. Rising crime in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and disparate rebel factions add to the instability. Humanitarian relief efforts have been restricted more than ever by the Sudanese government, and malnutrition rates in IDP camps, long at emergency levels, continue to rise. In an effort to draw international attention away from the plight of Darfuri civilians, Khartoum has followed a strategy of forcibly evicting IDPs from their camps, a tactic the government has tried to pass off as the “resettlement” of displaced persons. In reality, their home communities remain in violent, chaotic conditions and few IDPs feel it is safe to return.

The primary concern of the international community in Darfur must be the well-being of the civilian population, accordingly, Africa Action calls for the rapid deployment of a UN-led peacekeeping force. The U.S. must lead international efforts to fund and provide vehicles and equipment for a robust peacekeeping mission for Darfur, and apply diplomatic pressure at the UN Security Council to resolve the command and control issues with the current African Union (AU)-UN hybrid force to ensure that the UN retains ultimate control of the operation. The deployment of peacekeepers must be accompanied by renewed emphasis on political negotiations to reach a peace settlement. While international pressure must be persistent, the lack of progress reached at the talks held in Libya in October 2007 demonstrates that the international community needs to be flexible, broadening the participation of talks to include all affected parties and not sticking to arbitrary deadlines unless this criteria of inclusively is met.

For more on the current conflict in Darfur, please see Africa Action's updated [talking points](#).

## **(c) Abyei and Kordofan**

Multiple ethnic groups in the Nuba mountains and Southern Kordofan feel marginalized by Khartoum, and resentment is building in reaction to their exclusion from the CPA implementation process. A binding report issued in 2005 by a panel of experts that stipulated the boundaries of the oil-rich Abyei area has been totally ignored by the government of Sudan. As a result, the population has been unable to form a new local administration, and the promised distribution of oil revenues among the local Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, the SPLM, and Khartoum has yet to take place. Since the CPA specifies that the citizens of Abyei will vote

in the scheduled 2009 elections on whether to stay a part of Northern Sudan or join the South, these boundary demarcations and the control of oil they imply are one of the most contentious issues in the current political battle between the SPLM and the NCP.

The recent upsurge in Sudanese military presence around the oil fields in Abyei has led to increasing linkages between Darfuri rebels and dissident groups from Northern and Southern Kordofan. While it is not clear yet that Kordofan-based militias have expressed their dissatisfaction with current treatment from Khartoum violently, the climate is growing tenser. The U.S. must lead international pressure to force the government of Sudan to comply with the 2005 Boundary Commission report to build confidence in the CPA and ensure that the needs of the local population are met and that local factions buy in to the political process. If frustration among armed groups and militias in this region is allowed to grow unchecked, there is a serious risk of new violence that would destabilize the North-South and Darfur peace processes.

#### **(d) East Sudan**

Although the numbers killed as a result of violence do not compare, from a social and economic perspective the conditions endured by the population of East Sudan may be even worse than those in Darfur. The three to four million people in the states of Kassala, Red Sea and Gedaref subsist in extreme poverty, many on as little as twenty-five cents a day, the result of a profound lack of education and health infrastructure exacerbated by a spate of droughts in recent years. The United Nations Refugee Agency and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center estimate 395,000 IDPs and 145,000 refugees from neighboring Eritrea and Ethiopia live in the region. Red Sea has the highest infant mortality rate of any state in Sudan, and half of Kassala's population suffers chronic malnourishment.

Since the mid-1990s the Beja, at around 2.4 million East Sudan's largest ethnic group, have been waging a low-level rebellion against Sudan's central government in protest of the scarce resources provided to their region. Oil pipelines flow from the rest of the country through the Eastern states to Port Sudan and rebel groups have expressed their frustration by attacking this petroleum processing equipment. As a result of this strife, humanitarian agencies have been unable to access the region until very recently, contributing to the challenges faced by the population.

In October 2006 the Eastern Front, a coalition of Beja and Rashaida rebels, signed their own peace agreement with Khartoum that included provisions for central government representation and social and economic development spending in the East. None of the regional development programs mandated have been implemented, and it wasn't until May 2007 that Eastern Front officials actually took office in the Government of National Unity and the Sudanese Parliament. The Beja Congress and other rebel groups have ties to rebels in Darfur as well as to the SPLM, as each of these groups has operated in East Sudan from bases in Eritrea since the mid 1990s. Unless the international community pressures the government of Sudan to address the needs of its people in the East, the humanitarian crisis there will build and the risk of a return to open hostilities or violence that destabilizes Sudan's other conflicts is high.



## **(e) The far North**

Perhaps the region at greatest risk of exploding into a new violent conflict is the North of Sudan near the Egyptian border. In 2003, funded largely by China, the Sudanese government began building a hydroelectric dam on the Nile River in Merowe, in the process forcibly displacing tens of thousands of people in local communities. Another dam being built in Kajbar, farther north, would submerge territories that are considered part of the ancient Nubian homeland. The Nubian community has vociferously opposed this project as an assault on their cultural heritage, but Khartoum has forcefully repressed popular criticism. In August 2007, UN Special Rapporteur on Housing Rights Miloon Kothari reported “numerous reports of violations of civil and political rights” including “the shooting of unarmed demonstrators, arbitrary arrests of activists, and repressive measures against the press.”

The Sudanese government has strong political ties to Egypt, and many Nubian activists fear that the dams are part of a broader plan of ethnic cleansing designed to Arabize the region and deliberately destroy their homeland and culture. Whether or not this is true, Khartoum’s political and economic marginalization of Nubian, Manassir and other populations to make way for the dams is undeniable and seriously troubling. Nubian civilization stretched across what is today Egypt and Northern Sudan, and much of this archaeologically rich territory was lost to floodwaters created by the 1964 Aswan High Dam in Egypt. With this historical backdrop and the NCP regime’s history of genocide, Nubian suspicion is understandably intense.

Khartoum has not indicated how the energy from these projects would benefit local communities, and according to the United Nations Environment Program has yet to conduct a full environmental impact study of the Kajbar dam. Nubian activists are mobilizing and arming their communities to defend their territory, and Sudanese civil society leaders warn that the region will erupt into civil war unless the international community can successfully pressure Khartoum to halt these projects until complete impact assessments are conducted and local concerns are addressed. The U.S. should lead international pressure on Khartoum to cease these flagrant human rights abuses and leverage China to stop financial support of the dams until local communities are actively engaged in the development process.

---

## ***Myths and Misperceptions***

The government of Sudan has persistently pitted different ethnic groups against each other, making it difficult for different regions or populations to protect one another. The regime in Khartoum is able to continue breaking its promises and oppressing its people because the international community has failed to demonstrate the will to punish it for doing so. Now is a critical juncture to remedy this pattern of absent. A prerequisite for a comprehensive U.S. foreign policy towards Sudan that takes into account the complex linkages between regions while maintaining the important distinctions between the different conflicts is to separate persistent myths from realities on the ground. The section below in this report does just that,

setting straight some common misperceptions about Darfur and Sudan's conflicts that continue to plague the media, the public and policymakers.

**Myth:** The conflict in Darfur boils down to Arabs attacking Africans, just like the North-South civil war was essentially about Muslims oppressing Christians.



**Reality:**

These simplifications by the media and well-intentioned activists obscure the nuanced ethnic and religious identity politics that characterize Sudan's conflicts. Sudan is 70% Muslim, 25% animist and 5% Christian. Omer al-Bashir's regime, now known as the National Congress Party (NCP), came to power in a bloodless coup in 1989 as the National Islamic Front (NIF). The NIF implemented a strict interpretation of Islamic law throughout the country that some Muslim communities resisted as far more conservative than their own faith and non-Muslim communities (largely concentrated in Southern Sudan) rightfully perceived as a direct assault on their cultures and ways of life. The religious hardliners aligned with Bashir and the NIF ruthlessly enforced their interpretation of Sharia across the country as one key component of a broader strategy of centralizing power and marginalizing dissenting communities.

The second critical aspect of the NIF's supremacist ideology was an Arab identity; thus the regime defined national identity in terms of both Arabism and subscription to its particular conservative strand of Islam. While these religious and ethnoracial categories constituted fault lines for conflict throughout Sudan's history, such rigid bifurcation of these identities and the genocidal logic of enforcing a homogenous national character were a product of supremacist dictatorships like the NIF and its predecessors. In fact, "Arab" and "Black African" are identities that coexist within individuals and communities throughout Sudan. Most of the communities termed "Arab" in Sudan are not ethnically Arab in the sense that the term is often understood outside Africa; they speak indigenous languages as native tongues in addition to the Arabic lingua franca, their skin is dark and their appearance reflects African ancestry.

Although some communities in Sudan clearly suggest an Arab identity in their appearance and maintain strong ties to a migrant Arab heritage, for many others the term has been more malleable, an identity marker that reflects economic relationships between pastoralists, farmers and nomadic traders as well as conferred political power under the rule of supremacist regimes. Inter-marriage between ethnic groups considered "Arab" and those not has occurred regularly, further blurring these boundaries. Across Sudan, but especially in Darfur, ethnic groups have historically cooperated in social, economic and political spheres across this division.

The "Arab versus Black" stereotype does not reflect the historic structure of overlapping and shifting Sudanese identities – but this simplification does reflect the racism and genocidal logic of the NIF (now NCP) regime. Since 1989, NIF/NCP leaders have employed supremacist rhetoric as a tactic to consolidate power and marginalize political opposition, emphasizing the political significance of ethnic politics to a stronger degree than existed in pre-colonial Sudan. Originally, the Bashir regime tied the pure "Arab" identity it promoted to support of a strongly intolerant fundamentalist Islamic ideology. In recent years, prominent hardline clerics from the

region around Khartoum have broken with the NCP as it has failed to follow through on their religious agenda, revealing the political flexibility of the regime's inner circle and their willingness to compromise ideological priorities if those conflict with the expedients of maintaining their chokehold on political power.

Sudan's Christian and animist populations are concentrated in the South, but Christians are still a minority there, comprising just 30% of the population. The majority of South Sudanese who follow indigenous spiritual practices loosely categorized as animism were unhappy with the NIF's assault on their belief systems, but it was Christian elites who comprised the political leadership of the SPLM, leading many in the West to incorrectly identify the conflict as solely Christian-Muslim. In direct opposition to the monolithic Arabization and Islamization of the country by the NIF/NCP, the SPLM platform coalesced around the recognition of Sudan as a multi-ethnic, pluralistic and secular society, where Christians, animists and moderate to conservative Muslims would be free to practice their faith as they chose in their local communities.

**Myth:** The CPA is the solution for peace in the entire region.



**Reality:**

For there to be lasting peace in Sudan, the government will have to respect and respond to the needs and desires of its people everywhere, not just the area around Khartoum and the South. The CPA fails to adequately address the needs of marginalized groups not only in Darfur, but also in North and East Sudan. A truly comprehensive peace process for Sudan will require not just full implementation of the CPA, but also execution of the terms of the peace treaty signed between the government of Sudan and the Eastern Front in 2006, serious progress on peace negotiations for Darfur and a political mechanism to address the needs and concerns of the Nubians and other disaffected populations in the North.

The CPA has the potential to serve as a model for these other peace processes if it is successfully implemented, and key CPA provisions such as the national census and election timetable could catalyze political and economic reforms for the entire country. Pressuring all parties, particularly the NCP dominated government of Sudan, to honor their obligations to the CPA should be a priority of the international community but this strategy is one starting point, not a silver bullet. The unique specificities of other conflicts in Sudan need to be looked at individually, informed by an understanding of the North-South conflict but not limited by the exclusivity of the CPA. The 2005 treaty is rightly seen as an instructive model but the CPA was not a perfect process, and peace negotiations in other regions should improve women's involvement, popular engagement and nationwide dissemination of the resulting agreement, among other things. Ultimately, the processes and agreement must be owned and understood by the affected populations.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has broader consequences for African peace processes in general, and its achievement (or collapse) would set an important precedent for conflict resolution in the greater Horn of Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Great Lakes nations. As a critical model and precedent, Sudan's North-South peace process is intertwined



with the resolution of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebellion that has spilled across Uganda's Northern border, instability in Chad, and other simmering regional crisis, but these conflicts must each be addressed on their own terms. The CPA cannot act as a panacea for the instability of the entire region any more than it can, on its own, lead directly to peace and development for all of Sudan. The international community must concentrate on propping up the North-South peace process and getting CPA implementation back on track, but U.S. and international policymakers must keep in mind that failing to follow up this pressure with truly comprehensive engagement of all Sudan's conflicts will seriously risk a new crisis that defeats the progress made by the CPA.

**Myth:** Darfur is all about oil.



**Reality:**

Control of oil fields was a critical component of the North-South civil war, and the distribution of national oil revenues remains extremely important for all of Sudan, but the root causes of the crisis in Darfur do not have to do with oil. Rebel groups formed in the region as a result of political and economic marginalization by Khartoum, and in 2003 the government decided to address the political threat the rebels posed by destroying the ethnic communities from which opposing factions drew their popular support. The “final solution” of counterinsurgency by genocide had nothing to do with gaining control of Western Sudan's oil – at that point there were no known oil reserves anywhere in Darfur, and Khartoum was focused on wresting control of oil fields in the South from the SPLM.

In the summer of 2005, with the Janjaweed and Sudanese Armed Forces well into their campaign of rape, murder and destruction, a partly Swiss-owned multinational corporation began drilling for newly detected oil in South Darfur. The discovery in the summer of 2007 of a massive underground lake led many to further interpret the conflict as one over resources, but excessive focus on the potential wealth of Darfur as the motivation behind Khartoum's brutal tactics misses the fundamental dynamic driving the NCP regime. Control of Darfur's resource certainly appeals to Bashir and other leaders in the government of Sudan, but the genocide began as a strategy to address the more immediate political threat posed by agitating opposition parties and rebel groups in Darfur.

Although Khartoum's leading fundamentalist Islamic ideologues have recently split with the NCP, the regime has retained the supremacist ideology it originally enforced as the National Islamic Front. In 2003 Sudanese government officials decided to use the state policy of racism as a tool to eradicate their opposition in Darfur from its civilian base once and for all in order to solidify their control over the country and prevent Darfuri rebel groups from growing as strong as the SPLM was by that point. As Western journalists and policymakers focused on the North-South negotiations where oil was an essential component the tendency emerged to apply this same understanding to Darfur. A more accurate parallel between the two conflicts is that they both resulted from Khartoum's supremacist ideology and economic and political marginalization of these peripheral regions.

Critics of U.S. leadership in a multinational peacekeeping intervention for Darfur argue that the Bush administration is motivated by oil interests, but this priority better explains the heightened U.S. engagement in the North-South peace process until the signing of the CPA. U.S. policy towards Darfur has been far from comprehensive thus far: heavy on talk and light on action. This failure demonstrates the unacceptable unwillingness of U.S. policymakers to follow through on their oft-repeated commitments to human rights, security and development unless U.S. economic or military interests are also at stake.

**Myth:** The SPLM and rebel factions in Darfur are natural allies with the same goals.



**Reality:**

Darfur was historically a key provider of soldiers for Sudan's national army, and Darfuris actually comprised a significant number of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) troops who fought the SPLM during the civil war of the 1990s. Once it became clear that Khartoum was committing genocide in their brutal "counterinsurgent" campaign launched in Darfur in 2003, SPLM leader John Garang expressed sympathy for Darfuris as fellow victims of gross crimes against humanity, but other South Sudanese leaders have been less embracing of a perspective of solidarity. The recent decision by SPLM leaders to host Darfuri rebel groups as they try to forge a common front for negotiations with Khartoum is promising. It took the SPLM years of difficult dialogue and infighting to achieve the political maturity it enjoys now, and even the most representative Darfuri rebel groups have a long way to go to attain a similar organizational capacity to govern.

Consultations with the SPLM about how to build unity and grow from rebel groups into a mature political movement build on a history of ties between Darfuri rebels and the SPLM that coexisted with the presence of Darfuri soldiers among the ranks of the SAF troops who ravaged Southern Sudan, so the current alliance is tenuous. Ultimately, a unified opposition movement that emerges from the current chaos of rebel groups will need to cooperate not just with the SPLM, but also with other representative opposition parties and stakeholders from across the country if Sudan is to attain the status of a democracy. But the continuation of such solidarity is anything but certain, and an alliance based on a shared enemy is tenuous in the face of the renewed civil war that would result from the very real possibility of Southern Sudan succumbing to overwhelming popular pressure and declaring unilateral independence before the CPA-mandated referendum in 2009.

**Myth:** Because the conflicts in Sudan are so complex, a political solution to Darfur's crisis is unattainable and outside activists should not advocate for peace.



**Reality:**

Not only is a political solution possible in Darfur, it is an essential complement to a robust UN-led peacekeeping mission in order to resolve the crisis. Peacekeeping operations face serious challenges in the absence of political negotiations that address the grievances of all affected

*Africa Action*

1634 Eye Street, Suite 810, NW ♦ Washington, DC 20006 ♦ (t) 202-546-7961 ♦ (f) 202-546-1545 ♦ [www.africaaction.org](http://www.africaaction.org)

parties, but at the same time, inclusive talks cannot occur without increased stability, and the government of Sudan has repeatedly shown that it will renege on any ceasefire it declares in the absence of strong international enforcement. The sooner a fully equipped peacekeeping force is deployed, the sooner the peace talks that were stymied at Sirte, Libya in October 2007 can make meaningful headway.

Concerted U.S.-led international diplomatic pressure helped facilitate the signing of the CPA in 2005 – similar progress is possible in Darfur if the international community is persistent and firmly pushes for full inclusion of the affected communities in negotiations. The full deployment of a robust multinational peacekeeping force under ultimate UN command and control would help hold Khartoum accountable to its promises, allowing negotiations to proceed in good faith. It would also create the climate of stability necessary to engage displaced Darfuri community leaders and civil society in talks.

The crisis in Darfur is complicated, but the U.S. has a historic responsibility towards the people there because of previous U.S. engagement with Khartoum and in the region that facilitated the humanitarian emergency that exists today. U.S. activists have a duty to support the efforts of Sudanese civil society for democracy and human rights. As a September 2007 Human Rights Watch report puts it, Darfur is “chaos by design” – the goal of the NCP regime has been to foment a humanitarian crisis while simultaneously pitting different marginalized groups against one another in order to prevent an easy political solution and dissuade the international community from intervening. If U.S. activists fail to step up to this challenge, they capitulate to Khartoum and abandon solidarity with civil society groups in Darfur and throughout Sudan who are struggling for human security and the democratic rule of law

**Myth:** The U.S. has done all it can do to help Darfur, so future international advocacy efforts should just focus on China.



## **Reality:**

China is a critical ally of the genocidal regime in Khartoum, and an important target for advocacy efforts, but recognition of this reality does not imply that the U.S. can no longer play a key role in helping to protect the people of Darfur. To be effective, grassroots activism and media campaigns targeted at China should be accompanied by forceful U.S. diplomatic pressure to resolve the issues of command and control surrounding the UN/AU force at the Security Council. The U.S. should lead the international community in financial support for the Darfur peacekeepers, and use its financial and diplomatic clout to encourage other wealthy countries to supply the helicopters and other vehicles and equipment necessary to deploy a robust hybrid force to protect civilians. U.S. citizens have the most leverage on their own government – not China – and the continued pressure of activists on their elected officials in this country is essential to creating security for the people of Darfur.

Finally, as mentioned above, the U.S. must devote more diplomatic attention to the CPA, the Darfur peace process, and the political problems of other regions in Sudan. The Bush administration demonstrated what U.S. diplomatic pressure can help accomplish when the CPA

was signed in 2005, but has since been content to sit back on this achievement and allow the treaty to unravel as Khartoum continues to break its promises in the absence of international engagement. Renewed focus on implementing the CPA and keeping an inclusive process of political negotiations going for Darfur must be vital priorities of the international community, a step that would require committed U.S. leadership.

**Myth:** Darfur is an African problem – a “tribal conflict,” or “civil war” that requires African solutions, not international intervention.



**Reality:**

Ethnic divisions indeed figure prominently in the conflict in Darfur, and the proximate trigger of the military campaign that began in 2003 was a series of attacks on government assets by the SLA and JEM, but the current humanitarian crisis is ultimately the responsibility of the government of Sudan. The brutality and scale of the violence unleashed by the Sudanese Armed Forces and Janjaweed proxies has been seriously disproportionate to the threat level posed by Darfuri rebels to the government, and the vast bulk of deaths, destruction and displacement is due to the government and Janjaweed. A crisis in which soldiers and allied militias devastate entire villages with the well-documented intent of eradicating targeted ethnic groups is more accurately called genocide than a civil war.

Crimes against humanity like ethnic cleansing or genocide are never just local problems; in today's globalized world they are stains upon the conscience of the international community. In 2005 UN member states agreed to the principle of the “responsibility to protect” populations from genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, a commitment that the international community has repeatedly affirmed since then. The response to Darfur tests this principle.

The crisis in Darfur did not emerge from a vacuum. It was shaped by historic relationships between Sudan and other countries and international actors, by British and Egyptian colonial rule, by U.S. support for Khartoum as an ally in the “war on terror,” and by economic ties facilitated by multinational corporations through which the government of Sudan has built a war machine thanks to international demand for oil. Western governments including the U.S. are culpable in this crisis, and this responsibility augments the moral imperative that the international community act to protect the people of Darfur.

Even a purely “African solution” would be international in character, as Africa is a continent, not a country. The African Union has a critical role in addressing this crisis, and its engagement reflects the interests of African governments in protecting civilians outside their own borders. The reality is that at this time the AU does not have anywhere near the capacity to operate a robust and effective peacekeeping mission on its own in Darfur, nor does it have the trust of local communities necessary to integrate peacekeeping efforts into a broad-based political peace process. Therefore, international engagement at the level of the UN is vital to peace and security in Darfur, and successful movement by this body requires bold leadership by the U.S.