Ethnicity and Tribalism: are these the Root Causes of the Sudanese Civil Conflicts?

African conflicts and the Role of Ethnicity: a Case Study of Sudan

By

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Introduction

"When I visited Darfur last May, I felt hopeful. Today I am pessimistic, unless a major new international effort is mustered in the coming weeks (...)

I wish I could report that all these efforts had borne fruit - that Darfur was at peace and on the road to recovery. Alas, the opposite is true. People in many parts of Darfur continue to be killed, raped and driven from their homes by the thousands. The number displaced has reached 2 million, while 3 million (half the total population of Darfur) are dependent on international relief for food and other basics. Many parts of Darfur are becoming too dangerous for relief workers to reach. The peace talks are far from reaching a conclusion. And fighting now threatens to spread into neighboring Chad, which has accused Sudan of arming rebels on its territory (...)

One thing is clear: Whatever external force is sent to Darfur can provide at best only temporary security to the people there. Only a political agreement among their leaders can secure their future and the return of 2 million of them to their homes."[1]

The article by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan describes with pessimism the unsolved tragedy of Darfur. The headlines of the international press have echoed the toll of the Darfur Tragedy. The 200,000 victims and almost 2 million displaced people have pushed the conflict to the central stage of international issues. In the words of John Danforth, US Ambassador to the UN, this conflict represents 'the largest humanitarian disaster in the world'.[2]

The crisis in Darfur is not unusual in the overall African scenario. The whole African continent is in fact still torn apart by many cases of conflict and civil unrest, which hinder the development of many African countries. Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Somalia are only some examples of the atrocities that afflict the African continent and make peace and stability impossible.

Africa is also the continent with the highest rate of poverty, illiteracy, and infant mortality. Numerous international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, have tried to promote strategies for poverty reduction, economic and social development and crisis management. Africa seems, though, not to respond as well as other parts of the world to the "therapy". Since the 1960s, several development and international financial aid programs have tried to address the issues of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These programs yielded results in some parts of the world, as for the so-called "Asian Tigers" - Singapore, Honk Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea. We have also assisted to the exponential growth of the Indian

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[1] Annan, Kofi, <u>Darfur Descending: No Time For Apathy on Sudan,</u> The Washington Post, Wednesday, January 25, 2006; Page A19.
From: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/24/AR2006012401136.html
[2] "Can the African Union Bring Peace To Darfur?", <u>Economist.com,</u> October 25th, 2004
From: http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story_id=3313647

and Chinese economies despite their high levels of corruption. However, similar programs were almost a failure in African countries.

Many scholars have rightly argued that political and social instability are a major cause for underdevelopment. "Ted Gurr and Monty Marshall have written that most African conflicts are caused by the combination of poverty and weak states and institutions."[3] By poverty, I also imply a scarcity of and therefore a struggle for resources. It is thus fundamental to precisely identify the causes and factors for instability in order to create successful strategies for the resolution of endemic poverty and underdevelopment in Africa.

At a first glance, the media and a large number of scholars and politicians pointed out at ethnicity and tribalism as the root causes for conflict. For instance, despite Arab and African ethnic groups were mixed since the VIII century, most literature on the causes of Sudanese civil conflicts depicts these conflicts as an Arab, Muslim North versus an African, and Christian/Animist South. The distinction is made according to the perceived origins of the two groups, where the Arabs are said to come from Saudi Arabia, and the Africans from African groups, the most ancient of which is the Nubian ethnicity. In the Darfur conflict, the ethnic division between Arab militias and African tribes has been described as the primary cause for conflict. Indeed, ethnicity and tribalism have an important role in the conflicts, but emerge only as secondary factors. Concentrating on ethnicity as the primary cause for conflict underestimates the complexity of African societies and politics, and deviates policymakers' attention from the real causes of conflict. Ethnicity is a means through which conflicts in many African countries are conducted and a powerful tool for political mass mobilization.

Therefore, the main question is: if ethnicity and tribalism are not the root causes, what triggers conflict in Africa? My thesis tries to analyze the main features of African conflicts and to take the Sudanese civil conflicts and of the ongoing Darfur crisis as a case study. The thesis tries to give a theoretical framework for ethnicity, in order to explain that ethnicity is not conflictive per se and cannot, therefore, cause conflict. The thesis thus attempts to determine the root causes of conflict, which are to be found in historical patterns of regional marginalization and economic uneven distribution, in the influences of the international context on the local reality, in the political mobilization of ethnicity by international and local actors, in structural problems, in environmental degradation, and by the failure of state-building, and consequently of nation-building.

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[3] Quoted in: Irobi, Emma Godwin, Ethnic Conflict Management in Africa: A Comparative Case Study of Nigeria and South Africa, May 2005.
From: www.beyondintractability.org/case_studies/nigeria_south-africa.jsp?nid=6720

Geography

The Republic of the Sudan is a federal republic, which is divided in 26 States.

Its population amounts to about 40 million people. Most of the population - 68%[4] - is rural. According to the Millennium Development Goals Report, the percentage of rural population increases in the South as 98% of it lives in rural areas. The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur revealed that the remaining 32% of Sudan's population is urban and 7% nomadic.

Historical Background of Sudan

The history of Sudan has been strongly influenced by the Arab world since the VII century. In fact, in 651, Muslim Egyptians invaded Sudan, and signed a peace treaty with the Christian state of Makuria ruled by the Nubians, first inhabitants of the country. The treaty came to be known as *bakt*. It was based on mutual "respect of each other's political and cultural integrity."[5] Accordingly, Makuria had to provide the Egyptians with slaves in exchange for goods. This historical pattern is central, because the exploitation of marginalized regions is still an ongoing process in modern Sudan. We will see how this pattern of exploitation repeated itself during the Turkish domination, the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium and in post-independence Sudan.

With the first Arab invasion, the Egyptian Arabs and the Nubians became linked by frequent intermarriages. Although the *bakt* was a treaty of peaceful coexistence, Northern Sudan underwent a slow process of Islamization. During the 1200s, the Egyptian military ruling class, the Mamlukes, attacked the state of Makuria, which finally collapsed around the 1300s.

The Arab penetration was slow. The first key event was in XV century, when the black population of the Blue Nile region mixed with the Arabs, and founded the Kingdom of the Funj. Sennar became the capital. The Funj started to expand northward destroying in 1504 the Kingdom of Alwa - last Christian state of Sudan. The Funj unified the country, by subduing the pagan states of Darfur and Kordofan (1596), and by establishing local Muslim dynasties. The hegemony of Sennar lasted until 1786, when the Funj were suppressed by the Hameg, who threw the country into anarchy. Islamic law and religion came to Sudan through pilgrims and holy men. Arabization was strengthened by the presence of Arab merchants, who linked Sudan with the Arab world.

The 1797 Battle of the Pyramids, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, weakened the power of the Mamlukes. This event helped the Egyptian Khedive Mohammed Ali to conquer the regions of Kordofar and Sennar in 1821, and the district of Dongola around

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[4] Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General, Geneva, 25 January 2005

[5] Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience, p. 1793. Civitas Books (1999, New York)

1820-22. Mohammed Ali melted Sudan with Egypt, and founded a new capital in Khartoum in 1823.

The Egyptian domination accelerated the Islamization and Arabization of the indigenous tribes of the North and promoted their development. However, the Egyptian conquest also increased the spread of the slave trade, perpetrated by the Arab ruling classes, known as Jellaba. The Jellaba were merchants who had come to Sudan with Islam. The slave trade was the means by which the Egyptians could finally conquer in 1874 the Darfur region and Southern Sudan.

The bad administration of local governors, the establishment of the Anglo-French dominion on Egypt, and the repeated attempts by the Khedive Isma'il, successor of Mohammed Ali, to suppress the slave trade were the causes for the bloody Mahdist Revolt (1881-1898). The revolt attempted to create an Islamic state, but it faced the opposition of the Fur sultanate. The Fur are the predominant ethnic group in the Darfur region. They were never fully subjected to the strict Islamic law of the Mahdist state, but they applied Islamic law based on the Fur ethnicity and tradition.

During this period, after the Fashoda incident (Sep. 1898), the British affirmed their interest on this area, and in 1899 an Anglo-Egyptian condominium was created. Accordingly, Sudan was still economically tied to Egypt, but it was administered by the British. The condominium regime was renewed even in early XX century. However, a profound divergence arose between Great Britain and the Egyptian nationalists on the fate of the country. When in 1922, Egyptian Sultan, Fuad I, had proclaimed himself hereditary ruler of the two countries, the British did not oppose, mainly because they maintained the practical administration of the country. Greater divergence emerged in 1936. In fact, on the one side, Britain wanted an independent Sudan (and for the purpose it endowed the country with a Constitution in 1948 together with a legislative assembly), whereas, on the other, Egyptian nationalists wanted to annex the country to Egypt, claiming their legitimate right to rule the country. Anyhow, the Egyptian nationalists' requests finally ended with Egypt's independence in 1953.

In 1953, elections were held in Sudan, but they represented a compromise between the Egyptian nationalists and Northern Sudanese parties. Egypt accepted Sudan's independence on the condition that the South was removed of its administrative powers. In response to Southern Sudan's non-representation in the elections, a violent protest, known as the Torit Mutiny, blew up in 1955.

The First Civil War

The Torit Mutiny is seen as the beginning of the first civil war in the Sudan. The Sudan finally gained independence in 1956, but it was clear from the beginning that peace could not last if an agreement between North and South was not reached. In fact, in 1958 the first military coup ended the two years of pseudo-democratic governance and brought General Ibrahim Abbud to power. His policy of forced Islamization and Arabization was met with increasing violence, which led to the first civil war in 1962 between a mostly Arab Muslim North and a prevalently African Christian/Animist South. In 1965, a coup made elections finally possible, but only in the North. The South was not represented, because violence was still raging the region. However, the democratic regime was short-lived, as another military putsch took place in 1968. General Mohammed Nimeiri took the leadership of the country until 1985. The war only came to an end in 1972 with the Addis Ababa Agreement, which gave a higher

degree of autonomy to the South. "In February 1975, following a major cabinet reshuffle, General Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri reaffirmed his Government's basic commitment to the pursuit of an Afro-Arab foreign policy, and noted that this was not tied to particular personalities. For just as the appointment of the distinguished diplomat, Mansour Khalid, as Foreign Minister in August 1971, had prompted charges that the Sudan's Arab ties were to be sacrificed to African interests, so his departure from office to become Minister of Education aroused speculation that greater Arab involvement, if not actual African disengagement, would now follow."[6] This passage by Richard Stevens testifies that the Addis Ababa Agreement did not reach an effective compromise between North and South for a stable peace. Indeed, another coup was perpetrated, which led to the elections in 1986 of Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the moderate Islamist party, the Umma Party. In 1989, a modicum of stability - at least in what concerns the head of government's position - was reached as President Omar Hassan al-Bashir came to power through a military coup, and still retains power.

The Second Civil War

The second civil war, which lasted twenty years, erupted in 1983, and mainly involved the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which is the major rebel movement in the South. The war emerged as a consequence of President Nimeiri to revoke the Addis Ababa Agreements and to establish Islamic law (*sharia*). In 1986, Sadiq al-Mahdi came to power, and initiated the peace talks with the SPLM/A. The "Koka Dam" Declaration aimed at abolishing *sharia,* but the President only signed the declaration in 1989. However, after a few months a coup d'etat deposed al-Mahdi, and the Declaration was disregarded. The peace talks that finally put an end to the conflict initiated in 2002, and culminated in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on January 9, 2005. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement established a six-year autonomy of the South (elections will be held in 2011), an even share from oil revenues between North and South, and the integration of rebels into the regular army.

Historical Background of Darfur

Darfur is the westernmost region of the Sudan. Traditionally, the first rulers of Darfur were the Daju people, who were overthrown by the Tunjur only in XIII century. The Tunjur rule initiated Darfur's long tradition as an Islamic state. However, it was not until the XVII century that Darfur became a sultanate under the Keyra dynasty, which replaced the Tunjur and merged with the Fur. During the XVII century, the Keyra Fur dynasty, which originally came from the Jebel Marra occupied most part of what is today's Darfur (about 80%[7]). The sultanate expanded even further, when it occupied the Kordofan region to the east in 1786.

In 1821, the Turco-Egyptians conquered the region of Kordofan. Only in 1874, the Keyra dynasty was overthrown by a powerful merchant from Khartoum, Zubeyr, who took the lead of the sultanate. However, soon after his conquest, Zubeyr was arrested by the Turco-Egyptians.

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[6] Stevens, Richard P., The 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement and the Sudan's Afro-Arab Policy,
The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Jun., 1976), pp. 247-274
[7] Prunier, Gérard, Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide, p.10. Hurst & Co. (2005, London)

After the collapse of the Mahdiyya (the Mahdist period), Ali Dinar, who belonged to the Keyra dynasty, restored and took control of Darfur. Because Darfur constituted no threat and no resource of wealth for the British, it remained independent up until 1916. However, the occupation by French forces of neighboring Chad and World War I, ignited the suspicion of the British, who saw Ali Dinar as a possible allied of the enemy forces. At Al-Fashir, the colonial army occupied Darfur and annexed it to Sudan.

The Darfur Crisis

The first conflict in Darfur began in 1985, the same period when Sudan was suffering from a severe drought which brought untold suffering in the form of devastating famine. The feeling of neglect by the government in Khartoum, compound with the denial by sedentary communities to allow migration on their land of the pastoralists towards the South created an explosive cocktail which pushed some in the Darfur region to pick up arms. The situation was further exacerbated by the massive movement of Chadian refugees fleeing the civil war that had begun in Chad, bringing with them more hardship. The civil conflict lasted for four years until a peace agreement was signed in 1989 by the warring faction.

This initial conflict created the mechanisms for future conflict. The 1989 Peace Accord lasted just for a decade and another conflict erupted in 2003 and is still going on. The developments in Sudan over the years have led the present crisis to be at a glance an ethnic conflict, which sees mainly two sides: the Arab, government-sponsored militia, the *Janjaweed*, and the African ethnic groups - the Masalit, Fur and Zaghawa - of two rebel movements, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA). According to Human Rights Watch, between 2003 and 2005, the crisis has caused two million of internally displaced people (IDPs), 220,000 refugees to Chad, and 1.5 million still need food assistance. According to the UN Office in the Sudan, 200,000 people were killed since 2003.

The ongoing Darfur crisis started in early 2003 with the peace talks between North and South. The two Darfurian rebel groups - the SLM/A (Sudan Liberation Movement/Army) and the JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) - started to conduct attacks against military installations in early 2003. The rebel groups' major concern was that the peace agreement between North and South would have marginalized even more - politically and economically - the region of Darfur. Since 2003, the government started to bombard African villages, and state-sponsored Arab militia, known as the *Janjaweed*, has been involved in grave crimes against humanity, including ethnic cleansing, mass killings, and raping.

On May 5, 2006, the so-called Abuja Agreements were signed in Nigeria. The SLM and the Government signed the peace agreement brokered by the African Union and the US. The JEM did not sign the peace accord, because it did not meet JEM demands for a higher share of power in the Sudanese government. The agreement called for the disarmament of the Janjaweed and the incorporation of the rebels in the army, an annual $200-million investment in the region, compensation to IDPs (internally displaced persons), and "affirmative action in favor of the Darfurians to enhance inclusivity in public services."[8]

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[8] Darfur Peace Agreement, signed on May 5, 2006, in Abuja (Nigeria). From:

Despite the agreement, attacks by the Janjaweed have not subsided and the local population continues to suffer from the brutal actions by both the Khartoum authorities and their Janjaweed militia. An AU peacekeeping force (AMIS- African Mission in Sudan) is in Darfur since 2004. Its main task is to protect IDPs from the Janjaweed. However, due to weaknesses "in command and control, logistical support and operational practice"[9], the peacekeeping force has been unable to eradicate violence in Darfur. The International Press denounced the continuation of bombing campaigns by the government. On September 2006, the BBC reported, "Khartoum has denied any bombing, calling it 'lies designed to further the agenda of those who want to impose United Nations peacekeepers'"[10].

Only on 12 June 2007, President al-Bashir finally agreed to the deployment of a 20,000-men hybrid UN-AU force in Darfur. This is a first positive sign for conflict resolution. However, it must be still seen whether this will prove effective or not.

Why should not ethnicity and tribalism be considered the primary causes for conflict?

Conflicts in Sudan, as well as in many other African countries, have often been presented as ethnic or tribal conflicts, as they were usually fought by contending ethnic groups or "tribes." The Rwandan genocide, for instance, was fought between the Hutus and Tutsis; the first and second civil wars in Sudan were fought between an Arab Muslim North and an African Christian/Animist South; the Darfur crisis presents itself as a fight between Arab militia, the *Janjaweed,* and African tribes; and Somalia has been depicted as a conflict between different clans. Certainly, the ethnic and tribal identities are relevant in these conflicts, but they are only secondary factors. Ethnicity and tribalism are only the lines along which wars in Africa are fought. Using ethnic and tribal affiliation as the root causes of conflict is misleading, because it hides the real causes for war.

Tribalism and Ethnicity: A Theoretical Framework

In order to understand why ethnicity and tribalism are not the primary causes for conflict, it is necessary to define what a tribe and an ethnic group are in order to establish the role of different identities with regard to African civil wars. The theoretical framework that follows tries first to determine what tribalism and ethnicity are, and then to redefine their role in the emergence of conflict.

A "tribe is thought of as a group of people who are descended from common ancestors and ruled by a hereditary 'chief', who share a single culture (including, in

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http://www.iss.co.za/af/profiles/Sudan/dpa05052006.pdf
[9] AMIS: African Union Mission in Sudan (Darfur),
www.accord.org.za/ct/2005-4/ct4_2005_pgs52_53.pdf
[10] Fisher Jonah, Dying As Darfur Awaits for Peacekeepers, Thursday, September 21, 2006, *BBC News*, from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/5365770.stm

particular, language and religion), and who live in a well-defined geographical region."[11] The concept of tribe in modern usage is wrong, because it belongs to 19th century colonialism, it does not refer to a homogeneous identity, and because today's African identities do not always share common ancestors and well-defined geographical regions.

First, tribalism is a concept that belongs to the 19th century, and that is still used to describe some African societies. The anthropologists of the colonial period believed that all African peoples lived in tribes, because a tribe was the primitive stage of human social development. Thus, it has often been stressed that the term tribe has discriminatory connotations, because it underlines the primitiveness of a group relative to the advance of another group.

Second, even in 19th century the concept of tribe oversimplified the nature of African pluralist identities. In fact, a person not only "identified" with a tribe. There also existed other social identities, such as the village community, the clan and the lineage. A tribe was, in fact, the gathering of more clans and sub-clans, a clan being a "family tree of male descendants."[12] Moreover, a village community conglobed different clans or lineages. "Although they might have shared many of their daily life activities with their village neighbors, they often had political loyalties to rulers elsewhere, and connections through trade and secret societies to people in other villages and towns."[13] Therefore, a tribe was not a homogeneous identity, and is not the only political unit that we found in Africa. There existed also Sultanates and Kingdoms, which grouped even more diverse groups of people.

Third, today's usage of the term does not correspond to what African identities are. During the colonial period, urbanization led to consequent migrations. Civil wars, too, contributed to such phenomena, thus mixing former "tribal" identities with others. Also, "village identities became less important as rates of urbanization in Africa increased, especially after World War II. Secret societies were often deliberately targeted for destruction in the colonial period, because they involved rituals and religious beliefs inconsistent with Christianity or Europeans norms of civilization."[14] Consequently, the importance of geographical location and common ancestry in the definition of tribe significantly decreased.

So, why is the term still used? What is its meaning? Kwame Anthony Appiah clarifies that when we refer to tribe today, we do not emphasize the history of a specific group, but its "ethnonym". Ethnic names, or ethnonyms, are "products of the interaction between the ideas of European colonial officials and anthropologists, on the one hand, and preexisting ways of classifying people in Africa's many pre-colonial societies, on the other."[15] David Wiley of the African Studies Center of the University of Pennsylvania wrote in 1981: "Misnaming African ethnicity as tribalism has long bedeviled U.S. foreign policy in Africa, leading to miscalculations and errors of

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[11] Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ethnicity and Identity in Africa: An Interpretation, p.703 *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience,* Civitas Books (1999, New York)
[12] Jack L. Davies, The Reunification of the Somali People, Appendix 4.
Source from: http://www.civicwebs.com/cwvlib/africa/somalia/1995/reunification/appendix_4.htm#A.4.3
[13] Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ethnicity and Identity in Africa: An Interpretation, p.703 *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience,* Civitas Books (1999, New York)
[14] Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ethnicity and Identity in Africa: An Interpretation, p.703 *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience,* Civitas Books (1999, New York)
[15] Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ethnicity and Identity in Africa: An Interpretation, p.703 *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience,* Civitas Books (1999, New York)

judgement. When we respond to a political movement as only a tribal reality, we misjudge its strength, its potential organization, and the breadth of its appeal, as we clearly did in labelling as tribal groups the three political liberation movements of Angola."[16]

Also, because the languages taught in school or spoken in the cities were those of the colonial rulers, what was translated as "tribe" had often a different meaning in indigenous languages. In a paper published by the Africa Policy Information Center in 1997, it was emphasized how, for instance, the word *isizwe* in Zulu was translated in English as tribe. "Yet Zulu linguists say that a better translation of *isizwe* is nation or people."[17] David Wiley also stated, "Because English, French, Portuguese, and occasionally Afrikaans were the languages of the schools and the city, tribe, *tribu*, and the other cognates defined the language of urban and political interaction and defined the categories into which rural and urban societies were allocated during the colonial period. Now, prominent African leaders use the term in appealing for "an end to tribalism", referring to the urban and national struggles for power in utilizing ethnic and language ties as a means to aggregate power and authority. They too miss the ethnic dynamic and mistakenly link the urban ethnic dynamic to the rural societies."[18]

Johnson points out that the usage of the term 'tribe' in Sudan is retained because of its political connotation. In fact, it politically combines smaller affiliated sections and there is recognized consensus among Sudanese groups of their belonging to a certain 'tribe'. He recognizes, as most scholars do, that tribe is a very general concept and its definition varies from people to people. Therefore, a 'tribe' is defined by the Nuer group as a unit having common descent, whose affiliation is stronger in cases of defense. For the Dinka, belonging to the same tribe means having a relationship to a lineage of spiritual leaders. But as reflected in other scholars' works, Johnson emphasizes that 'tribes' are in no way rigid categories, and implies the recognition of tribe as an ethnonym. "In neither case are tribes permanent fixtures, even though they were given some rigidity as recognized parts of the administrative structure during the later Condominium period. Among the Nuer, for instance, the primary sections of the Eastern Jikany and the Lou have increasingly acted as autonomous political groups. One cannot, therefore, speak of *the* Dinka tribe or *the* Nuer tribe: rather of the Dinka people and the Nuer people, each of whom are organized into a number of different tribes at any one time, some of which may be socially and politically closer to tribes of neighboring peoples than to more distant tribes of the same people."[19]

Therefore, what we call tribe is usually a reference to ethnic groups. Ethnicity has been ground of very heated debates over its meaning and definition. It is commonly agreed upon that an ethnic group is characterized by common descent and culture. Before giving details about ethnicity, we must point out the difference between ethnic groups and nations. Nations and ethnic groups are based on pretty much the same

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[16] Wiley, David, <u>Using "Tribe" and "Tribalism" Categories To Misunderstand African Societies</u>, African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, 1981.
Source from: http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Tribe.html

[17] Background Paper, <u>Talking About "Tribe", Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis,</u> November 1997, *Africa Policy Information Center* From: http://www.africaaction.org/bp/ethall.htm

[18] Wiley, David, <u>Using "Tribe" and "Tribalism" Categories To Misunderstand African Societies</u>, African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, 1981.
Source from: http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Tribe.html

[19] Johnson, Douglas H., <u>The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars,</u> Preface p. xv, Indiana University Press (2003, Bloomington)

concepts of common culture and descent. The idea of "nation" is different from ethnicity, though. An ethnic group is the basis for the idea of nation to be created. Anthony Smith argues in <u>The Ethnic Origin of Nations</u>, "Nationalism extends the scope of ethnic community from purely cultural and social to economic and political spheres; from predominantly private to public sectors. To make any real headway in the modern world, ethnic movements must stake their claims in political and economic terms as well as cultural ones, and evolve economic and political programs."[20] However, political and economic features can be found even in Sudanese multiple ethnic identities without speaking of any real national identity. Anyhow, the main difference between nation and ethnic group is that the first is as broad a term as to include in itself the idea of ethnic identity. Smith argues that national identities have an ethnic core, which provides "distinctive features" such as "mythology, symbolism and culture."[21] As anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen points out, **"the distinguishing mark of nationalism is by definition its relationship to the state. A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas many ethnic groups do not demand command over a state."[22] As emphasized by different authors, nationalist groups seek independence from the state, whereas ethnic groups just seek a greater participation within the state. "Unlike nationalist movements, ethnic groups do not seek self-determination but operate within the parameters of the state (although ethnic assertion can evolve into a nationalist movement)."[23]

In <u>Ethnicity,</u> Steve Fenton states, an ethnic group "refers to descent and culture communities with three specific additions: 1. that the group is a kind of sub-set within a nation-state, 2. that the point of reference of difference is typically culture rather than physical appearance, 3. often that the group referred to is 'other' to some majority who are presumed to be 'ethnic'."[24]   In 1975 book by Glazer and Moynihan, <u>Ethnicity,</u> ethnicity was defined as "a label for social groups who feel a distinct sense of difference by virtue of common culture and descent."[25] Similarly, "following Max Weber's classic definition, an ethnic group is a human collectivity based on an assumption of common origin, real or imagined."[26] Also, in analyzing the Greek word *ethnos* and the Latin word *nation,* Fenton shows "that the ideas of ancestry, common origin or descent, and more generally 'peoplehood' are at the core of modern usages of the words 'ethnic' and 'nation' which are derived from these classical sources."[27]

Ethnicity, though, is best described when the concept of the 'other' is also introduced. In a few words, an ethnic group identifies itself as such only when it enters a relation with another group. Johnson says that the word *qabila* (قبيلة) in Arabic is commonly used in the Sudan to describe a tribe or group. But I think that it is even more

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[20] Background Paper, <u>Talking About "Tribe", Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis,</u> p.22. November 1997, *Africa Policy Information Center* From: http://www.africaaction.org/bp/ethall.htm

[21] Mezran, Karim K., <u>Negotiating National Identity</u>, p. 40. Antonio Pellicani Editore (2002, Rome)

[22] Hylland Eriksen, Thomas, <u>Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives,</u> Pluto Press (1993, London) From: http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Ethnicity.html

[23] Premdas, Ralph, <u>Ethno-Racial Division And Governance: The Problem of Institutional Reform and Adaptation,</u> Paper Prepared for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Conference on *Racism and Public Policy*, September 2001, Durban, South Africa. From: www.unrisd.org

[24] Fenton, Steve, <u>Ethnicity,</u> p. 23, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)

[25] Jones, James M., <u>Prejudice and Racism</u>, p. 87. 2nd Edition. McGraw-Hill (1997, New York)

[26] Pettigrew, Thomas F., *Ethnicity in American Life: A Social-Psychological Perspective,* <u>Race and Ethnicity in Modern America,</u> p.180 (1974, Washington, D.C.)

[27] Fenton, Steve, <u>Ethnicity,</u> p. 51, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)

interesting to note that the same Arabic root gives birth to another name *muqabil* (مقابل) which means "opposite" but also "equivalent." Thus, the relationship with another entity (as "opposite") and with other individuals within a same group (as "equivalent") is the key element in the definition of the word itself.

The theory of the 'other' can be found again in the etymology of the adjective *ethnikos* that, as Fenton argues, means both foreign and national. Therefore, despite the difference between the concepts of "nation" and "ethnic identity", in arguing about the nation, Mezran devices concepts, which could also be used to define an ethnic identity:

> National identity becomes meaningful only through the contrast with others. For the nation to exist it is presupposed that there is some other community, some other nation, from which it needs to distinguish itself. As Triandafyllidou points out "the nation has to be understood as a part of a dual relationship rather than as an autonomous, self-contained unit. The identity of a nation is defined and/or redefined through the influence of 'significant' others, namely other nations or ethnic groups that are perceived to threaten the nation, its distinctiveness, authenticity, and/or independence.[28]

In defining ethnicity, there is widespread consensus that it expresses ideas of common origins and ancestry, and that its distinctiveness becomes relevant only in relation to another identity, which is perceived as different. Anyhow, we find a dialectical approach when talking about its origins. Is ethnicity innate or socially constructed? The theory that sees ethnicity as being something innate is primordialism. The theory according to which ethnicity is subjectively characterized by culture and society is constructivism.

Primordialism sees kin relations and family ties as pre-social, or to use Geertz's concept 'given'. "These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves."[29] Thus, as also Shils says, "The attachment to another member of one's kinship is not just a function of interaction…it is because a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood."[30] Therefore, primordialists have come to regard ethnicity as a state of nature, an innate bond to kinsmen of a same ethnic group. Some argue that 'primordial' means non-civic, being civic "those ties associated with citizenship and citizen-like obligations in a modern state."[31]

Constructivism, on the contrary, sees ethnicity not as a matter of nature, but as a matter of 'nurture'[32]. Thus, common ancestry and myths are socially and culturally constructed, not 'given'. Fenton shares the constructivist view, and therefore describes ethnicity as referred to "the social construction of descent and culture, the social mobilization of descent and culture, and the meanings and implications of classification systems built around them. People or peoples do not just possess cultures or share ancestry; they elaborate these into the idea of a community founded upon these attributes."[33] Judith Nagata talks in a way of a 'primordialization of cultural attributes' (my emphasis). "Depending on circumstances, people may see their place of origin, their ancestry and aspects of custom and culture as fundamental to their being. In these circumstances, she suggests, people attach a 'primordial' meaning to these attributes;

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[28] Mezran, Karim K., <u>Negotiating National Identity</u>, p. 49. Antonio Pellicani Editore (2002, Rome)
[29] Geertz, Clifford, <u>The Interpretation of Cultures</u> p.258 Basic Books (1973, New York)
[30] Fenton, Steve, <u>Ethnicity,</u> p. 82, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)
[31] Fenton, Steve, <u>Ethnicity,</u> p. 88, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)
[32] Mezran, Karim K., <u>Negotiating National Identity</u>, p. 36. Antonio Pellicani Editore (2002, Rome)
[33] Fenton, Steve, <u>Ethnicity,</u> p. 3, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)

they are seen as fundamental, even biological, certainly grounded in place (of birth) and similar in nature to ties of kinship."[34]

Ethnic identities are complex and cannot be simplified by saying they are innate or socially construed. We must be aware that innate and constructed elements are both present in every ethnic identity. If we try to explain ethnic affiliation as partly non-civic, then it is true. "To speak of this kind of 'customariness', 'familiarity', 'conventions of language and thought' and the like is not to invoke an unexplored and unexplorable realm of irrationality in human behavior, and certainly not to imply that 'irrationality and affect' are dominant forces in social life. (cf. Bourdieu 1990). It is simply to acknowledge that this kind of familiarity exists, that habits of thought do become ingrained and are often associated with early life, place, the family, and wider grouping or regions."[35] We may not say though that ethnicity is primordial, meaning it is innate, because human beings still need a contact with other kin members (be it the family or regional groupings) to recognize themselves as belonging to a specific ethnic group. If ethnicity was primordial, and so was the perception of the 'other', then conflict would be inherent in each relationship between different ethnic groups and ethnicity would always imply conflict per se. It would be a Hobbesian war of every man against the other. But this is not the case. The constructivist view of ethnic identities can explain the so-called ethnic conflict. Societal, cultural and political influences are fundamental in shaping relations between ethnicities and thus in explaining conflict between them and ethnic mobilization.

Some ethnic identities share common cultural origins, ancestry, and language, but still, they consider themselves different. The work of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth is essential in explaining ethnicity not as a matter of objective cultural differences, but as a matter of recognition and differentiation among ethnic identities. Barth argues that ethnic groups are separated from each other by 'boundaries' which "are drawn by social behavior which is relevant to the recognition of membership, and to the drawing of distinctions; the cultural 'items' which are used to make this distinction vary, and may be only a small part of the cultural repertoire of a particular group."[36] In Barth's words, "we can assume no one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant – some cultural features are used by actors as signals and emblems of difference– others are ignored."[37] Cultural differences exist and Barth denies no such thing. But he argues that these differences may change and are not static. According to the Norwegian anthropologist, there is a sort of complicity among members of a same ethnic unit, "acceptance that both are playing the same game."[38]

Ethnicity in Sudan and in the Darfur region is not easily recognizable, given the entrenchment and intertwining of original African and Arab groups. Conflicts in Sudan have usually been defined as tribal or ethnic. On the one hand, the North-South divide has usually been defined as a war between predominantly Arab, Muslim North against the African and Christian South. On the other hand, the Darfur conflict has been described as a conflict between Arab and African "tribes". If we only look at the

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[34] Fenton, Steve, _Ethnicity,_ p. 86, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)
[35] Fenton, Steve, _Ethnicity,_ p. 89-90, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)
[36] Fenton, Steve, _Ethnicity,_ p. 106, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)
[37] Fenton, Steve, _Ethnicity,_ p. 107, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)
[38] Fenton, Steve, _Ethnicity,_ p. 108, Polity Press (Cambridge, UK, 2003)

surface, that is, at first sight, it is clear that the North-South divide involves prevalently ethnic Arab and Muslim North versus an African, non-Muslim South. Also the Darfur crisis involves the Arab "tribal" militias, the *Janjaweed*, and African "tribes" the Masalit, Zaghawa, and Fur.

But are there really pure Africans and pure Arabs? What defines ethnicity in the Sudan? And most of all, to what extent does ethnicity count in Sudan's conflicts? Is ethnicity the ultimate cause for conflict? Can the Sudanese North-South conflict really be described as a two-bloc civil war between Arab Muslims and African Christians/Animists? And in what sense can the Darfur crisis be termed as a "tribal" conflict?

In order to answer these questions, we must first analyze ethnicity in the Sudan.

Ethnicity in Sudan

In order to have a general overview of Sudanese ethnic scenario, we must identify the main ethnic groups. Most ethnic groups in Sudan socially construe their ancestry, origins and culture by reference to the past. Thus, for instance, the Berti and Zaghawa claim descent from a Nilo-Saharan group, which came from northwest between the 1300s and the 1500s. However, despite the perceived common origins and ancestry, most modern ethnic groups in Sudan are also the result of centuries of migrations from neighboring countries.

For the purpose of giving an overall cadre of ethnicity, we will use The Encyclopedia of the Orient's classification. Accordingly, there are about nine major ethnic groups, each of which is subdivided in smaller ethnic groups. The following table shows these groupings and their percentage on Sudan's total population.

Main Sudanese Ethnic Groups		
Arabs	21,000,000	55.0%
Dinka	3,000,000	8.0%
Nuba	2,100,000	6.0%
Nuer	1,400,000	4.0%
Fur	1,000,000	2.7%
Zande	660,000	1.8%
Shilluk	600,000	1.6%
Bari or Zaghawa	480,000	1.3%
Nubians	200,000	0.5%
Other peoples	6,300,000	17.0%

Table 1 - Main Sudanese Ethnic Groups. Source: The ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ORIENT, http://lexicorient.com/e.o/sudan_4.htm

Arabs

The so called Arabs account for 55% of the population. Such group claims descent from Saudi Arabia or Yemen, and speak Arabic. The Arabs are not a uniform group, and ethnicity can be defined by the way of life of a community. Thus, for instance, a nomadic or sedentary livelihood modifies the perception of ethnicity.

Dinka

The Dinka are 8% of Sudan's total population, and are mainly settled in the South. As the Arabs, the Dinka present about 25 ethnic subdivisions[39]. They are mainly semi-nomadic.

Nuba

The Nuba account for 6% of the population, and are characterized by various ethnic sub-groupings. They predominantly live in the Kordofan region on the Nuba hills. They live mostly on agriculture and cattle raising. Almost all Nuba profess so-called "traditional" religions, but those who moved to urban areas have adhered to the Islamic religion. However, it has been recalled that "The term Nuba refers to *'a bewildering complexity'* of ethnic groups (Nadel, 1947). Stevenson (1984) identified more than 50 languages and dialect clusters, falling into 10 groups. Many authors have argued that the term 'Nuba' was originally an alien label used to group together all peoples living in the hills area who were seen as 'black Africans' as opposed to the Baggara Arabs (Nadel, 1947; Baumann, 1987)."[40]

Nuer

The Nuer mostly live in Southern Sudan, and consist of 4% of the total residents. The name "Nuer" is used by neighboring ethnic groups. However, they call themselves Naath. It is remarkable that "their communities are not closed, and groups originally belonging to other peoples have been included into the Nuer communities."[41] Their primary occupation is cattle-raising, and their livelihood is semi-nomadic. Their religious belief is named "traditional".

Fur

The Fur ethnicity lives in the Western regions of Sudan, especially in Darfur. They are 2.7% of the population, and they profess Islam. They mainly live on agriculture.

Zande

"The foundations of the Zande goes back to the 18th century when the Ambomu people conquered large lands where people of different ethnic groups lived. The people of the conquered lands would become the Zande."[42] The Zande are also known as Asande or Niam-Niam, and live in Western Sudan, Congo, and the Central African Republic. The Zande are agriculturalists, and practice a theist religion.

Shilluk

Living in south-central Sudan, the Shilluk are 1,6% of Sudanese population. They are pastoralists, and also their religion is said to be traditional.

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[39] http://www.geocities.com/forsudan/poulation.html
[40] Suliman, Mohamed, Ethnicity From Perception to Cause of Violent Conflicts: The Case of the Fur and Nuba Conflicts in Western Sudan, CONTICI International Workshop, Bern, July 8-11, 1997, Center For African Studies, London. From:
[41] "The Nuer", The ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ORIENT, http://lexicorient.com/e.o/sudan_4.htm
[42] "The Zande", The ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ORIENT, http://lexicorient.com/e.o/sudan_4.htm

Bari or Zaghawa

The Bari people are both an agriculturalist and pastoralist society, living in Southern Sudan and professing traditional religious cult.

Nubians

Despite their African descent, the Nubians have been arabized and Islamized throughout the centuries. Most of them claim themselves to be Arabs, as in fact "The influx of Arabs to Egypt and Sudan had contributed to the suppression of the Nubian identity following the collapse of the last Nubian kingdom in 1900."[43]

Constructed Ethnicity and Constructed Conflict

Sudanese ethnic identities, as previously noted, have been constructed by historical and cultural habits. Therefore, the perceived common ancestry, history or customs, rather than biological and physical characteristics, have contributed to the ethnical identification of the self. At first glance, conflict in Sudan can be regarded as ethnic. But is ethnicity the ultimate cause for conflict? The answer is no, because ethnic groups are not conflictive per se. "Alan Phillips, the Director of Minority Rights Group International, wrote in 1995 that attempts to portray the conflict in North-South or Arab-African terms disguise 'the complexities of a war fought by multi-ethnic groups where religious differences colour struggles over access to land or political power.'"[44]

Indeed, the relative peacefulness of the previous centuries suggests that ethnic diversity does not constitute a major problem in Sudanese multi-ethnic societies. Ethnic diversity becomes conflict as a consequence of external factors. Various scholars have agreed that other factors, such as economic and political competition, marginalization and inequality, can have a negative impact on ethnic diversity. "Ethnic identities in themselves are not conflictual, just as individuals are not inherently in conflict merely because of their different identities and characteristics. Rather, it is unmanaged or mismanaged competition for power, wealth, or status broadly defined that provides the basis for conflict."[45] In Judith Nagata's words, ethnicity depends on "changing social circumstances and external forces. In other words, whether people feel their ethnic loyalties to be important depends not on the nature of the attachment itself but on the calculation of whether 'in these circumstances' the ethnic tie is one which may be evoked, used and acted upon."[46] And in paraphrasing Judith Nagata, Fenton adds, "this variation in political consciousness and organization will depend on 'external social circumstances'. In other words, the level of consciousness and political organization of an ethnic group or category will depend less on internal social and cultural features and more on external political and economic circumstances. This would certainly offer an explanation of why ethnic identities may be socially 'quiet' for long periods of time but burst into action when there is a critical change in circumstances."[47]

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[43] "The Nubians", The ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ORIENT, http://lexicorient.com/e.o/sudan_4.htm
[44] Youngs, Tim, Sudan: Conflict in Darfur, Research Paper 04/51 for the House of Commons, 23 June 2004. From: http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2004/rp04-051.pdf
[45] Deng, Francis M., *Reconciling Sovereignty with Responsibility,* Africa in World Politics: The African State System in Flux, p.367. 3rd Edition. Edited by John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild. Westview Press (2000, Boulder, CO)
[46] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 85, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)
[47] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 70, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)

The expert on African issues, Alex de Waal, also stated, "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."[48] Psychologist, M. Sherif, supports the idea that in specific situations, differences between and among ethnic groups are believed "to be vital and central to beliefs, values, and needs that define individual and ethnic identity."[49]

If such externalities influence an ethnic group as a whole, it means that all individuals within that group perceive a common sense of threat or interest coming from a specific factor. Thus, ethnic groups are also interest groups, in the sense that they act as a whole at particular stimulations. In speaking about ethnic groups as interest groups in the US, Glazer and Moynihan argue:

> Ethnic groups then, even after distinctive language, customs and culture are lost, as they largely were in the second generation, and even more fully in the third generation, are continually recreated by new experiences in America. The mere existence of a name itself is perhaps sufficient to form group character in new situations, for the name associates an individual with a certain past, country, race. But… a man is connected to his group by ties of family and friendship. But he is also connected by ties of interest. The ethnic groups in New York are also interest groups.[50]

The sense of ethnic identity is thus perceived stronger when specific circumstances highlight common interests within a group, and consequently leads to ethnic mobilization. Again, it is useful to refer to a definition used by Mezran in Negotiating National Identity. In using the "cultural construct" approach to defining the nation, he suggests a concept that can be used in our theory of 'constructed ethnicity and constructed conflict': "Supporters of this approach view the nation as the product of 'conscious' process of construction by a group of people to pursue their interest."[51] Whether we agree or not that ethnic affiliation, as well as the nation, is 'consciously' constructed, we must recognize that the mobilization of an ethnic group occurs when some sort of common interests (including also community or individual rights) have been denied or are undermined. In a few words, ethnic groups may be mobilized as a consequence of the neglect of their interests. "People respond to political slogans because their status is undermined with a resultant sense of diffuse anger or anxiety (...) In the field of ethnicity, … people are seen to be calculating their individual or collective interest."[52] Omi and Winant precise that "ethnicity is not just about 'difference' but about structural inequality and a hierarchy of difference."[53] It is in this specific circumstance, that is, when ethnic groups are unequally represented and protected by law, that the identity of an ethnic group is reinforced, and becomes 'instrumental' in its political exploitation. Ethnicity becomes instrumental when "ethnic attachments serve some individual or collective political or economic ends,"[54] by fostering action.

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[48] De Waal, Alex, Who Are The Darfurians?, Justice Africa
[49] Jones, James M., *Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict*, Prejudice and Racism, p.254. 2nd Edition. Mc Graw-Hill (1997, New York)
[50] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 93, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)
[51] Mezran, , Karim K., Negotiating National Identity, p. 38. Antonio Pellicani Editore (2002, Rome)
[52] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 75-76, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)
[53] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 111, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)
[54] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 76, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)

The exploitation of ethnicity by key actors, be them political or religious elites, reinforces the idea of diversity to the point that it becomes conflict. Fenton speaks of 'state-sponsored ethnicity' saying, "Once the state takes a hand in using ethnic categories to allocate resources, it both creates or confirms ethnic categories and makes ethnicity a politically instrumental principle."[55] Fenton also points out that "when it is mobilized, ethnic identity may be an apparently powerful source of action. This is because it can be, for the individual and the community, a totalizing identity: if people are concerned about their jobs, their neighborhood, their education and that of their children, their legal status, their persona security, *under the right circumstances ethnic identity may be incorporated in all of these.*"[56]

In Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement, David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild argue, "Ethnic conflict is not caused directly by inter-group differences, 'ancient hatreds' and centuries-old feuds, or the stresses of modern life within a global economy. (…) Rather, ethnic conflict is caused by collective fears of the future. (…) Ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs, operating within groups, reinforce these fears of physical insecurity and polarize the society."[57]

Similarly, other scholars argue that ethnicity does not cause conflict. Crawford Young affirms, "a host of factors related to opportunity structure, resource possibilities for rebel action, generalized discontents, deteriorated well-being and life chances, and weakened states – among other elements- explain why armed conflict is more prevalent in post-Cold War Africa. Cultural pluralism alone is not the prime determinant (…). In a culturally plural society, however, once armed conflict is interwoven with politics, identity is virtually certain to become part of the larger patterns of confrontation, even though the ways in which communal determinants operate are very diverse."[58]

Finally, John Mueller concluded his article on The Banality of "Ethnic War" saying, "this analysis of the experiences in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda suggests that ethnicity is important in 'ethnic wars' more as an ordering device than as an impelling force (…); that the wars did not necessarily derive from the ethnic peculiarities of those regions (…). Ethnicity proved essentially to be simply the characteristic around which the perpetrators and the politicians who recruited and encouraged them happened to array themselves. It was important as an ordering device or principle, not as a crucial motivating force."[59]

The Root Causes of African Conflicts

As many constructivist and instrumentalist scholars demonstrated, ethnicity assumes an important aspect in the conflicts, but does not per se explain their emergence. Understanding the major causes of the civil conflicts that have plagued

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[55] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 99, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)
[56] Fenton, Steve, Ethnicity, p. 114, Polity Press (2003, Cambridge)
[57] Lake, David A. & Rothchild, Donald, Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement, Working Paper for the *Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation*, January 1996.
From: www.ciaonet.org/wps/lad01
[58] Young, Crawford, Deciphering Disorder in Africa: Is Identity the Key?, Review Article, *World Politics 54* (July 2002), 532-57
[59] Mueller, John, The Banality of "Ethnic War", p.62, *International Security*, Summer-Fall 2000, Vol.25

Africa requires a time-space collocation. This implies locating the conflict region in a multidimensional space, both geographically and historically. The case of Sudan provides an appropriate case study, not only for the understanding of the characteristics of post-independent African states - and therefore of the political behavior that has triggered conflict - but also the common changing features of conflict in Africa. The use of the term Africa does not want to minimize the complexity and uniqueness of the different states and ethnicities of the continent, but only attempts to trace a common thread, which is useful to have a more in-depth comprehension of the conflicts in Africa, and especially of the so-called ethnic conflicts.

The causes for conflict in Africa are numerous. However, the historical period and events (such as colonialism, neocolonialism, the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union) explain some of the policies and choices that African countries made. Conflicts in Africa can generally be classified as Stefano Bellucci, Professor of Comparative African Systems at the University of Pavia, says in two main categories: the postcolonial and the neoliberal conflicts. The first type can be located in a time-framework, which goes from the independence of most African states - the sixties - to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its root causes generate from socio-political, cultural and economic conflicts, from the failure of state-building and consequently of nation-building, and from militarism and militarization. The second type of conflict, the neoliberal one, belongs to the ongoing global era. It is characterized by political and economic changes, by the crisis of the state and by the end of the Cold War.

Both types of conflict, though, primarily have economic reasons, concerning the misallocation of resources and power. Stefano Bellucci points out that "the causes of civil conflicts come from social, cultural and political conflicts, which hide economic aspects: between those who are in power and those who experience its consequences; economic aspects, which result in growing poverty and economic inequality, and which finding armed conflict the only solution."[60]

Even Biafran scholar and PhD in Political Science, Emmy Godwin Irobi, argues, "economic factors have been identified as one of the major causes of conflict in Africa. Theorists believe that competition for scarce resources is a common factor in almost all ethnic conflicts in Africa. In multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria and South Africa, ethnic communities violently compete for property, rights, jobs, education, language, social amenities and good health care facilities."[61]

In a similar way, Ernest Harsch wrote in *African Renewal*:

"Inequality does matter for achievement of the MDGs," noted Mr. Arjan de Haan, a social development adviser with the UK's Department for International Development, in an article in *NEPAD Dialogue*, a publication of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a continental plan adopted by African leaders in 2001. "Inequality — particularly in assets and gender — can even reduce rates of growth, hence indirectly limiting poverty reduction."

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[60] Bellucci, Stefano, Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale, p.56 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)
[61] Irobi, Emmy Godwin, Ethnic Conflict Management in Africa: A Comparative Study of Nigeria and South Africa, *Research Paper*, May, 2005, at Beyond Intractability.org of the University of Colorado, at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/case_studies/nigeria_south-africa.jsp?nid=6720

"Ignoring inequality in the pursuit of development is perilous," states UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs José Antonio Ocampo. "Focusing exclusively on economic growth and income generation as a development strategy is ineffective, as it leads to the accumulation of wealth by a few and deepens the poverty of the many." Besides impeding poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs, Mr. Ocampo adds, failure to address inequalities means that "communities, countries and regions remain vulnerable to social, political and economic upheaval."

The World Bank, which for years emphasized market liberalization as the best route to economic growth and poverty reduction, now also recognizes the role that inequalities play in hindering those goals. "Equity considerations need to be brought squarely into the centre of both diagnosis and policy," says the Bank in the 2006 edition of its annual *World Development Report*, which this year focuses on the theme "Equity and Development."[62]

The Postcolonial Period

Postcolonial African States and the Emergence of Conflict

In order to understand postcolonial African conflicts, it is necessary to understand the main characteristics of post-independent African states. These features have been influenced by pre-independence historical events, such as colonialism, and by the global trends, changes and events, which took place after World War II. These characteristics are the main cause for uneven economic distribution, and political and social unrest, which led to the majority of African conflicts.

Independence instilled in African societies optimism for the future. Due to the many structural problems inherited from the past, the new African governments were unable to meet the growing requests of their people, though. The failure of the new states to fulfill their obligations towards their citizens led to increased disillusionment. The new states failed, because "in the absence of a state with efficient institutions, it was difficult for the new African governments to counterbalance the economic and social disequilibrium inherited from colonialism."[63] Unmet expectations, rising poverty, economic underdevelopment, political unrest, together with increased militarization and the exploitation of ethnicity as the appealing tool for the mobilization of the masses led to conflict. Stefano Bellucci states that conflict was the result of the intertwining of internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to the "history and culture"[64] of African societies; whereas external factors refer to global political and economic factors.

Furthermore, the ethnic and religious factor played a major role in shaping conflict in Africa, because "ideology was used by many African leaders as a means to achieve power, and power granted the control of the economy. (…) African crises always originate from economic disequilibria, which change into political and social resentment. They change into civil war, though, when politics (the ideal of society) or the identity (ethnicity or religion) become tools used by the elites to achieve improper

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[62] Harsch, Ernest, Combating Inequality in Africa, *Africa Renewal, Vol.20 #2 (July 2006), page 16.* From: http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol20no2/202-combating-inequality.html

[63] Bellucci, Stefano, Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale, p.57-8 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

[64] Bellucci, Stefano, Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale, p.41 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

and selfish ends, that is, ends, which do not concern the social or cultural sphere, to which politics and identity belong."[65]

Postcolonial African States and the Legacy of Colonialism

The impact of colonialism on the African continent is certainly relevant in characterizing postcolonial states and conflicts. Pre-colonial societies in Africa were stateless insofar as the concept of modern state is concerned. Modern states, which came into existence after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, are defined as entities having the sovereign authority to rule over the people of a specific territory. Sovereignty gives such states the highest authority internally, and inviolability of their borders vis-à-vis external political actors. In this sense, pre-colonial African societies were mainly organized in feudal systems with a chief or king, and with largely decentralized administrative powers.

In talking about ethnic conflict, Emmy Godwin Irobi affirmed that "it is important to note that most of these ethnic conflicts were caused by colonialism, which compounded inter-ethnic conflict by capitalizing on the isolation of ethnic groups. The divide-and-conquer method was used to pit ethnicities against each other, thus keeping the people from rising up against the colonizers. Distribution of economic resources was often skewed to favor a particular group, pushing marginalized groups to use their ethnicity to mobilize for equality."[66]

Even Stefano Bellucci argues that colonialism had a tremendous impact on postcolonial states, because it transferred to these states its patterns of violent and exploitative administration. "The causes of civil conflict are usually historical, which can be found in the European penetration in Africa, and in the colonial slave trade, which have introduced models of violent exploitation and domination in African societies that have taken roots in the whole continent, even after independence. During the decoloniazation period, the new states had been left by the colonial powers with scarce institutional and human resources (…). The underdevelopment caused by colonialism and neocolonialism is at the base of social and political conflict in Africa, between the poorer and poorer masses and the rich elites. These imbalances generated the social discontent that subsequently fueled civil wars in Africa."[67]

Colonialism shaped the postcolonial state in six main ways: it left it with fragile economies; it left it with weak political institutions; it legitimized patterns of violent coercive and exploitation; it disrupted the African geopolitical scenario by introducing artificial borders; it created or consolidated ethnically homogeneous elites, despite multicultural heterogeneousness of societies; and it set in motion mechanisms of

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[65] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale</u>, p.63-64 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

[66] Irobi, Emmy Godwin, <u>Ethnic Conflict Management in Africa: A Comparative Study of Nigeria and South Africa,</u> *Research Paper*, May, 2005, at Beyond Intractability.org of the University of Colorado, at: <u>http://www.beyondintractability.org/case_studies/nigeria_south-africa.jsp?nid=6720</u>

[67] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale,</u> p.56 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

identity awareness, such as pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, in response to a Western imperialist domination based on racial and cultural superiority.

First, postcolonial states in Africa had been left with very fragile economic economies, which caused their economy to be dependent on the import of refined goods and on foreign capitals. This is important, because dependence hindered the process of economic growth and development. De facto, these colonies, when created, were not meant to be independent. The only raison d'être for the colonies had been their economic exploitation to the advantage of the imperial power. They produced and exported raw materials, which were then sent to the colonial power to be manufactured. Because of the lack of refined goods, the colonies had to import them. The construction of a few infrastructures, such as railroads and roads, was intended to easily access and exploit the resources of the colony to the advantage of the colonial power. Areas with few or no resources were largely neglected and marginalized, causing regional underdevelopment and great disparities within a same country. As a consequence, when independence came, the economies of the former colonies were dependent on the import of refined goods and on the only form of income that they had: the export of raw materials. Economic backwardness caused these states to be dependent also on foreign capitals, which were the only form of investment and the only possible solution for achieving economic growth and modernization.

Second, the former colonies retained a Western system of political organization, which was alien and could not be easily adapted to most colonial realities. Such political institutions were inadequate to face the multiethnic reality of African states. Very often, the colonial administrations had governed different regions within a country in different ways. This factor offset a process of nation-building and of multiethnic amalgamation. In The Statehood of Somalia and the United Nations, Nii Wallace-Bruce stated in 1994, "the new Republic could not disguise the stark bi-reality. It had 'two different judicial systems, different currencies, different organization and conditions for service for the army, the police, and civil servants…The governmental institutions, both at the central and local level, were differently organized'…"[68] For this reason, in the absence of a previous process of common political and social organization, postcolonial governments were alienated from the beginning from the overall majority of the population, consequently hindering the process of state building and of nation building. In most African colonies a large bureaucratic apparatus came to develop, which had previously been unknown to them. Posts within the bureaucratic machine were the only and the best alternative to more customary forms of employment (farming, herding, trade, etc.). Thus, they were highly competitive. This fueled corruption and political patronage. Corruption hampered efficiency, and the large expenditures for the maintenance of such a huge apparatus weakened even more the economy. Colonialism brought with it an administrative apparatus, which offset the traditional organization of local communities. When during the mid-1960s most colonies became independent, they maintained a system, which could not have deeply taken root in less than a few decades. In addition, such fragile system had to coexist with the more traditional societal organizations, the communities or "tribes". One type of organization had now to manage and rule what was once a large variety of different organizations and with differing interests. In Somalia, for instance, immediately after independence, around 60 political parties were created, each of which reflected various Somali groups. In the

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[68] Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, "Africa Since 1800".p.97 5th Edition. Cambridge: University Press, 2005 Ref. Op. Nii Wallace-Bruce, The Statehood of Somalia and the United Nations,

absence of a strong sense of 'state-ness', politics came to represent not a point of cohesion among groups, but a tool for individual interest groups, represented by the various ethnic communities. Local elites, in fact, sought allegiance and cohesion by granting favors and benefits to their kinsmen and allies, who usually belonged to the same ethnic group. In this respect, they appealed to common origins and ancestry to politically mobilize ethnicities in their favor.

The institutions of the colonial rule may have worked if constructed on more solid bases. And a solid basis needs time to establish, a larger participation from the whole people, and needs therefore a process of nation-building. The fragility of the economies and the specific historical momentum led to see the state as the only provider of power, status and wealth. Therefore, conflict over resources became a competition for power, which assumed ethnic overtones due to the mobilization of ethnicities by political elites.

The failure of state-building and of nation-building is the reason why we have so many failed democracies in post-independent Africa, and why so many dictatorial regimes rising. Once the newly independent states came to power, the fragile base just collapsed, because democracies were unable to be acknowledged as legitimate by the whole population. "In states across much of the Third World democracy was bent out of shape to suit the interests of the military, the bureaucracy, feudals and other powerful interest groups: it was either 'basic', or 'guided' or otherwise appropriately prefixed to deny its central function of articulating the will of the people through elections, not to mention key processes such as accountability. Among other things, this also meant that a genuine system of political accommodation could not be put into place."[69]

Third, colonialism legitimized patterns of coercion, violence and exploitation, initiated with the *bakt* and became customary during the Turkish occupation. These methods had often been used by the colonial administrations to "tame" those populations, who resisted the alien rule. Coercion, violence and exploitation were retained by the postcolonial elites in power, because they had become a customary form of enforcement during colonialism. Given the failure of state- and nation-building, post-colonial governments were unable to gain the consensus of their whole population. Thus, these methods were seen as necessary to maintain order. In the absence of strong and effective state institutions, which could provide efficient enforcement mechanisms, the elites in power maintained their power through terror and violence. In this sense, colonialism reinforced and legitimized forms, which were typical of the feudal system.

Fourth, the colonial empires had disrupted the geopolitics of the African continent by introducing artificial borders. The Berlin Conference of 1884-5 partitioned Africa in what some scholars have referred to as "spheres of influence" among the colonial powers. African states had been artificially created by drawing borders, which did not take into account the ethnic component and plurality on the territory. They did not take into consideration the people's main subsistence activity (be it farming or

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[69] Rashid, Abbas & Shaheed, Farida, Pakistan : Ethno-Politics and Contending Elites, , Discussion Paper No. 45, June 1993 Prepared for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
From: www.unrisd.org

herding or nomadic) and the geological conformation of the ground[70], either. In addition, colonial administrations had made little or no effort to create a sense of unity. They had sometimes retained different patterns of administration within a country, which contributed to heterogeneous practices. Thus, when independent, the newly-formed governments had to create a sense of national unity in a heterogeneous society. The ethnography on the continent was completely subverted insofar as different ethnic groups had now to coexist within the same territory with other ethnic groups, with which there had previously been little or no interaction. Given the fragility of the economy, the competition for access over resources, and the failure of state-building, nation-building, too, failed.

A fifth important feature is that the colonial administrations created or consolidated to power ethnically homogeneous elites vis-à-vis the cultural heterogeneity of African societies. Colonial powers had sought the help of a small part of the population to administrate the country. Colonial administrative powers either created new elites or re-confirmed the power of pre-existing elites. The negotiation with these elites served the purpose of maintaining order in the colony, and consisted of educating them with Western-like education, granting them a post in the new administrations, benefits, and impunity. When independence was not the result of insurrection and war, independence was negotiated between the colonial administration and the elites. Therefore, independence re-confirmed these elites as the new ruling actors in post-colonial countries. This had two effects: it led to a lack of legitimacy by the whole population and created competition for access over resources. First, the fact that the elites represented specific interest groups and neglected others caused the new states to lack legitimacy by the whole society from the beginning. Second, because the state was the main provider of wealth, local elites came to exploit ethnicity as the main engine for political mobilization and therefore for access over resources. Governing elites came to be associated with the ethnic group to which they belonged, and marginalization came to be seen not as the failure to evenly distribute resources, but as the domination of ethnically homogeneous elite over a heterogeneous society.

Sixth, another effect of colonialism, which is usually underestimated, is that it set in motion complex mechanisms of social and identity awareness (beyond geographical borders), such as Pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, in response to Western imperialism. At first, in the decolonization process, these movements served as ideological glue against the ideas of African cultural and racial inferiority that Western colonial powers had tried to instil. Later on, though, post-independence economic underdevelopment and disparities in income distribution were distorted through the prism of ethnicity, making these movements ethnic coalitions for political and economic claims. Because these two movements coexisted within the same territorial borders in large regions of Africa, clashes became inevitable, as each of them gained more strength from the idea of superiority, especially in the light of a larger context, such as the Middle East.

Pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism are important, because they strengthened cultural and ethnic identities, and highlighted the ethnic factor instead of emphasizing

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[70] These two elements, more than the ethnic component, are important. The drawing of artificial borders limited the movement of peoples, which was once free, and therefore impeded their access over resources needed for subsistence.

the economic and political causes for Africa's underdevelopment. The concept of pan-Africanism was embodied by the African Union, which was created in 1963 and was able to philosophically link African leaders. Despite its failures, the African Union gave the chance to African leaders to no longer be isolated, and to spread their ideas throughout the continent. It not only created self-awareness among African elites, but also stressed misperceived ideas such as ethnic conflict. These, in turn, became the "legitimate" causes for war by putting aside the real causes, such as economic marginalization and failed nation- and state-building. At the domestic level, 'African-ness' created a polarization, where marginalization reflected ethnic discrimination. In speaking about Darfur, Alex de Waal provides an explanation of how significant Africanism and Arabism are in the whole Sudanese context. He argued that the incorporation of Darfur not only in Sudanese processes, but also in wider African and Middle-Eastern processes, has caused Darfur's ethnic identities to be "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."[71]

At the same time, pan-Arabism created the idea among Arabs of superiority. Although distinct, pan-Arabism mixed at times with pan-Islamism, at least at the level of ideas. This gave pan-Arabists an even more legitimate belief of their superiority. The descent from the Prophet and centuries of cultural and economic splendour gave a unitary aspect to the Arab world and reinforced the idea of superiority. As far as Sudan is concerned, Qaddafi's idea of pan-Arabism efficiently fuelled ethnic hatred, and most of all supported it with money, training and weapons. At the same time, pan-Africanism strengthened the feeling of African awareness in most rebel groups, who felt themselves oppressed and discriminated again by their own governments, in the same way as colonialism had done. When the reality of bad governance and regional marginalization came into contact with the ideas of pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, the *connubium* created hatred, resentment, and finally conflict.

Pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism became important tools for leaders, intellectuals and elites, who were able to appeal to a renowned consciousness of their origins and used these ideas as a point of strength in civil wars to gain consensus. In this sense, what was created as a movement of protest against the imperialist era of the West became a double-edged knife, which revolted against other ethnic groups within the same countries. The appeal to and exploitation of ethnicity, as well as the appeal to religion, become tremendous weapons, when national unity is non-existent or the basement on which states are created is fragile.

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[71] De Waal Alex, <u>Who Are The Darfurians,</u> *Justice Africa*

Postcolonial African States and the Impact of the Cold War Period

Post-colonial African states inherited from colonialism elitist, coercive governments, large bureaucratic apparatuses, fragile political and economic institutions, all of which led to failed prospects of nation-building. The Cold War period contributed in two ways to the shaping of postcolonial African states. First, global trends and theories emphasized the role of the state as central in development and modernization. Second, the military confrontation between the two superpowers resulted in the militarization of allied states and rebel movements.

First, global trends and theories throughout the Sixties emphasized the role of the state as central in development and modernization. The major challenge for neo-independent African states was modernization. For modernization to be achieved, highly centralized states were seen as the only feasible solution. In fact, centralization served the purpose of hiding the problem of national disunity and of fragile political institutions. Thus, African countries in the Sixties and Seventies were highly centralized both economically and politically. Centralization did not solve the existing problems, but led to an enormous concentration of power and wealth in the hands of an elite, which was consequently perceived as the domination by a specific ethnic group. The centralization of power led the new governments to neglect the issue of nation-building in a multiethnic society. The most vital priority for the neo-independent African states during the Sixties was modernization. Centralization of political and economic power during the Cold War period was not uncommon to the rest of the world. Global trends had, in fact, emphasized the central role of the state not only in the political but also in the arena of economics. In the first place, the Keynesian theories had become very popular in most Western countries. The main idea that spread after the Great Depression was that unemployment had finally led to the rise of fascism all over Europe[72]. In looking at the Great Depression of the 1930s, Keynes had speculated that the free fluctuation of markets could not adjust by itself to full employment. He had looked at economic downturns as a lack of aggregate demand, and had proposed that governments could stimulate it through fiscal policies aimed at either cutting taxes or increasing expenditures. Thus, there was a wide belief that saw in the government the main architect for economic growth. All over Europe, then, the nationalization of the economy yielded excellent results, especially when considering the economic miracles of Germany and Italy during the early Sixties. Also, we should not forget that Europe had been the mother of a social welfare system, in which the state was the main provider for health and education services. The social welfare system had been very successful in Europe, and the former colonial powers instilled such state-centered conception to the colonies. It is also remarkable that the president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, and his adviser, Hollis Chenery, had concentrated their attention on the governments for the reduction of poverty and in the correction of market failures. The state was also expected to meet the demand for the creation of infrastructures, schools and health services. In the second place, the emergence of the Soviet Union as political, military and economic superpower was central in determining the global political and economic trends. The perceived success of the 5-year plans, the emphasis

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[72] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale,</u> p.21(Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

on heavy industry, the collectivization of land, and the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) contributed to raise the Soviet Union to the rank of economic superpower. Ideologically and politically speaking, the Soviet Union was the only alternative to Western capitalist democracy, which recalled ideas of a colonial exploitative past. Not by chance, Marx had seen imperialist colonialism as an inherent feature of capitalism - which required a continuous consumption and consequently a continuous market expansion - and also of the concept of "surplus-value," which could only result from the exploitation of the labor force.

Second, the military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union led to the militarization of geo-strategically important states and rebel movements. De facto, the two superpowers were not formally at war with each other, but their confrontation resulted in the militarization and financing of allied states, and therefore in the emergence of proxy wars. The two superpowers not only financed states, but also rebel groups that aimed at overthrowing regimes, which could support the opposite bloc. There are plenty of examples in Africa: the Soviet support and armament of the Somali regime of Siad Barre, of the Marxist liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau and in Mozambique; or the US support to Hissené Habré of Chad, Congo-RD, Congo-Brazzaville, etc. Militarization characterized African societies and gave conflicts an incredible power of destruction. Sophisticated weapons increased the devastation of these conflicts, as testified by the Rwandan case, where in a few weeks 800,000 people were killed.

Ideologies of the Cold War Period

African states were thus guided in their choices by the global trends, which saw the state as central. The tendency of most African states towards socialism was strengthened ideologically by three theories, which either saw the former colonial powers as hegemonic or criticized the exploitative inclination of capitalism. These are neocolonialism, the dependency and the structuralist theories.

First, neocolonialism emerged in response to the economic dependence of postcolonial states on the former colonial powers as they were the only available source of investment for economic growth and modernization. Neocolonialism thus emphasized and criticized the central role in the economic growth that the former colonial rulers retained on these countries as a new form of imperialism. In Bellucci's words, neocolonialism "indicates new forms of hegemony of the more advanced former colonial powers on the ex colonies. The former colonial powers tended to substitute the old direct rule with a relation of economic, technological and political dependency."[73]

Second, the dependency theory is the theory on which neocolonialism finds its economic basis. It can be summarized in the words of Brazilian scholar, Theotonio Dos Santos: "By dependence we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies,

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[73] Bellucci, Stefano, Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale, p.57 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development."[74] Most scholars saw dependence as the main cause for underdevelopment in Africa. "Although different dependency theories lean in one direction or another – toward Marxism or nationalism- they all share several assumptions and explanations regarding the causes of and the solution to the problems of less developed countries. This position is captured by Andre Gunder Frank's statement that 'it is capitalism, both world and national, which produced underdevelopment in the past and which still generates underdevelopment in the present.' As Thomas Weisskopf has said, 'the most fundamental causal proportion [associated] with the dependency literature is that dependence causes underdevelopment'"[75]. However, Gilpin argues that "the less developed countries have a high degree of dependence and continue to be vulnerable precisely because they are underdeveloped rather than vice versa. (…) Their foremost problem is not external dependence but internal inefficiency."[76]

The third theory is structuralism. Accordingly, "a liberalist capitalist world economy tends to preserve or actually increase inequalities between developed and less developed economies. Whereas trade was indeed an engine of growth in the nineteenth century, structuralists argue that it cannot continue to perform this role because of the combined effects of free trade and the economic, sociological, and demographic conditions (structures) prevalent among less developed economies in the twentieth century (Nurkse, 1953). These conditions include the combination of overpopulation and subsistence agriculture, rising expectations causing a low propensity to save, excessive dependence on unstable commodity exports, and political domination by feudal elites. These structures trap less developed countries in a self-perpetuating state of underdevelopment equilibrium from which they cannot escape without outside assistance (Myrdal, 1971). (…) The structuralist argument is that the world economy is composed of a core or centre of highly industrialized countries and a large underdeveloped periphery (Prebisch, 1959). (…) In the non-industrial periphery, however, technical progress is introduced from outside and is restricted primarily to the production of commodities and raw materials that are exported to the core."[77]

Although the dependency and the structuralist theories differ on the causes of underdevelopment, what they both point out is that less developed countries' economies are dependent on the economies of more industrialized countries. Indeed, the lack of internal capital for investment was one of the main structural problems in the continent. "Externalities (neocolonialism) – that often resulted from alliances that the same African governments wanted- impeded to African leaders the actuation of progressive

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[74] Quoted in: Gilpin, Robert, The Political Economy of International Relations, p.282 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[75] Quoted in: Gilpin, Robert, The Political Economy of International Relations, p.282 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[76] Gilpin, Robert, The Political Economy of International Relations, p.304 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[77] Gilpin, Robert, The Political Economy of International Relations, p.274-276 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

policies, because the ex-colonial powers and the superpowers (USA and USSR) strongly encouraged militarism, that is disproportionate military expenditures, which has taken resources away from other development sectors, such as education and infrastructures."[78]

The Neoliberal Period

As seen, the Cold War period had been characterized by a large concentration of power in the hands of the state; in fact, it was seen as the only actor capable of achieving economic growth and development. African states were thus highly centralized, but because centralization could not solve Africa's structural problems, this did not lead to economic growth and development. Indeed, Africa's budget deficit increased and economic underdevelopment led to a competition over resources, which came to be seen as a competition among ethnic groups.

The Eighties and Nineties marked a transition period between the postcolonial and the neoliberal period, and signaled the crisis of the state. At both the international and domestic level, the state lost its importance as central actor in the development process. These two decades were marked by an era of free market and liberalization. The Reagan-Thatcher ideologies, the Washington Consensus and the concept of conditionality promoted economic liberalism and democratization. Especially during the Nineties, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, we assisted to the triumph of democracy. Conditionality came thus to be associated with good governance, in order to promote the respect of human rights and of international law. Anyhow, "conditionality and the economic neoliberal reforms," argues Stefano Bellucci, "had curbed the budget deficit from one side, but had worsened even more the economic situation and the living conditions of the populations. Because of the liberalization of trade and of the money market, both inflation and unemployment increased; whereas, the decreased state intervention caused a diminishing financing of educational and health infrastructures."[79] The crisis of the state corresponded also to an increase in "illegality, criminality, and informal economic exchanges"[80]

The collapse of the Soviet Union is an important factor which must be necessarily mentioned. It is relevant in two respects. First, with the end of the balance of power between the two superpowers, and therefore of their military intervention in Africa, African states started to interfere more and more in neighboring countries' domestic affairs. Second, Stefano Bellucci argues that "the end of ideological confrontation at a global level exacerbated the political crisis of the post-colonial nation-state."[81] De facto, the ideological dimension ceased to be the consolidating factor of African politics, and the post-colonial period came to an end.

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[78] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale,</u> p.19 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

[79] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale,</u> p.30 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

[80] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale,</u> p.30 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

[81] Bellucci, Stefano, <u>Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale,</u> p.19 Carrocci Editore (2006, Rome)

Crisis of Postcolonial States and Democratization

The Eighties and Nineties saw two important events, which signaled the end of the postcolonial era: the end of the Cold War and a renewed spread of free market ideologies, in the guise of conditionality and structural adjustment programs (SAPs). The end of the Cold War and the policies of conditionality and structural adjustment, induced by the IMF and the World Bank, led to two fundamental phenomena in the development of African states and conflicts: the crisis of the postcolonial state and the democratization process.

The end of the Cold War also ended the financial, military, and ideological support of the two superpowers to strategically important African states and rebel movements. This had two consequences: a political and an economic one. Politically, the ideological struggle between communism/socialism and democracy/capitalism came to an end. These ideologies had in a way constituted the glue on which many postcolonial states held. Indeed, the balance of power between the two superpowers had prevented the intervention of states in neighboring countries' internal conflicts. Consequently, the lack of this glue made postcolonial African states more vulnerable to the interference by other states and by internal interest groups. Economically, the end of the financial and military support by the two superpowers not only exasperated even more the already bad economic conditions of African societies, but also meant that African states were more dependent on international lenders and donors. After the oil crisis of the Seventies, and despite a worldwide economic recovery, African budget deficits and consequent economic underdevelopment deteriorated even more. Because of this, even their dependence on international aid increased.

The policies of conditionality and structural adjustment, which were started in the Eighties, found their ideological foundations in the Reagan-Thatcher programs of liberalization and privatization. Conditionality is an economic program, according to which an international financial institution lends money to a developing country on the condition that the last engages in structural adjustment programs. Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) are those programs, which profess the correction of macroeconomic imbalances and that allow for the market, and not for the state, to allocate goods available for purchase. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus the end of its ideological confrontation, the community of Western lenders and donors "intensified their campaign for multipartytism in Africa where the balance of the Soviet Union was no longer available to African governments in their quarrels with the West."[82]

SAPs, the end of the ideological, military and financial support of the Soviet Union contributed to weaken the foundations of authoritarian, one-party and dictatorial regimes in Africa. The loss of funds to fuel the machine of patrimonialism, patronage and corruption, which kept these regimes alive, was no longer available, and led to their crisis.

Pressure by the international community, i.e. Western financing communities, contributed to the process of disintegration of postcolonial states and fueled a movement of protest for change in Africa. During 1990 and 1994, these movements of protest led to an unprecedented wave of democratization. The key event was the peaceful overthrowing of the Kérékou regime by the civil society and NGOs in Benin.

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[82] Ould-Mey, Mohameden, "Structural adjustment programs and democratization in Africa: The Case of Mauritania" in Multiparty Democracy and Political : Constraints of Democratization, p.44 Edited by John Mukum Mbaku & Julius O. Ihonvbere, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998)

The event was followed by the fall of dictatorships in Congo-Brazzaville, Niger and Mali and by the end of the apartheid system in South Africa. In other countries, such as Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Mali, the international community was able to put pressure on the same governments to enact democratic reform.

According to Julius O. Ihonvbere, the struggle for democracy had positive consequences on African states. It "encouraged challenges to authoritarian and military as well as repressive one-party regimes; (…) it has encouraged the rise of new political parties and movements on the political landscape; (…) ethnic, religious, community and human rights as well as environmental organizations in Africa have become part of the struggles for democracy."[83] In a few words, the democratization process, which has had a role in the crisis of the postcolonial state, has encouraged multipartytism and the creation of a civil society in Africa.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, democratization, and the economic programs of the IMF and the World Bank translated, both domestically and internationally, in a total distrust of the state in the promotion of economic development. This, in turn, led African societies to "withdraw into ethnic and community institutions (…); to refuse to pay taxes, support government projects, and vote in elections; (…) and has also led them to withdraw into the so-called informal or underground or parallel economy."[84]

Notwithstanding the advantages that the democratization process and the crisis of the state had for African societies, many scholars argue that the impact of the neoliberal era and its processes (such as SAPs) had a fundamental impact in the insurgence of conflict. Indeed, after a first wave of optimism, conflicts, especially the ethnic, tribal and religious ones, multiplied all over the continent. This does not mean that ethnicity, tribalism and religion have become the primary factors for conflict. However, the absence of the ideological confrontation of the Cold War and the loss of trust in the state have led local leaders to exploit even more the ethnic, tribal and religious components in the mobilization and political adherence of local communities.

As has been said, the economic factor plays an important role in African conflicts. This was true for the postcolonial period, and even more in the neoliberal one. Although proponents and critics of the impact of globalization on Africa have differing views, they both agree that globalization on Africa with its free trade, market liberalization and free flow of investment, has put Africa to a disadvantage in the global market because of its "inadequate capacity to manage the process, which makes it more vulnerable to inherent potential forces of political and economic destabilization."[85]

In a paper produced by UNCTAD, the focus of the failure of Africa to enter globalization is on African states themselves. Accordingly, SAPs have resulted in better macroeconomic policies, with consequent higher levels of growth on the African continent. Anyhow, these policies are "clearly inadequate to effectively address the challenge of poverty reduction, which is embedded in the grossly uneven distribution of the benefits of economic growth between Africa's sub-regions, economic sectors, and

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[83] Ihonvbere, Julius O., "Where is the third wave? A critical evaluation of Africa's non-transition to democracy" " in Multiparty Democracy and Political : Constraints of Democratization, p.13 Edited by John Mukum Mbaku & Julius O. Ihonvbere, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998)

[84] Ihonvbere, Julius O., "Where is the third wave? A critical evaluation of Africa's non-transition to democracy" " in Multiparty Democracy and Political : Constraints of Democratization, p.11 Edited by John Mukum Mbaku & Julius O. Ihonvbere, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998)

[85] "Globalization, regionalism and Africa's development agenda" Paper prepared for UNCTAD X, February 12-19, 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.
From: www.unctad-10.org/pdfs/ux_id_ecapaper.en.pdf

segments of the population."[86] Proponents of SAPs and of globalization point out that globalization undoubtedly yields benefits, but that in Africa, structural inefficiencies are the main cause for its unsuccessful results. African states' main problems are those same problems that affected postcolonial states, that is, their dependence "on the production and on the export of a few primary commodities whose share of world trade is declining (…). Since the majority of people are employed in the commodity-producing sectors, poverty is perpetuated by the secular decline in the demand for these commodities."[87] Another major problem emphasized by UNCTAD is the lack of sufficient investment finance, which has contributed to the deterioration of infrastructure that has in turn led to higher costs of transport. This has made these goods, for which the world demand had already declined, even less competitive. Finally, an important shortcoming is the lack of domestic investment in human and physical capital, both of which are "prerequisites for competitiveness and sustained growth and development."[88]

Scholars, who are more critical of globalization, have argued that SAPs and globalization have not been beneficial at all for Africa; and on the contrary, they have triggered conflict. Indeed, the rise in poverty has increased the divide between rich and poor and also the share in the informal and illegal economy. In the words of Stefano Bellucci, "the liberalization of trade and of the money market has increased inflation and unemployment; in turn, the reduction of state intervention in the economy has reduced the investment in the education and health sectors. Thus, 'the retreat of the state' has corresponded to a worsening of the living conditions of the masses and an intensification of the illegality, criminality and informality of economic exchanges. Social degradation has allowed the formation of new forms of violence, or 'social chaos', which characterize African conflicts in the global era."[89]

Stefano Bellucci also affirms that democratization has not translated into democracy, in which minority rights are at the basis. Democratization has only led to multi-party competition in the elections and for access over resources, but has not yielded benefits to the whole population. "In Africa, the so-called neoliberal democratization has seemed to serve only the new system and the new dominant elite, rather than the whole population."[90]

For those scholars, who criticize globalization and SAPs, such as Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Maria Mies and Silvia Federici, the proliferation of war in Africa, as well as in Latin America and Asia, has been caused by the destruction of subsistence economies and especially of subsistence agriculture by globalization. For these scholars, globalization follows the same patterns of 19th-century colonialism, without necessarily

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[86] "Globalization, regionalism and Africa's development agenda" Paper prepared for UNCTAD X, February 12-19, 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.
From: www.unctad-10.org/pdfs/ux_id_ecapaper.en.pdf
[87] "Globalization, regionalism and Africa's development agenda" Paper prepared for UNCTAD X, February 12-19, 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.
From: www.unctad-10.org/pdfs/ux_id_ecapaper.en.pdf
[88] "Globalization, regionalism and Africa's development agenda" Paper prepared for UNCTAD X, February 12-19, 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.
From: www.unctad-10.org/pdfs/ux_id_ecapaper.en.pdf
[89] Bellucci, Stefano, Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale, p.30 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)
[90] Bellucci, Stefano, Storia Delle Guerre Africane: Dalla Fine del Colonialismo al Neoliberalismo Globale, p.32-3 (Rome: Carrocci Editore, 2006)

conquering the territory. "SAPs, trade liberalization, privatization and intellectual property rights (…) are responsible for an immense transfer of wealth from the Third World to the metropoles, and (for) the expropriation of Third World assets and resources by multinational corporations, (…)" which have led to a "context of generalized economic bankruptcy, (in which) violent rivalries have exploded everywhere among different factions of the African ruling class, who, unable to enrich themselves through the exploitation of labor, are now fighting for access to state power, (which is) the key to the appropriation and sale on the international market of either the national assets and resources or the assets possessed by rival or weaker groups."[91]

In essence, scholars have pointed out to a flurry of causes for the emergence of conflict in Africa in the neoliberal period. However, structural and economic factors remain the crucial ones. The crisis of the state and the following wave of democratization have substituted the old elites and introduced multipartytism in Africa, but economic and social underdevelopment has not decreased. Conflict over resources and power is still the key cause in the understanding of African conflicts, in both the postcolonial and the neoliberal periods. The end of the balance of power between the Soviet Union and the US has, however, unchained forces of identity creation and association, which were once subordinated to the ideologies of the Cold War.

Sudan perfectly fits in the framework of African conflicts in both the postcolonial and the neoliberal periods. Sudan has inherited structural inefficiencies from its historical past that are still the main causes for conflict in the ongoing Darfur crisis.

Sudan

The regions of the Sudan, especially the North and the South had had separate developments before the Turkish occupation. The North was culturally and religiously tied to the Arab Muslim world; whereas the South was more culturally variegated. The Turkish occupation ended these separate developments. In fact, while penetrating militarily through the South, the Turco-Egyptians brought with them traders from Egypt and northern Sudan to exploit the resources of the South. The Turkish occupation is important in two respects. First, it started the exploitation and marginalization of regions, such as the South and Darfur. Second, it created an elite of Muslim Arabs. Colonialism later legitimized these processes and transferred them to postcolonial Sudan.

Postcolonial Sudan and the inheritance of colonialism

The British colonial rule is important in the characterization of postcolonial Sudan and its conflicts. Colonialism contributed to the problems of post-independence Sudan in three ways. First, it strongly contributed to the economic marginalization of regions other than the Khartoum area. Second, it impeded the process of Sudanization, i.e. nation-building, and of cultural amalgamation, by following separate regional policies and by consolidating the Arab Muslim elite to

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[91] Federici, Silvia, War, Globalization and Reproduction, *Turkish Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 1 No. 4, Winter 2002
From: http://www.alternativesjournal.net/volume1/number4/federici.htm

power. Third, it legitimized coercive and exploitative methods that will later be inherited by post-independence ruling elite.

First, colonialism strongly contributed to the economic marginalization of regions other than the Khartoum area. The main reason was that the British had never considered the possibility of a process of cultural amalgamation and political union especially between the North and the South. Khartoum was already the wealthiest area and the fulcrum of trade as well. Southern Sudanese regions had counted on subsistence economies and had been impoverished by the continuous exploitation by the Turkish. Because the main purpose of the colonial administration was the exploitation of resources, it developed the already flourishing center of Khartoum. Consequently, the neglect of other regions led to enormous disparities within Sudan.

Second, it impeded the process of Sudanization, i.e. nation-building, and of cultural amalgamation, by following separate regional policies and by consolidating the Arab Muslim elite to power. The British had an interest in preventing the South from being influenced by the North. Northern Arab Muslim elites had been central in the Mahdist revolt, which had halted the first attempt by the British to dominate the country. Thus, the cultural isolation of the South from the North served the purpose of preventing a new insurgence of Mahdism. For this purpose, the Closed District Ordinance, enacted in 1906, limited the north-to-south flux of people and banned Arabic in the South. In 1930, a "Southern Policy" was officially enunciated in a speech by the British Civil Secretary, who confirmed the government's willingness to develop the South "along 'African', rather than 'Arab' lines."[92] Also, because the more subversive elements were constituted by Arab Muslim elites of the North, their allegiance was necessary for the prevention of a new wave of Mahdism. The British thus consolidated the power of Northern Sudanese elites by granting them benefits and posts in the new administration and allowing a high degree of impunity. The isolation of the South and the consolidation of a Northern Arab Muslim elite, despite the high level of cultural heterogeneity, hindered the process of nation- and state-building.

Third, the British Condominium legitimized coercive and exploitative methods that will later be inherited by post-independence ruling elites. The central government was geographically distant, and tried in no way to assert its legitimacy through acceptance. The South perceived no difference between the Ottoman, Mahdist and Anglo-Egyptian rule, because the fundamental features of the three governments were unvaried. They were all alien and oppressive. Actually, the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium did not detach much from the exploitative and brutal rule of the previous Turco-Egyptian occupation, and not even from the racial distinctions made by both the Turco-Egyptians and the Mahdists. For these reasons, soldiers from the South were employed through coercion, and "recruited" mainly in those areas, where slave raiding had been a constant feature of the Turkish occupation (a feature that recalls the *bakt* and its way of providing slaves to the Arabs). In addition, the British and Egyptians had recruited those officers who had been previously recruited by the Turco-Egyptians, and later by the Mahdists. Pillages, the seizing of livestock as tribute, violence and coercion could not differentiate the Anglo-Egyptian rule from the previous two, and certainly did not legitimate the government through acceptance. The granting of impunity to Northern elites legitimized these patterns of coercion, and delegitimized the central government in the eyes of the different regions.

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[92] Johnson, Douglas H., The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars, p.11, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003)

Sudan and the Postcolonial and Neoliberal Periods

Postcolonial Sudan had thus inherited from colonialism relevant structural inefficiencies, which led to the collapse of the first post-independence government. Neo-independent Sudan had been the result of negotiations between the British, the Egyptians and the northern Sudanese elites, which consolidated the elite of the colonial period, the Northern Arab Muslims, to the head of the new government. The South, as well as other regions of the Sudan, had been denied participation in the formation of the government. Consequently, the new state lacked legitimacy from the beginning. Gerard Prunier points at this lack of legitimacy as the cause for the military coup, which took place only two years after 1956 independence. "By November 1958 there was a strong sense of national crisis: economic setbacks coupled with a sharp decline in foreign exchange reserves, a series of costly strikes in the nascent industries, constant floor-crossing by opportunistic parliamentarians in the weak coalition government, the same government's inability to make any progress in controlling or extinguishing the continued rebellion in the Southern region and ever present rumours regarding subversion or possible invasion from Egypt. The feeling of crisis was so pervasive that the parties practically abdicated in the hands of the Army."[93]

Similarly to other African states, Sudan saw centralization as necessary and vital to modernization and to keep the unity of the new state. For this reason, when at independence, Southern regions asked for a federal government, the request was denied. A federal government, in fact, was seen as a first step towards secession. The centralization of the state failed to properly address the problem of nation-building. The government embarked in a policy of Arabization for the purpose of creating a sense of national identity. This attempt led the country towards the opposite direction. Because all posts in the administration were occupied by the same Northern Arab Muslim elites, the process of Arabization was not seen as an attempt of nation-building, but as an attempt by these elites to suppress multiculturalism and dominate the whole country.

The neglect of the South in the process of state- and nation-building and the competition over scarce resources, power and status, transformed the protests into conflict in 1963, led by a revolutionary faction of the Sudan African National Union, the so-called Anyanya. The war only ended in 1972, when the Addis Ababa Agreements established a Southern Regional Government. However, the agreement failed to address the important question of wealth sharing - especially in the light of the discovery of oil in those days - and to diminish economic disparities among the regions. In addition, despite the agreement, government intervention in the South was still high.

In 1977-8, Sudan's economic situation worsened even more due to the increased budget deficit and to the failed program of mechanized agriculture. Such worsening led to new economic confrontation between Khartoum and the other marginalized regions, and to dependence on US foreign aid. The US considered Sudan of strategic importance against Soviet-sponsored Ethiopia and had thus given considerable financial and military support. The 1980s, as said, were the years in which conditionality started to take a foothold. Financial aid was granted on the condition that the nationalized economy was privatized. Since the government's very existence was based on the negotiations with influential elites, "the Islamists imposed for 'national reconciliation' the reform of the law on Islamic principles, beginning with financial reforms and the

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[93] Prunier, Gérard, Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide, p.37. (London: Hurst & Co., 2005)

establishment of Islamic banks. They were in a strong position to benefit from privatization and the new investment climate."[94] The new reforms thus yielded no benefits to marginalized regions and to the whole population. Even the discovery of oil resources was of no benefit to regions other than the Khartoum area and the northern Sudanese elites. Furthermore, the establishment of *sharia* laws worsened the legitimacy of the government. The economic reforms, the discovery of oil and the establishment of Islamic law to the advantage of Northern elites led to the emergence of a new conflict in 1983.

The second civil war in Sudan presents the same causes of the first civil war and of the Darfur crisis, namely the failure of the government to share wealth among the different constituencies, the regional political and economic marginalization, and the patterns of coercion, which delegitimize the government in the process of state- and nation-building. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005 between the government and the SPLM/A failed to address the problem of regional marginalization and wealth sharing. The South gained autonomy and an even share in the oil revenues. However, other regions, such as Darfur, were not considered in the agreement. This led to the Darfur crisis in early 2003. Conflict over scarce resources had already started in 1985 when the government neglected the famine, which occurred after a drought.

Tim Youngs stated, "The current conflict has its origins in decades of economic and political marginalization, and tension over increasingly scarce farmland and water resources. Prolonged drought and desertification in Northern Darfur pushed nomadic groups south where they came into conflict over water resources with the farming tribes of the centre. Administrative boundary changes imposed by the predominantly Arab regime in Khartoum served to alienate the farming tribes, as did government backing from the loose collection of 'Janjaweed' nomadic militias, which has come to comprise several thousand fighters of mainly Arab extraction. An influx of modern weaponry in recent decades has increased the loss of life in these disputes."[95]

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[94] Johnson, Douglas H., The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars, p.44, Indiana University Press (2003, Bloomington
[95] Youngs, Tim, Sudan: Conflict in Darfur, Research Paper 04/51, 23 June 2004, House of Commons Library- International Affairs and Defence Section

Conclusion

Many African conflicts, including the Sudanese civil conflicts and the present Darfur crisis, have been depicted by the media and by politicians as ethnic or tribal. The emergence of these conflicts has been attributed to ancient ethnic or tribal hatred between different groups. My thesis has argued that the assumption that tribalism and ethnicity are the root causes of African civil conflicts is both presumptuous and misleading. Such constructs have led to numerous failures by the international community to work out a lasting peace settlement.

With regard to tribalism, it has been said that it is a concept, adopted by 19th-century colonial powers to indicate a primitive stage of social development, in which loyalty was owed to a group with common descent. Anyhow, it has been shown that the term's discriminatory connotations underestimate the complexity of African pre-colonial societies, insofar as the tribal identity coexisted with other forms of identities, such as village identities. Tribalism is only an "ethnonym", that is, a classification, which combines African pre-colonial classification of groups and the ideas of 19th-century colonialists. In Sudan, the usage of 'tribe' is retained for it refers to political association.

With regard to ethnicity, two opposed theories have been discussed: primordialism and constructivism. On the one hand, primordialism explains ethnicity as a social association, which is innate. On the other hand, constructivism sees ethnicity as an identity, which is socially and culturally constructed. In a final analysis, ethnicity has been presented as social construct, which always implies a differentiation between a group and the "other". As seen, Sudanese ethnic groups are the result of centuries of intermarriages, and therefore it would be misleading to characterize them as primordial. In addition, if ethnicity was primordial, conflict would be intrinsic in the concept itself, leading to a Hobbesian war of each man against each other.

If ethnic conflict is not primordial, then it is constructed by historical, cultural and social habits. It has been proven that ethnicity does not per se explain conflict, but it is its exploitation by political actors for political and economic purposes that shape conflicts as ethnic. Therefore, mobilization explains and reshapes the role of ethnicity and tribalism in African conflicts.

Later on, it was attempted to delineate the primary causes for conflict, which are to be found in the structural inefficiencies inherited by African states from colonialism, in the repeated economic marginalization of regions and of interest groups by postcolonial governments. Colonialism had a relevant impact in the emergence of conflict in Africa, because it transferred weak economic and political institutions to postcolonial states, it legitimized patterns of violence and exploitation, it subverted the geopolitical asset of the African continent by drawing artificial borders, it consolidated or created ethnically homogeneous elites against the multiculturalism of African societies, and it finally set in motion mechanisms of identity awareness, such as pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, in response to Western imperialist domination. These characteristics were perpetuated by postcolonial African governments, and still constitute an important hindrance to the processes of conflict resolution and of democratization.

The case study of Sudan was finally taken into consideration. Both, the first and the second civil war, as well as the Darfur crisis, do not stem from ethnic hatred, but from uneven economic distribution and regional marginalization. Despite the 2005

Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and the South and the Abuja Agreements signed between the Government of Sudan and the rebel group SLM, conflict and violence are still going on. The main problem is that the al-Bashir Government is not resolute in resolving the conflict. This is testified by its denial to accept assistance by the UN in Darfur up until June 2007.

Indeed, the efficacy and success of a UN-AU peacekeeping force intervention will depend on two fundamental aspects. First and foremost, it will depend on the actual efforts of the Sudanese government to grant peace and stability and to pave the way towards nation- and state-building. The Darfur crisis and the analysis of African conflicts show that the only way to have a successful conflict resolution is to grant wealth and power sharing as well as political inclusion of marginalized regions and interest groups. Also, protection and enforcement of minority rights should be quintessential priority if conflict management has to be achieved.

Second, the success of the UN-AU peacekeeping force intervention will depend on a concerted action of the international community and Sudanese government with regard to human rights law and sustainable development. On the one hand, it will depend on their ability to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of grave crimes against humanity. Indeed, this will re-legitimize the Sudanese government in the eyes of the international and of the Sudanese community. On the other hand, the Sudanese government and the international community will have to be also capable of developing successful sustainable development programs. These, in fact, cannot be underestimated for the achievement of peace and stability. We have actually seen how the scarcity of resources (especially of water and arable land) has exacerbated the crisis in Darfur.

In conclusion, the fate of Sudan and of Darfur is not a matter of words, but a matter of facts. Ethnicity and tribalism, Arabs and Africans are just concepts. Conflict resolution and lasting peace will be determined by the actual willingness of the national government and of the international community to really solve the problem.

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