

Who are the Darfurians? Arab and African Identities, Violence and External Engagement

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This paper is an attempt to explain the processes of identity formation that have taken place in Darfur over the last four centuries. The basic story is of four overlapping processes of identity formation, each of them primarily associated with a different period in the region's history. The four are the 'Sudanic identities' associated with the Dar Fur sultanate, Islamic identities, the administrative tribalism associated with the 20th century Sudanese state, and the recent polarization of 'Arab' and 'African' identities, associated with new forms of external intrusion and internal violence. It is a story that emphasizes the much-neglected east-west axis of Sudanese identity, arguably as important as the north-south axis, and redeems the neglect of Darfur as a separate and important locus for state formation in Sudan, paralleling and competing with the Nile Valley. It focuses on the incapacity of both the modern Sudanese state and international actors to comprehend the singularities of Darfur, accusing much Sudanese historiography of 'Nilocentrism', namely the use of analytical terms derived from the experience of the Nile Valley to apply to Darfur.

The term 'Darfurian' is awkward. Darfur refers, strictly speaking, to 'domain of the Fur'. As I shall argue, 'Fur' was historically an ethno-political term, but nonetheless, at any historical point has referred only to a minority of the region's population, which includes many ethnicities and tribes.¹ However, from the middle ages to the early 20th century, there was a continuous history of state formation in the region, and Sean O'Fahey remarks that there is a striking acceptance of Darfur as a single entity over this period.² Certainly, living in Darfur in the 1980s, and traveling to most parts of the region, the sense of regional identity was palpable. This does not mean there is agreement over the identity or destiny of Darfur. There are, as I shall argue, different and conflicting 'moral geographies'. But what binds Darfurians together is as great as what divides them.

Identity formation in Darfur has often been associated with violence and external engagement. One of the themes of this paper is that today's events have many historic precursors. However, they are also unique in the ideologically-polarized nature of the identities currently in formation, and the nature of external intrusion into Darfur. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of the U.S. determination that genocide is occurring in Darfur. There is a danger that the language of genocide and ideologically polarized identities will contribute to making the conflict more intractable.

While primarily an exercise in academic social history, this paper has a political purpose also. It is my contention that, for almost a century, Darfurians have been unable to make their history on their own terms, and one reason for that, is the absence of a coherent debate on the question, 'Who are the Darfurians?' By helping to generate such a debate, I hope it will be possible for the many peoples for whom Darfur is a common home, to discover their collective identity.

Sudanic Identities

The first of the processes of identity formation is, the 'Sudanic model' associated with indigenous state formation. In this respect, it is crucial to note that Dar Fur (the term I will use for the independent sultanate, from c. 1600 to 1916, with a break 1874-98) was a separate centre of state formation from the Nile Valley, which was at times more powerful than its riverain competitors. Indeed, Dar Fur ruled Kordofan from about 1791 to 1821 and at times had dominion over parts of the Nile Valley, and for much of its life the Mahdist state was dominated by Darfurians. Before the 20th century, only once in recorded history did a state based on the Nile rule Darfur, and then only briefly and incompletely (1874-82). This has been grossly neglected in the 'Nilocentric' historiography of Sudan. Rather than the 'two Sudans' familiar to scholars and politicians, representing North and South, we should consider 'three Sudans' and include Dar Fur as well.

The Keira Sultanate followed on from a Tunjur kingdom, with a very similarly-placed core in northern Jebel Marra (and there are many continuities between the two states, notably in the governance of the northern province) and a Daju state, based in the south of the mountain. Under the sultanate, we have an overall model of identity formation with a core Fur-Keira identity, surrounded by an 'absorbed' set of identities which can be glossed as Fur-Kunjara (with the Tunjur ethnicity, the historic state-forming predecessor of the Fur-Keira) enjoying similarly privileged status immediately to the north). 'Kunjara' itself means 'gathered together.' This is a pattern of ethnic-political absorption familiar to scholars of states including imperial Ethiopia, the Funj, Kanem-Borno and other Sudanic entities. Analysing this allows us to begin to address some of the enduring puzzles of Fur ethnography and linguistics, namely the different political structures of the different Fur clans and the failure to classify the Fur language, which appears to have been creolized as it spread from its core communities. However, the ethnography and history of the Fur remain desperately under-studied and under-documented.

Surrounding this, are subjugated groups. In the north are both nomadic Bedouins (important because camel ownership and long-distance trade were crucial to the wealth of the Sultan) and settled groups. Of the latter, the Zaghawa are the most important. In the 18th century, the Zaghawa were closely associated with the state. Zaghawa clans married into the ruling Keira family, and they provided administrators and soldiers to the court. To the south are more independent groups, some of which 'became Fur' by becoming absorbed into the Fur polity, and others of which retain a strong impulse for political independence, notably the Baggara Arabs. As in all such states, the king used violence unsparingly to subordinate these peripheral peoples.

To the far south is Dar Fertit, the term 'Fertit' signifying the enslaveable peoples of the forest zone. This is where the intrinsically violent nature of the Fur state is apparent. The state reproduced itself through dispatching its armies to the south, obtaining slaves and other plunder, and exporting them northwards to Egypt and the Mediterranean. This nexus of soldiers, slaves and traders is familiar from the historiography of Sudanic states, where 'wars without end' were essential to ensure the wealth and power of the rulers.³ O'Fahey describes the slaving party as the state in miniature.⁴ This in turn arose because of the geo-political position of the Sultanate on the periphery of the Mediterranean world, consumer of slaves, ivory and other plunder-related commodities. During the 18th and 19th century, the Forty Days Road to Asyut was Egypt's main source of slaves and other sub-Saharan commodities.⁵ When Napoleon Bonaparte occupied Egypt, he exchanged letters and gifts with the Sultan of Dar Fur.

All the major groups in Darfur are patrilineal, with identity inherited through the male line. One implication of this is that identity change can occur through the immigration of powerful males, who were in a position to marry into leading families or displace the indigenous men. Historically, the exception may have been some groups classed as Fertit, which were matrilineal. A combination of defensive identity formation under external onslaught and Islamization appears to have made matrilineality no more than a historical fragment. This, however, only reinforces the point that identity change is a struggle to control women's bodies. With the exception of privileged women at court, women are almost wholly absent from the historical record. But, knowing the sexual violence that has accompanied recent conflicts, we can surmise that rape and abduction were likely to have been mechanisms for identity change on the southern frontier.

Identity formation in the Sultanate changed over the centuries, from a process tightly focused on the Fur identity (from about 1600 to the later 1700s), to a more secular process in which the state lost its ideologically ethnic character, and ruled through an administrative hierarchy (up to 1916). It is also important to note the role of claims to Arab genealogy in the legitimation and the institutions of the state. The founding myth of the Sultanate includes Arab descent, traceable to the Prophet Mohammed. This is again familiar from all Sudanic states (Ethiopia having the variant of the Solomonic myth). Arabic was important because it brought a literate tradition, the possibility of co-opting traders and teachers from the Arab world, and above all because of the role of Islam as the state religion.

The state's indigenous Arab population was meanwhile 'Arab' chiefly in the archaic sense, used by Ibn Khaldun and others, of 'Bedouin'. This is a sense still used widely, and it is interesting that the Libyan

government (one of three Bedouin states, the others being Saudi Arabia and Mauritania), has regarded Tuaregs and other Saharan peoples as ‘Arab.’

This model of identity formation can be represented in the ‘moral geography’ of figure 1.

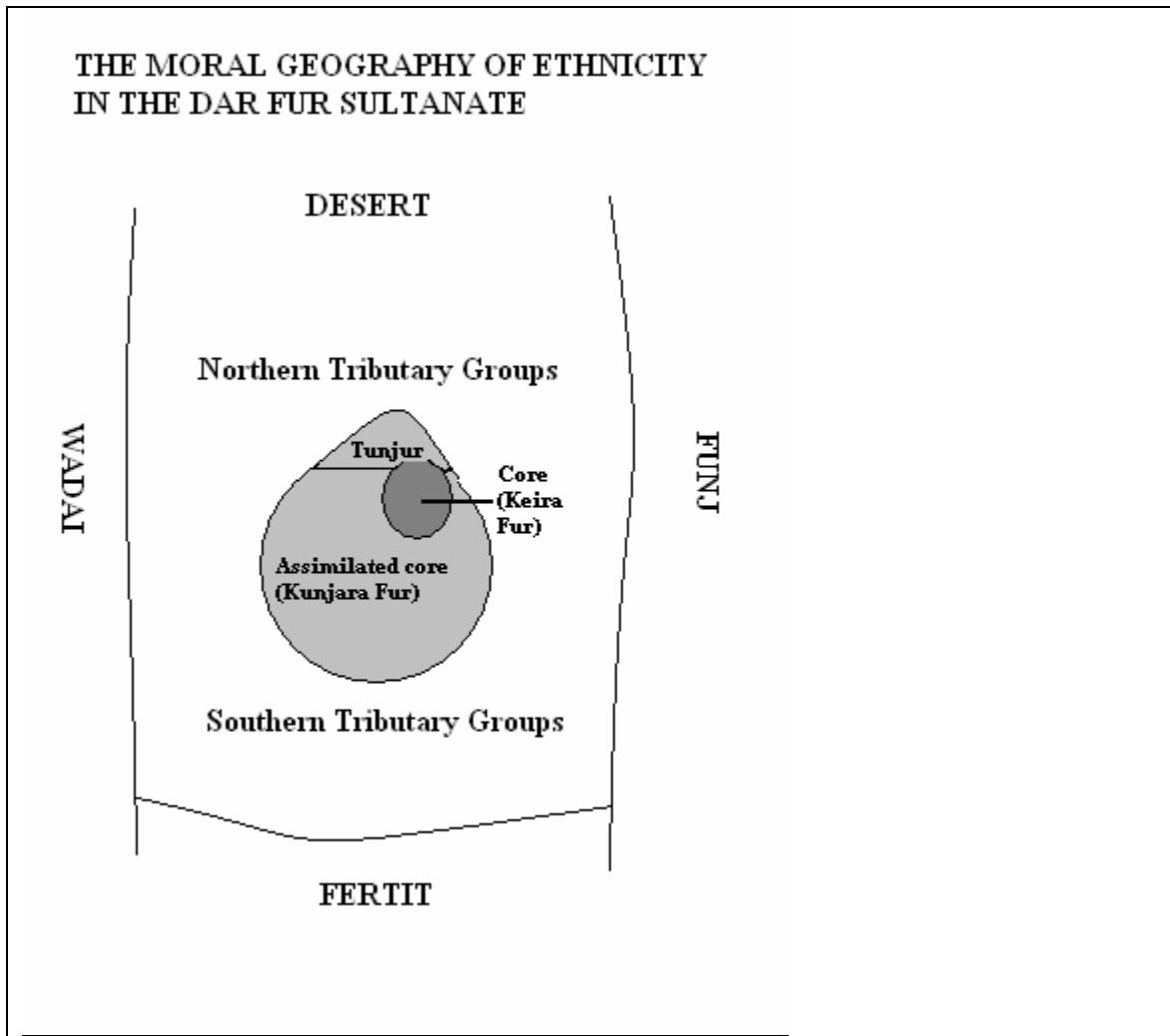


Figure 1: Moral geography of the Dar Fur sultanate as seen from the centre.

One significance of this becomes apparent when we map the categories onto the Turko-Egyptian state in the middle Nile Valley, 1821-74. For this state—which is essentially the direct predecessor of what we have today—the core identity is ‘Arab’, focused on the three tribes Shaigiya, Jaaliyiin and Danagla. (The first and second are particularly dominant in the current regime. The last is ‘Nubian’, illustrating just how conditional the term ‘Arab’ can be.) The other identity pole was originally ‘Sudanese’, the term used for enslavable black populations from the South in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but which by a curious process of label migration, came by the 1980s to refer to the ruling elite, the three tribes themselves. Meanwhile, the Southerners had adopted the term ‘African’ to assert their identity, contributing to a vibrant debate among Sudanese intellectuals as to Sudan’s relative positions in the Arab and African worlds.⁶ From the viewpoint of Southern Sudan (and indeed east Africa), ‘African’ and ‘Arab’ are polar opposites. From the viewpoint of Darfur and its ‘Sudanic’ orientation, ‘Arab’ is merely one subset of ‘African’. Darfurians had no difficulty with multiple identities, and indeed would have defined their African kingdom as encompassing indigenous Arabs, both Bedouins and cultural literate Arabs.

The transfer of the term 'African' from Southern Sudan to Darfur, and its use, not to encompass the Fertit groups but to embrace the state-forming Fur and Tunjur, and the similarly historically privileged Zaghawa, Masalit, Daju and Borgu, is therefore an interesting and anthropologically naïve category transfer. 'African' should have rather different meanings in Darfur.

Dar Fur's downfall came in the 1870s because it lost out to its competitor, the Turko-Egyptian regime and its client Khartoum traders, over the struggle for the slaving/raiding monopoly in the southern hinterland. The current boundaries of Sudan are largely defined by the point at which the Khedive's agents had reached at the time when their predatory expansion was halted by the Mahdist revolution. Their commerce and raiding inflicted immense violence on the peoples it conquered, subjecting them to famine and in some cases, complete dissolution and genocide. Historians have managed to reconstruct some of the societies that pre-existed this onslaught, but others live on in memory only, and others have disappeared without trace.⁷

Islamic Identities

The second model is the 'Islamic model'. This substantially overlaps with the 'Sudanic model' and complements it, but also has distinctive differences, which came to a head with the Sudanese Mahdiya (1883-98). Let us begin with the overlaps.

Islam was a state cult in Dar Fur from the 17th century. Most likely, Islam came to Dar Fur from the west, because the region was part of the medieval Kanem-Bornu empire, which was formally Islamic from the 11th century if not earlier. Nilocentric historians have tended to assume that Islam reached Dar Fur from the Nile Valley, but there is much evidence to suggest that it is not the case. For example, the dominant Sufi orders in Darfur are west African in origin (notably the Tijaniya), and the script used was the Andalusian-Saharan script, not the classic Arab handwriting of the Nile Valley.

The majority of Darfur's Arab tribes migrated into the sultanate in the middle of the 18th century, from the west.⁸ They trace their genealogy to the Juheiyina group, and ultimately to the Prophet (in common with all ruling lineages, Arab or non-Arab). During the 18th century, they exhibited a general south and eastward drift. At all times they were cultivators and herders of both camels and cattle, but as they moved east and south, cattle herding came to predominate and they became known collectively as the Baggara. Most of the tribal names they now have emerged in the 18th, 19th or 20th centuries, in some cases as they merged into new political units. An interesting and important example is the Rizeigat, a vast confederation of clans and sections, that migrated east and south, with three powerful sections (Nawaiba, Mahamid and Mahriya) converging to create the Rizeigat of ed Daien in south-eastern Darfur. But they also left substantial sections to the north and west, historic remnants of this migration. These sections have a troubled and uncertain relationship with their larger southern cousins, alternately claiming kinship and independence. Whereas the southern, Baggara, Rizeigat were awarded a territory by the Fur Sultan (who had not subjugated the area where they chose to live), the northern clans continued a primarily nomadic existence on the desert edge, without a specific place they could call home. When sections did settle (and many did), they were subject to the administrative authority of the Sultan's provincial governor of the northern region, Dar Takanawi or Dar el Rih. For historic reasons, this was an area in which administration was relatively de-tribalised, so the northern Bedouins were integrated into the Sultanate more as subjects than as quasi-autonomous tribal units.

The same process explains why we have a large Beni Halba Baggara group, with territorial jurisdiction, in southern Darfur, and a small Abbala group further to the north, and also similarly for the Misiriya whose main territories lie in south Kordofan, but who have remnant sections in northwest Darfur and Chad. Meanwhile the Zayadiya and Ma'aliya are not Juheiyina at all, and did not migrate in the same manner, and had different (though not necessarily easier) historic relations with the Sultanate.

The Hausa and Fulani migrations that occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries also have important parallels. They too populated substantial territories in Darfur (and also further east), and included remnant and more purely pastoral sections (such as the Um Bororo) that continued the eastward migration well into the late 20th century. An important component of the eastward drift is the influence of the Haj (many see themselves as 'permanent pilgrims', seeking to move towards Mekka), and Mahdist tradition that

emphasizes eastward migration.⁹ As we shall see, militant Mahdism is itself an import into Sudan from west Africa, brought with these migrants. There are other significant groups with origins to the west, such as the Borgu and Birgid, both of them sedentary Sudanic peoples. We should not see eastward migration as exclusively a phenomenon of politically-Islamized groups, pastoralists or Arabs.

The Juheiyina groups brought with them their own, distinctive ‘moral geography,’ one familiar to pastoral nomadic groups across the central Sudan and Sahelian regions. This sees all land as belonging to Allah, with right of use and settlement belonging to those who happen upon it. It sees Darfur as a chequerboard of different localities, some belonging to farmers and others to herders, with the two groups in a mutually-advantageous exchange relationship. It is also open-ended, especially towards the east. (The extent to which this is co-terminous with the moral geography of a Muslim pilgrim, exemplified by the west African migrants in Sudan, is an interesting question.)

This is represented in figure 2, which was drawn for me in outline by one of the most eminent Abbala Sheikhs, Hilal Musa of the Um Jalul Rizeigat, in 1985.

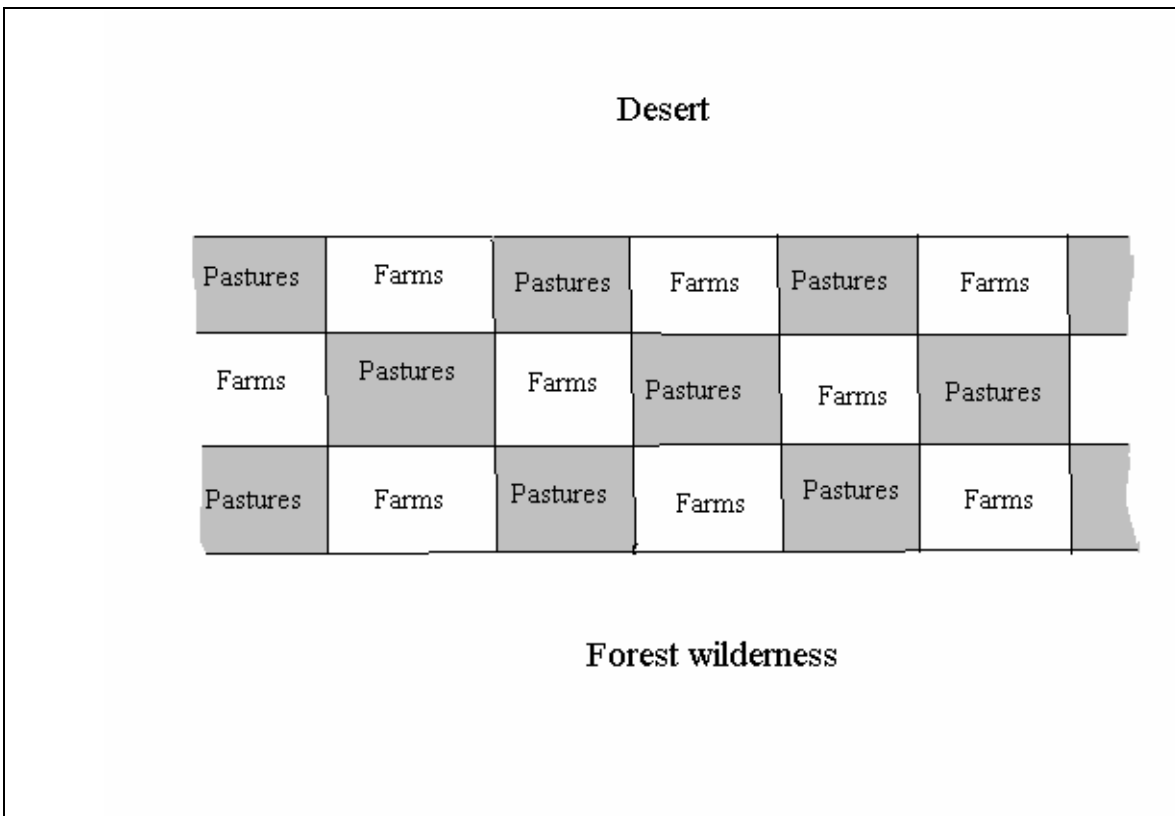


Figure 2: The ‘moral geography’ of Darfur, from a camel pastoralist viewpoint.

Several legacies of this are evident today. Most of the ‘Arab’ groups involved in militia activities including land grabbing are what we might call the Abbala remnants, with weak historic claims to tribally-defined territories, and traditions of migration and settlement to the east and south. Meanwhile, the majority of the Baggara Arabs of south Darfur are uninvolved in the current conflict.

Three other elements in the Islamic identity formation process warrant comment. One is Mahdism, which arrived in Darfur from the west, and has clear intellectual and social origins in the Mahdist state founded by Osman Dan Fodio in what is now northern Nigeria. Unlike the Nile Valley, where the Mahdist tradition was weak, in the west African savannas it was strong and well-articulated. Dan Fodio wrote ten treatises on Mahdism plus more than 480 vernacular poems, and insisted that the Mahdi had to bear the name Mohamed Ahmed (which ruled him out).¹⁰ The first Mahdist in 19th century Sudan was Abdullahi al

Ta'aishi, grandson of a wandering Tijani Sufi scholar from somewhere in west Africa, who met the Dongolawi holy militant Mohamed Ahmed in 1881 and proclaimed him the Mahdi, in turn becoming his Khalifa. The majority of the Mahdist armies derived from the Baggara of Darfur and Kordofan, and for most of its existence the Mahdist state in Omdurman was ruled by the Khalifa and his Ta'aisha kinsmen. In fulfillment of Mahdist prophecy and to support his power base, the Khalifa ordered the mass and forced migration of western peoples to Omdurman. The Mahdiya was, to a significant extent, a Darfurian enterprise. And it involved extreme violence, though of a radically different kind to that on which the Dar Fur sultanate was founded. This was religious, messianic Jihad, including population transfers on a scale not seen before or since.

Such is the stubborn Nilocentrism of Sudanese historiography that the influence of west African and Darfurian forms of Islam on this pivotal episode in Sudanese history, are consistently under-estimated. It was the collision between the heterodox Mahdist Jihadism of the west, including the egalitarian ideology of the Tijaniya, and the more orthodox and hierarchical (though also Sufist) Islam of the Nile Valley that created the Mahdiya.

The Mahdist period is remembered even today in the cultural archive of a time of extraordinary turmoil and upheaval. It was a time of war, pillage and mass displacement. In 1984/5, people looked back to the drought of 1913/14 as their historical point of reference. One wonders if the current historic reference point is the famine of 1888/9, known as 'Sanat Sita' because it occurred in the year six (1306 Islamic calendar), and which seems to have surpassed the Darfurians' otherwise inventive capacity for naming tragedy.

Beyond that historic precedent, I do not want to suggest that there are parallels between the Mahdiya and contemporary or recent political Islam in Sudan, which has had its own manifestations of extreme violence and jihadism. On the contrary, I would argue that it is the failure of Sudan's recent Islamist project that has contributed to the war in Darfur. This arises from the last important theme of Islamic identity, namely Hassan al Turabi's alliance-building across the east-west axis of Sudanese identities.

Among the many intellectual and practical innovations in Turabi's Islamism was an opening to African Muslims as individuals and African Islam as a tradition. The National Islamic Front recognized that Darfur represented a major constituency of devout Muslims that could be mobilized. It made significant openings to Darfur and to the substantial Fellata communities across Sudan.¹¹ It promised that Islam could be a route to enfranchisement as citizens of an Islamic state. In doing so, Turabi and his followers moved away from the traditional focus of the political Islamists on the more orthodox Islam of the Nile Valley, and its close association with the Arab world. It was, unfortunately, a false promise: the Sudanese state is the inheritor of the exclusivist project of the 19th century Khartoum traders, and sought only to enlist the Darfurians and Fellata as foot soldiers in this enterprise. For the Fellata it had a quick win: it could grant them citizenship, correcting a longstanding anomaly of nationality policy. And it has gained the loyalty of many Fellata leaders as a result. But for Darfurians, the best it offered was relative neutrality in the emergent conflicts between Darfur's Arabs and non-Arabs, and increasingly, not even that. Darfur was marginal even to the Islamists' philanthropic projects in the 1990s, which at least provided basic services and food relief to many remote rural communities. Perhaps because the Islamists took the region for granted, and certainly because the ruling groups were focused on the threats from the South, Nuba and Blue Nile, Darfur was neglected in the series of Islamist projects aimed at social transformation.

When the Islamist movement split in 1999, most Darfurian Islamists went into opposition. By an accident of fate, the most powerful Darfurian in the security apparatus was an airforce general from the Abbala Rizeigat, and members of those sections were rapidly put in place as leaders of the Popular Defence Force in critical locations, removing men whom the government suspected of having sympathies with the Turabi faction. Thus was created a set of militias popularly known as 'Janjawiid,' adopting a term first used to refer to Chadian Abbala militias that used western Darfur as a rear base in the mid-1980s, and who armed some of their Abbala brethren and helped instigate major clashes in 1987-90. The Darfur war is, in a significant way, a fight over the ruins of the Sudanese Islamist movement, by two groups, both of which seem to have abandoned any faith that the Islamist project will deliver anything other than power.

The third note of significance concerns the position of women. In the Tijaniyya sect, with its far more egalitarian tradition than the Sufis of the Nile, women can achieve the status of sheikh or teacher. This reflects both the religious traditions of the Sudanic region, and also the relatively higher socio-economic status of women in savanna societies, where they could own their own fields and engage in trade in their own right. Darfurian ethnographies repeatedly note the economic independence enjoyed by women, among non-Arab and Arab groups alike. The subsequent spread of Islamic orthodoxy, described more below, contributed to a regression in women's status.

Administrative Tribalism and 'Becoming Sudanese'

The British conquest of Dar Fur in 1916, and the incorporation of the then-independent sultanate of Dar Masalit in 1922-3, represented a clear break with the past. Darfur was ruled by an external Leviathan which had no economic interest in the region and no ideological ambition other than staving off trouble. Darfur was annexed when the basic determinants of British policies in Sudan had already been established, and the main decisions (e.g. the adoption of Native Administration after 1920, the expulsion of Egyptian civil servants after 1924, the embrace of neo-Mahdism and the Khatmiya, the adoption of the Famine Regulations in the 1930s, the Sudanisation of the civil service, and the moves towards independence) were all taken with scant reference to Darfur.

The key concern in Darfur in the decade after the conquest was security, and specifically the prevention of Mahdist uprisings. An attack on Nyala in 1921 was among the most serious threats the new rulers faced, and the last significant uprising was in 1927. In riverain Sudan, the British faced a more immediate danger, in the form of revolutionary nationalism, on the slogan of unity of the Nile Valley, among the educated elite and detribalized elements especially Sudanese soldiers. To suppress both, and to ensure the utmost economy in rural administration, the British chose a policy of 'Native Administration'. This was not 'Indirect Rule' as practiced in the Nigerian Emirates or Buganda (except in the case of the Sultanate of Dar Masalit, where the British officer was a Resident). Rather, it was the creation of a new hierarchy of tribal administrators, with the significant innovation of the 'omda, the administrative chief intermediate between the paramount chief ('nazir' for Arab tribes) and the village sheikh. 'Omda was an Egyptian office specially imported for the purpose.¹²

In a series of ordinances, the British regularized the status of tribal authorities. A particularly important act was to grant judicial powers to chiefs, in addition to their executive powers. This was a means of setting the tribal leaders to police their subjects, to keep an eye on both millenarian preachers and discontented graduates. (It is interesting that the leader of the 1924 nationalist revolt, Ali Al Latif, as a detribalized Southerner or 'Sudanese' in the parlance of the day, having no tribal leader to whom he could become subject, was kept in jail in Sudan long beyond his prison term, and then exiled to Egypt.) Along with this came the 'Closed Districts Ordinance', much criticized for shutting off the South and Nuba Mountains from external influences, but used in Darfur to keep an eye on wandering preachers and west African immigrants.

But the most significant corollary of Native Administration was tidying up the confusion of ethnic identities and tribal allegiances that existed across Sudan. This was an administrative necessity more than an ideological cleaning-up.

The colonial archives from the 1920s and '30s are filled with exchanges of letters on how to organize the ethnic chaos encountered in rural Sudan.¹³ In Darfur, the most significant question was the administration of the Rizeigat, which included shoring up the authority of the pro-British Nazir, Madibbu, regulating the shared pastures on the Bahr el Arab river, also grazed by the Dinka, and deciding the status of the Abbala Rizeigat (initially subject to Nazir Ibrahim Madibbu, then with their own deputy Nazir, finally with their own full Nazir). Other activities included grouping the two sections of the Beni Hussein together, and providing them with land in north-western Darfur (a very rare instance of a wholesale tribal relocation, albeit one done with the consent of the section that needed to be relocated), administratively uniting the two parts of the Beni Halba, finding means of appointing a chief for the Birgid, grouping the miscellaneous sections living in an area called 'Dar Erenga' together to form one tribe, etc. A lot of attention was paid to the Fertit groups living on Darfur's southern frontier, including a brave but futile attempt to move them into

Southern Sudan and create a 'cordon sanitaire' between Muslims and non-Muslims. But this was an anomaly: the basic approach was 'live and let live.'

Native Administration was reformed in the 1940s and 1960s (when chiefs were stripped of most of their judicial powers) and formally abolished in 1971, although many people elected to Rural People's Councils were former native administrators.

Along with the regularizing of tribal administration came the formalizing of boundaries. The British stuck with the four-fold division of the Dar Fur sultanate into provinces, and demarcated tribal territories for the Baggara in south Darfur (following the Sultan's practice). Elsewhere, the allocation of tribal dars was somewhat haphazard. The creation of Dar Beni Hussein in the western part of north Darfur was anomalous: when a group did not present a problem, it was left to be. However, the de facto recognition of the legality of a tribal dar in south Darfur began to build a legacy.¹⁴ Beforehand, the term 'dar' had been used in many different senses, ranging from a specific location or administrative unit, to the specific territory of an ethnic group, to the whole Sultanate, to an abstract region such as Dar Fertit. But, by constant usage, twinned with a tribally-based administrative system with judicial powers, the term 'dar' came primarily to refer to an ethnic territory in which the dominant group had legal jurisdiction. By the 1970s, Sudan's leading land law scholar could conclude that tribes have become 'almost the owners of their homelands.'¹⁵ During most of the 20th century, this had no significant political repercussions, as it coincided nicely with the customary practice of a settler adopting the legal code of one's hosts. There was sufficient free land, and a strong enough tradition of hospitality to settlers, that by the 1970s all 'dars' in south Darfur were ethnically mixed, some of them with very substantial settler populations from the drought-stricken north.

Let us not over-emphasize the implications of tribal administration for identity formation. It undoubtedly slowed and even froze processes of identity formation. But it was lightly implemented. Many district officers in Darfur reveled in the myriad forms of ethnic identity and chieftanship they found, documenting the intermediate identities of the Kaitinga (part Tunjur/Fur, part Zaghawa), the Jebel Si Arabs, the Dar Fongoro Fur, and numerous others; also allowing Darfurian administrators to keep their wonderful array of traditional titles including Sultan, Mek, Dimangawi, Shartay, Amir, and Nazir. Given that there were no significant economic interests in Darfur, no project for social change or modernization, and no land alienation, we must recognize the limits of imperial social engineering. It had a very light hand, both for good and ill.

Indeed, in the 1960s and '70s, Darfur became something of a textbook case for identity change. During the preparatory studies for establishing the Jebel Marra Rural Development Project, a number of eminent social anthropologists were employed to study social change in Darfur.¹⁶ Among their writings are a number of studies on how sedentary Fur farmers, on acquiring sufficient cattle, would 'become Baggara' in stages, to the extent of teaching their children the Arabic language and adopting many socio-cultural traits of the pastoralists they moved with. This was a remarkable reversal of the previous pattern whereby communities 'became Fur' for political reasons; now individuals might 'become Baggara' for economic ones. There were also studies of the sedenterization of nomads, underlining how the nomad/farmer distinction is an extremely blurred one. Sadly, there were no comparable studies in northern Darfur.

Most proposals for a settlement of Darfur's conflict include the revival of Native Administration in some form, both for the resolution of inter-communal conflicts (including settling land disputes) and for local administration.¹⁷ Whether or not the important role of chiefs' courts will be re-established is far less clear. However, the context of the early 21st century is very different to the 1920s. This is clear from a brief examination of the role played by the tribal leaders in the resolution of the 1987-9 conflict and the revived Native Administration Council after 1994.

The first major conflict in Darfur of recent times occurred in 1987-9, and had many elements that prefigure today's war, not least the fact that the major protagonists were Fur militia and Abbala Arab fighters known as 'Janjawiid'. Belatedly, a peace conference was called including tribal leaders on both sides, some of whom sought to reestablish their authority over younger militant leaders, and some who sought for advancement of their own positions. Assisted by the fact that the NIF coup occurred while the conference was in session—allowing both sides to make compromises without losing face—an agreement was

reached. But it was not implemented; fighting broke out again, and another conference was held in early 1990, which came with similar recommendations, which again were not properly implemented. The key lesson from this is that Native Administration is not a solution in itself, but rather a component of finding and implementing a solution. Control of armed groups, payment of compensation, and measures to deal with the causes of dispute are all necessary.

A form of Native Administration Council was established in 1994, a measure that coincided with the division of Darfur into three states and renewed conflict in western Darfur. There are two ways in which the NAC is implicated in the conflict. First, the government saw the award of chieftancies (usually called Emirates) as a means of rewarding its followers and undermining the power of the Umma Party, which retained the allegiance of many of the older generation of sheikhs. Second, the positions were awarded with a new, simplified and more administratively powerful view of ethnicity. The very rationale for creating the new entities was to reinforce the power of a central authority (a party as much as, or more than, a state). In a militarized environment, with no services delivered by party or state, the reward for the new chiefs was the power to allocate land and guns within his jurisdiction. It was a recipe for local level ethnic cleansing, which duly occurred in several places.

During the colonial period—less than four decades for Darfur, scarcely three for Dar Masalit—and the first decades of independence, Darfur was subject to a state in Khartoum which knew little, and cared less, about this faraway region. Little changed with independence. The entire debate over Sudanese independence was conducted in Nilocentric terms: the dual questions were whether Sudan should be united with Egypt, and what should be the status of the South.¹⁸ The position of Darfur was almost wholly absent from this discourse, and remained a footnote in ongoing debates on Sudanese national identity. For example, perhaps the most eloquent analyst of the dilemmas of Sudanese identity, writing in the format of fiction that allows him to explore more explicitly the unstated realities of Sudanese racism, treats Darfurian identity wholly within the North-South framework.¹⁹

The state that ensued was a clear successor to the Turko-Egyptian colonial state. It was, and remains, a merchant-soldier state, espousing Arabism, using Arabic as a language of instruction in schools and in the media, and promoting Islam as a state ideology. Its political discourse is almost wholly Nilo-centric: the key debates leading up to independence concerned whether Sudan would opt for unity with Egypt under the slogan of ‘unity of the Nile Valley’, and subsequent debates on national identity have been framed along the North-South axis of whether Sudan is part of the Arab or African world. There were brave attempts by scholars and activists to assert that Sudan is at once Arab and African, and that the two are fully compatible. These efforts came from all parts of the political spectrum: it is particularly interesting to see the Islamists’ arguments on this score.²⁰ Some of the academic historians who engaged in this debate worked on Sudan’s westward links. They, however, were both academically a minority and found no political reverberations for their writings. Whether polarizing or attempting bridging, the discourse was overwhelmingly North-South. And, within Northern Sudan especially, we see the relentless progress of absorption into the culture of the administrative and merchant elite.

What we see is a process that has been called many names, of which I prefer ‘Sudanization,’ following Paul Doornbos, who produced a series of superb if under-referenced studies of this phenomenon in Dar Masalit in the early 1980s.²¹ ‘Arabization’ is not adequate, because Darfur’s indigenous Bedouin Arabs were also subject to the same process, and because it did not result in people who were culturally ‘Arab’. Rather, individuals came to belong to a category of Sudanese who spoke Arabic, wore the jellabiya or thoub, prayed publicly, used paper money, and abandoned tribal dancing and drinking millet beer. Doubtless, the newly-Sudanised were at social and financial disadvantage when dealing with the established elites. But they were not expropriated of land or identity, and most of them straddled both the ‘Sudanised’ and local identities, and gained from it.

One of the most marked aspects of Sudanisation is a change in the status of women. The Darfurian Sudanised women is (ideally) circumcised, secluded at home, economically dependent on her husband, meek in her behaviour, and dressed in the thoub. The spread of female circumcision in Darfur in the 1970s and ‘80s, at a time when the Sudanese metropolitan elite was moving to abandon the practice, is perhaps

the most striking physical manifestation of this process, and yet another illustration of how identity change is marked on women's bodies. It is also an illustration of the recency of a 'traditional' practice.

What is remarkable about these processes of identity change is not that they occurred, or that they were subject to the arbitrary impositions of a state, but that they were almost entirely non-violent (with the significant caveat of genital mutilation). This is an important contrast with the South and the Nuba Mountains.

Incorporation into a Sudanese polity did bring with it a clear element of racism, based on colour of skin, and facial characteristics. Although both the Sudanic and Islamic processes of identity formation could not avoid a racial tinge, it was with Egyptian dominance and the successor Sudanese state that this became dominant. The Egyptian or Mediterranean littoral 'moral geography' of Dar Fur can be charted as early as 1800, when the Arab trader Mohamed al Tunisi lived there: he graded the land and its inhabitants according to the colour of skin, the beauty of women, and their sexual mores.²² A broadly similar racist classification became evident in Egyptian occupation of the Nile Valley in the mid-19th century, and remains essentially unchanged today.

A particularly important difference between Darfur and other parts of Sudan is the significance of land and labour. Under the British and independent governments, very substantial agricultural schemes were established along the Nile and in eastern Sudan, and subsequently in south Kordofan. These involved widespread land alienation and the transformation of a rural peasantry into a wage labour force, much of it seasonally migrant.²³ In Darfur there was no land alienation to speak of, and seasonal labour migration is almost entirely within the region, to work on locally-owned smallholdings (some of which are large by Darfur standards, but do not match the huge registered schemes of the eastern savannas). The violent depredation and dispossession inflicted by the Sudanese state in the 1980s and 90s on the Nuba, Blue Nile peoples and adjacent areas of Upper Nile, creating mass internal displacement with the twin economic aims of creating mechanized farms owned by a Khartoum elite and creating a disadvantaged labour force to work them, has no parallel in Darfur. To a significant degree, Darfur has served as a labour reserve for Gezira and Gedaref, but because of the distances involved, the migration is long-term and not seasonal.²⁴ And the Darfurian labour reserve has never been of strategic economic significance, such that national economic policies have been geared to sustaining it. Male outmigration has left the poorest parts of Darfur with a gender imbalance and a preponderance of female-headed households.²⁵

Labour migration has had implications for the way in which the riverain elite regards westerners. In the 1920s, landowners were reported as saying that just as God (or the British) had taken away their slaves, he/they had brought the Fellata. The lowly status of this devout Muslim pilgrim group is closely associated with their low-status labouring occupations, and much the same holds for the Darfurians (of all ethnicities). The term 'abid' was often applied to them all, indiscriminately, reflecting both racism and their labouring status.²⁶ It is arguable that racist attitudes followed economic stratification, rather than vice versa. In either case, there is a clear association between status and skin colour.

Incorporation into a Sudanese national state also, simultaneously, represented incorporation into a wider regional identity schema, in which the three attributes of skin colour, economic status and Arab identification all served to categorize populations. Mohamed al Tunisi would feel at home in the contemporary moral geography of Sudan, almost two centuries after his travels.

Militarized and Ideological 'Arab' and 'African' Identities

The complex history of identity formation in Darfur provides rich material for the creation of new ethnic identities. What has happened is that as Darfur has been further incorporated into national Sudanese processes, wider African and Middle Eastern processes, and political globalization, Darfur's complex identities have been radically and traumatically simplified, creating a polarized 'Arab versus African' dichotomy that is historically bogus, but disturbingly powerful. The ideological construction of these polarized identities has gone hand-in-hand with the militarization of Darfur, first through the spread of small arms, then through the organization of militia, and finally through full-scale war. The combination of fear and violence is a particularly potent combination for forging simplified and polarized identities, and

such labels are likely to persist as long as the war continues. The U.S. government's determination that the atrocities in Darfur amount to 'genocide' and the popular use of the terms 'Arab' and 'African' by journalists, aid agencies and diplomats, have further entrenched this polarization, to the degree that community leaders for whom the term 'African' would have been alien even a decade ago, now readily identify themselves as such when dealing with international interlocutors.

Internally, this polarization began with some of Darfur's Arabs. Exposed to the Islamist-Arabism of Khartoum, drawing upon the Arab lineage ideology latent in their Juheiyana identities, and often closely involved in Colonel Gaddafi's ideologically Arabist enterprises in the 1970s and '80s, these men adopted an Arab supremacist ideology. This seems to have been nurtured by Gaddafi's dreams of an Arab homeland across the Sahara and Sahel (notwithstanding the Libyan leader's expansive definition of 'Arab' which, true to his own Bedouin roots, includes groups such as the Tuareg), and by competition for posts in Darfur's regional government in the 1980s. In 1987, a group of Darfurian Arabs wrote a now-famous letter to Prime Minister Sadiq el Mahdi, demanding a better deal for Darfur's Arabs. They appealed to him as 'one of their own.' At one level this was simply a legitimate demand for better political representation and better services. But within it lurked an agenda of Arab supremacism. Subsequently, it has become very difficult to separate the ambitious agenda of a Darfurian Arab homeland from wider and more modest goals, and to identify which documents are real and which are not. But there is no doubt that, twinned with similar ambitions among the Chadian Juheiyana Arabs, there was a political and territorial agenda emerging. This helps explain why some of the first and fiercest clashes of 1987 were in the highland Jebel Marra area of Gulu, a territory which would be clearly indicated a 'Fur' heartland on any moral geography of the region including that of Sheikh Hilal, reproduced above, whose son Musa has since become infamous as commander of a major PDF brigade. The attacks on Gulu in 1987 and again in 2002 and 2004, represent a symbolic strike at the heart of Fur identity and legitimacy, as well as a tactical assault on a Fur resistance stronghold.

This newly-politicized Arab identity was also militarized. Three overlapping strands of militarization can be seen. One is the Ansar, the core followers of the Mahdi, who are historically a political, religious and military movement. Between 1970 and 1977, the Ansar leadership was in exile in Libya, planning its return to power, which it tried in 1976 and failed. Many returned to Sudan in 1977 as part of the 'National Reconciliation' between Sadiq el Mahdi and Nimeiri, but were not, as they had hoped, absorbed into the national army. Instead, they were settled on farming schemes. Disproportionately drawn from the Baggara tribes, former Ansar fighters were instrumental in the creation of the first Baggara militias in the mid-1980s. A second group of Ansar returned in 1985-6, following the fall of Nimeiri.²⁷ While in Libya, the Ansar had been organized, trained and armed alongside Gaddafi's Islamic Legion, which drew recruits from across the Sahelian countries.²⁸ This is the second contributor to the militarization of the Bedouin. The Islamic Legion was disbanded after its defeat in Ouadi Doum in 1987, but its legacy remained. The third contributor was the formation of Arab militias in Chad, which used Darfur as a rear base for their persistent but unsuccessful attempts to take state power. The different political, tribal and ideological strands of this story have yet to be teased apart. Clearly there are important differences within these groups, including a competition for the allegiance of the Ansar fighters between the Umma leadership and the NIF. Gaddafi was also quite capable of treating with non-Arab groups such as the Zaghawa when it suited him, and was quick to recognize the government of Idris Deby when it took power in late 1990. Although Deby had been a commander of the forces that defeated the Libyan army and Islamic Legion a few years earlier, Gaddafi's main quarrel was with Hissene Habre.

While there is a definite strain of Arab supremacism, the significance of 'Arab' identity must not be overstated. The groups involved in the current conflict are overwhelmingly Juheiyana Abbala (excluding for example the Zayadiya), with relatively few Baggara groups (notably including one part of the Beni Halba, many of whom were armed and mobilized in 1991 to counter the SPLA incursion into Darfur). This means that the largest and most influential of Darfur's Arabs are not involved, including the Baggara Rizeigat, the Habbaniya, the Maaliya and most of the Taaisha. As the conflict continues to spread and escalate, this may change, and there are clear attempts by some in government to bring in all Arab groups (especially the Rizeigat) on their sides, and attempts by some on the rebel sides to provoke them.

The character of Arab supremacism is manifest in a racist vocabulary and in sexual violence. The term ‘zurug’ has long been used in the casual racism of Arabs in Darfur, despite—or perhaps because of—the absence of any discernible differences in skin colour. Attributions of female beauty or lack thereof are similarly made, again despite or because of the lack of noticeable difference. The term ‘‘abid’, which has long been used by the riverain elites to refer to all Darfurians, has been adopted by some Arab supremacists to refer to non-Arab Darfurians, despite—or because of—its lack of historical precedent. And widespread rape itself is a means of identity destruction or transformation, particularly salient and invasive for Muslim communities. In the early 1990s Nuba Mountains counterinsurgency campaigns, there is ample documentation that rape was used systematically and deliberately for this purpose.²⁹

The creation of ‘Africanism’ is more recent than the ascent of Arab supremacism. It owes much to the SPLA, whose leader, John Garang, began to speak of an ‘African majority’ in Sudan to counter the Islamist government’s claim that Sudan should be an Islamic state because it had a majority Muslim population. Garang reached out to the Nuba and peoples of southern Blue Nile, for whom ‘African’ was an identity with which they could readily identify. For example, the Nuba clandestine political and cultural organization of the 1970s and early ‘80s, known as Komolo, asserted the Nuba’s right to their own cultural heritage, which they identified as distinctively ‘African.’ Under the leadership of Yousif Kuwa, Komolo activist and SPLA governor of the Nuba Mountains, the Nuba witnessed a revival of traditional dancing, music and religion.³⁰

Trapped in a set of identity markers derived from the historical experience of the Nile Valley, a number of educated Darfurian non-Arabs chose ‘African’ as the best ticket to political alliance-building. The veteran Darfurian politician Ahmed Diraiige had tried to do this in the 1960s, making alliances with the Nuba and Southerners, but had then switched to trying to bring Darfur’s non-Arabs into the Umma Party, hoping thereby to broaden and secularise that party. Daud Bolad, a Fur and a prominent Islamist student leader, switched from one political extreme to the other and joined the SPLA, leading a poorly-planned and militarily disastrous SPLA expedition into Darfur in 1991. Sharif Harir, a professor of social anthropology and as such inherently distrustful of such labels, was one of the first Darfurian intellectuals to recognize the danger posed by the new Arab Alliance, and has ended up reluctantly donning the ‘African’ label. He is now one of the political leaders of Darfur’s Sudan Liberation Movement.

The influence of the SPLA on the Darfurian opposition should be acknowledged. What was originally a peasant jacquerie was given political ambition with the assistance of the SPLA. Indeed, the Darfur Liberation Front was renamed the SLA under SPLA influence, and it adopted Garang’s philosophy of the ‘New Sudan’, perhaps more seriously than its mentor.

It is a commonplace of ethnographic history that communal violence powerfully helps constitute identity. In times of fear and insecurity, people’s ambit of trust and reciprocity contracts, and identity markers that emphasize difference between warring groups are emphasized. Where sexual violence is widespread, markers of race and lineage are salient. Much anecdotal evidence indicates that this is happening today, and that the civilian communities most exposed to the conflict are insisting on the ‘African’ label. We can speculate that it serves as a marker of difference from the government and its militia, an expression of hope for solidarity from outside, and—perhaps most significant in the context of forced displacement and threats of further dispossession—a claim to indigeneity and residence rights. For whatever reason, identity markers that had little salience in the past are extremely powerful today, and the overwhelming reason for this is the appalling violence inflicted on people.

From the point of view of the SLA leadership, including the leadership of the communities most seriously affected by atrocity and forced displacement, the term ‘African’ has served them well. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the depiction of ‘Arabs’ killing ‘Africans’ in Darfur conjures up, in the mind of a non-Sudanese (including many people in sub-Saharan Africa), a picture of bands of light-skinned Arabs marauding among villages of peaceable black-skinned people, of indeterminate religion. In the current context in which ‘Arabs’ are identified, in the popular western and sub-Saharan African press, with the instigators of terrorism, it readily labels Darfur’s non-Arabs as victims.

From the point of view of the government in Khartoum, the labels are also tactically useful. While insisting that the conflict is tribal and local, it turns the moral loading of the term 'Arab' to its advantage, by appealing to fellow members of the Arab League, that Darfur represents another attempt by the west (and in particular the U.S.) to demonize the Arab world. In turn this unlocks a regional alliance, for which Darfur stands as proxy for Iraq and Palestine. Looking more widely than Darfur, the term 'Arab' implies global victimhood.

The U.S. determination that Darfur counts as 'genocide' plays directly into this polarizing scenario. It is easy for self-identified Arab intellectuals in Khartoum (and elsewhere) to see this finding as (yet another) selective and unfair denigration of Arabs. If, in the confrontation between the Arabs and the Israelis and Americans, Arabs are cast as 'terrorists', warranting pre-emptive military action and a range of other restrictions on their rights, now in the context of Africa, they are cast as 'genocidaires' and similarly cast beyond the moral pale and rendered subject to military intervention and criminal tribunals. Arab editorialists are thus driven both to deny genocide and to accuse the U.S. of double standards, asking why killings in (for example) Congo are not similarly labeled.

In fact, the U.S. State Department was reluctant to conclude that Darfur counted as genocide, and the Secretary of State insisted, almost in the same breath that he announced 'genocide', that it would not change U.S. policy. The impetus for the genocide finding did not come from Washington's neocons, but rather from liberal human rights activists and members of the religious right. The origins of this coalition lie both in genuine outrage at the conditions of life in Sudan, and also in the politics of support for the SPLA (with the Israeli lobby as a discrete marriage broker), which intersected with influence trading in Congress, specifically finding an issue (slavery in Southern Sudan) that brings together the Black Caucus, the Israeli lobby, the religious right (for whom Sudan is a crusade) and the human rights groups (who began campaigning on this long before the others). Several of these groups were frustrated that the State Department, under the Republicans, had switched from a policy of regime change in Khartoum to a pursuit of a negotiated peace for Southern Sudan. The war in Darfur was a vindication of their thesis that no business could be done with Khartoum's evildoers. The atrocities were sufficiently swift and graphic, and coincided with the tenth anniversary of the preventable genocide in Rwanda, giving remarkable salience to the genocide claim. Congress passed a resolution, and the State Department prevaricated by sending an investigative team, confident that because there was no evident intent at complete extermination of the target groups, that their lawyers would find some appropriately indeterminate language to express severe outrage, short of moral excommunication of Khartoum (with which State was still negotiating) and military intervention. What State had not counted on was that the definition of Genocide in the 1948 Convention is wider than the lay definition and customary international usage, and includes actions that fall short of a credible attempt at the absolute annihilation of an ethnic or racial group. The State Department's lawyers, faithful to the much neglected letter of the law, duly found genocide, and the Secretary of State, doubtless judging that it would be more damaging to ignore his lawyers' public advice, duly made the announcement, and then said that this would not affect U.S. policy.

Arrived at without grand design other than faithfulness to the facts as reported, the genocide finding has a number of implications. One is that it divides the U.S. from its allies in Europe and Africa. Given that the Sudan peace process is a rare contemporary example of multilateralism (albeit ad hoc) and rare example of a success in U.S. foreign policy (albeit incomplete), it is important that this unity is not fully sundered. At present, it appears that the State Department has succeeded in keeping its policy on track, despite being outflanked by the militants in Washington. (Had the Democrats won in November, we might have faced the ironic situation of a more aggressive U.S. policy.)

Second, the broader interpretation of the Genocide Convention, while legally correct, is one that diplomats have been avoiding for decades, precisely because it creates a vast and indeterminate grey area of atrocity, in which intervention is licensed. A tacit consensus had developed to set the bar higher: now the U.S. has lowered it, and Arab critics are correct: if Darfur is genocide, then so is Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Nigeria and a host of others. The neocons do indeed have another weapon in their armoury of unilateral intervention. Arguably, they didn't need it, already having sufficient reason to intervene on the basis of the September 2002 U.S. National Security doctrine.

And thirdly, for Darfur, the genocide finding is being internalized into the politics of the region. This is occurring in the context of considerable external dependence by Darfur's political organizations and communities. The political organizations have centered their strategies around external engagement. The Islamists in the Justice and Equality Movement have a strategy for regime change, using the atrocities in Darfur to delegitimize the Khartoum government internationally, thereby bring it down. The SLA, representing a broad coalition of communities in arms, has yet to develop a full political programme, and is instead largely reacting to events, especially the escalating atrocities since late 2003. It seeks international intervention as a best option, and international monitoring and guarantees as a second best. The communities it represents, many of them either receiving or seeking international assistance, are also orienting their self-representation to the international audience. They have been provided with a simple and powerful language with which to make their case.

The other lenses for analyzing Darfurian identities are too subtle and complex to be of much use for journalists and aid workers. So we are stuck with a polarizing set of ideologically constructed identities, mutually antagonistic. If, as seems likely, these labels become strongly attached, they will hugely complicate the task of reconstructing the social fabric of Darfur or, given the impossibility of returning to the recent past—they will obstruct the construction of a new Darfurian identity that stresses the common history of the region and the interdependence of its peoples.

Conclusion

Let me conclude this essay with two main observations.

First, who are the Darfurians? I argue that Darfur has had a remarkably stable continuous identity as a locus for state formation over several centuries, and is a recognizable political unit in a way that is relatively uncommon in Africa. But the incorporation of Darfur into Sudan, almost as an afterthought, has led not only to the economic and political marginalization of Darfurians, but the near-total neglect of their unique history and identity. Just as damaging for Darfurians as their socio-political marginalization has been the way in which they have been forced to become Sudanese, on terms that are alien to them. To overcome this, we must move to acknowledging a politics of three Sudans: North, South and West. It is probably a naïve hope, but a recognition of the unique contribution of Darfurians and the inclusive nature of African identity in Darfur, could provide a way out of Sudan's national predicament of undecided identity. Short of this ambition, it is important for Darfurians to identify what they have in common, and undertake the hard intellectual labour of establishing their common identity.

Second, what we see is the gradual but seemingly inexorable simplification, polarization and cementing of identities in a Manichean mould. Within four generations, a set of negotiable identities have become fixed and magnetized. We should not idealize the past: while ethnic assimilation and the administration of the Sultanate may have been relatively benevolent at the centre, at the southern periphery it was extremely and systematically violent. Similarly, while Sufism is generally and correctly regarded as a tolerant and pacific set of faiths, it also gave birth to Mahdism, which inflicted a period of exceptional turmoil and bloodshed on Sudan, including Darfur. Violence has shaped identity formation in the past in Darfur, just as it is doing today. Also, from the days of the Sultanate, external economic and ideological linkages shaped the nature of state power and fed its centralizing and predatory nature. Today, the sources and nature of those external influences are different. A 'global war on terror' and its correlates influences the political and ideological landscape in which Darfur's conflict is located, including the very language used to describe the adversaries and what they are doing to one another and the unfortunate civilians who are in the line of fire. The humanitarians and human rights activists, as much as the counter-terrorists and diplomats, are part of this process whereby Darfurian identities are traumatically transformed once again. Hopefully there will be a counter-process, which allows for Darfurians to carve out a space in which to reflect on their unique history, identify what they share, and create processes whereby identities are not formed by violence.

¹ The use of the label 'tribe' is controversial. But when we are dealing with the subgroups of the Darfurian Arabs, who are ethnically indistinguishable but politically distinct, the term correlates with popular usage

and is useful. Hence, 'tribe' is used in the sense of a political or administrative ethnically-based unit. See Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, Anthropology in the Sudan: Reflections by a Sudanese Anthropologist, Utrecht, International Books, 2002.

² R. S. O'Fahey, State and Society in Dar Fur, London, Hurst, 1980.

³ Cf. S. P. Reyna, Wars without End: The Political Economy of a Precolonial African State, Hanover, University Press of New England, 1990; Lidwien Kapteijns, Mahdist Faith and Sudanic Tradition: A History of the Dar Masalit Sultanate 1870-1930, London, Kegan Paul, 1985; Janet J. Ewald, Soldiers, Traders and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley, 1700-1885, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990. The term 'wars without end' was used by the 19th century traveler Gustav Nachtigal with specific reference to the central Sudanic state of Bagirimi.

⁴ R. S. O'Fahey, 1980, *ibid*.

⁵ In the late 18th century, Egypt's trade with Dar Fur was five times larger than with Sinnar.

⁶ For the seminal debates on this issue, see Yusuf Fadl Hasan, Sudan in Africa, Khartoum University Press, 1971.

⁷ Dennis D. Cordell, 'The Savanna Belt of North-Central Africa,' in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (eds.), History of Central Africa, Vol 1, Longman, 1983, Stefano Santandrea, A Tribal History of the Western Bahr el Ghazal, Bologna, Nigrizia, 1964.

⁸ H. A. MacMichael, , A History of the Arabs in the Sudan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1922; Ian Cunnison, Baggara Arabs: Power and the Lineage in a Sudanese Nomad Tribe, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966.

⁹ C. Bawa Yamba, , Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan, Washington D.C., Smithsonian Press, 1995.

¹⁰ Ahmed Mohammed Kani, The Intellectual Origin of Islamic Jihad in Nigeria, London, Al Hoda, 1988.

¹¹ Awad Al-Sid Al-Karsani, 'Beyond Sufism: The Case of Millennial Islam in the Sudan,' in Louis Brenner (ed.) Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa, Indiana University Press, 1993.

¹² The Turko-Egyptian regime had also used administrative tribalism, and had created the position of 'sheikh al mashayikh' as paramount chieftancies of the riverain tribes. In the 1860s, this title was changed to 'nazir'. The sultans of Dar Fur tried similar mechanisms from the late 18th century, awarding copper drums to appointees.

¹³ This discussion derives chiefly from the author's notes from research in the Sudan National Archives in 1988. For simplicity, specific files are not referenced.

¹⁴ The real drive for the recognition of tribal territories was elsewhere in Sudan, where ethnic territorialization was less complex, and administration denser.

¹⁵ Saeed Mohamed El-Mahdi, Introduction to Land Law of the Sudan, Khartoum, Khartoum University Press, 1979, p. 2. In southern Darfur, there was a strong push by the regional authorities and development projects to recognize tribal dars in the 1980s. See Mechtild Runger, Land Law and Land Use Control in Western Sudan: The Case of Southern Darfur, London, Ithaca, 1987.

¹⁶ Frederik Barth, 'Economic Spheres in Darfur', in Raymond Firth (ed.), Themes in Economic Anthropology, London, Tavistock, 1967; Gunnar Haaland, 'Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes,' in Frederik Barth (ed.) Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, London, Allen and Unwin, 1969.

¹⁷ James Morton, The Poverty of Nations, London, British Academic Press, 1994.

¹⁸ Cf. Gabriel R. Warburg, Historical Discord in the Nile Valley, Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press, 1993.

¹⁹ Cf. Francis M. Deng, The Cry of the Owl, New York, Lilian Barber Press, 1989. In this novelistic exploration of Sudanese identities, the main protagonist, who is a Southerner, meets a Fur merchant on a train. The encounter reveals that anti-Southern racist feeling exists among Darfurians, while Darfurians themselves are marginalized, exploited and racially discriminated against by the ruling riverain elites.

²⁰ Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, 'Arabism, Africanism and Self-Identification in the Sudan,' in Y. F. Hasan, Sudan in Africa, Khartoum University Press, 1971.

²¹ Paul Doornbos, 'On Becoming Sudanese,' in T. Barnett and A. Abdelkarim (eds.), Sudan: State, Capital and Transformation, London, Croom Helm, 1988.

²² Eve Troutt Powell, A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain and the Mastery of the Sudan, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003. Powell shows convincingly how similar attitudes informed Egyptian attitudes towards Sudan into the 20th century.

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- ²³ Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, Slaves into Workers: Emancipation and Labor in Colonial Sudan, Austin, University of Texas, 1996.
- ²⁴ Darfurian migrant labour is remarkably under-researched, in comparison with the Nuba and west Africans. In the modest literature, see Dennis Tully, 'The Decision to Migrate in Sudan,' Cultural Survival Quarterly, 7.4, 1983, 17-18.
- ²⁵ See, for example, my discussion of Jebel Si in Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- ²⁶ Mark Duffield, Maiurno: Capitalism and Rural Life in Sudan, London, Ithaca, 1981; C. Bawa Yamba, Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan, Washington D.C., Smithsonian Press, 1995.
- ²⁷ Alex de Waal, 'Some Comments on Militias in Contemporary Sudan,' in M. Daly and A. A. Sikainga (eds.) Civil War in the Sudan, London, Taurus, 1994.
- ²⁸ Gaddafi's African policy has not been well documented by journalists and scholars.
- ²⁹ African Rights, Facing Genocide: The Nuba of Sudan, London, African Rights, 1995.
- ³⁰ The Nuba's 'African' identity is well-documented. The best treatment is Yusuf Kuwa's own memoir, 'Things Would No Longer Be The Same,' in S. Rahhal (ed.) The Right to be Nuba: The Story of a Sudanese People's Struggle for Survival, Trenton NJ, Red Sea Press, 2002.