



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Crisis in Darfur

By Sam Roosz

Introduction

Since early 2003, the Darfur region of Sudan, a nation in East Africa, has been turned upside down by a conflict that has killed approximately a half million people and has turned civilians into the victims of rape, murder, and displacement. The crisis is reminiscent of a similar catastrophe on the African continent that occurred only ten years earlier. In 1994, conflict erupted in the African nation of Rwanda and **genocide** was committed against members of the Tutsi ethnic group, resulting in nearly a million deaths. The international community stood by and did nothing to quell the conflict. In fact, the UN actually reducing its peacekeeping forces in the region even after it became clear that genocide was occurring.

Following the failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda, the United Nations is faced with yet another potential genocide and must decide whether to step in and try to resolve the crisis in Darfur. Unfortunately, there are many complications that make this task a particularly difficult one. Sudan has a **tumultuous** past, only recently emerging from over twenty years of civil war. As a result, the entire region is highly unstable and any UN intervention must strive to maintain the fragile balance in Sudan.

Genocide—*the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.*

Tumultuous—*marked by violent or overwhelming turbulence or upheaval.*

Explanation of the Problem

History of Darfur

Arab nomads moved into Darfur in the 14th century, creating the region's multi-ethnic culture that persists to this day. Darfur was a self-ruled entity until the Keyra Fur Sultanate took control in the mid-1600's. The Sultanate brought great economic development to the region, but this progress was undone in the 1870's when Darfur fell under the control of British-dominated Egypt. Lawlessness and disorder followed as Islamic militias roamed the region fighting British control. In 1899, Darfur gained status as an independent sultanate, and a period of peace followed. However, with the commencement of World War I, the British government grew uneasy about the extent of Turkish influence on the region, and consequently reabsorbed Darfur into the British Empire.

During the period of British rule, Darfur was largely neglected and received few resources for development. This **systematic** lack of attention had long-lasting consequences; when the nation was given its

Systematic—*methodical in procedure or plan.*

independence in 1956, it was plagued with poor government and infrastructure. While under British control, Sudan was governed as two regions, one northern and one southern, the latter of which included Darfur. The northern region's population was largely of Arab descent and received the majority of Britain's financial attention, while the more indigenous South was neglected. The northern Arabs were granted control of Sudan, which left the indigenous population in the south feeling **marginalized**. In 1955, the people of southern Sudan started a rebellion that lasted until a peace accord was signed in 1972. This first civil war claimed approximately 500,000 lives.

Second Sudanese Civil War

The peace lasted 11 years until 1983, when the Sudanese President announced that he would be implementing Islamic law into the **penal code** of Sudan. As result of this policy, the **animist** southern region felt further **disenfranchised**, and they once again rebelled to seek autonomy. Prime Minister Sadiq Al-Mahdi, who rose to power in 1986, made some progress towards peace. The terms of the peace seemed to appeal to both sides, but in 1989 General Omar al-Bashir of the National Islamic Front overthrew Al-Mahdi in a bloodless coup and dramatically reversed the peace process by moving to make Sudan an Islamic state. Around this time, Darfur was also utilized by Muammar al-Gaddafi, the leader of Libya, as a staging ground for his war in Chad. Islamic extremism took root in the region, and great amounts of arms and ammunition became available.

As Sudan became a hotbed for Islamic fundamentalism, even hosting Osama Bin Laden during the 90s, an independent, religiously motivated Arab militia emerged to fight against the southern rebels. In the mid-90s, the Sudanese government used this group, known as the *janjaweed*, as an inexpensive tool to do its dirty work against the southern rebels.

After the US applied pressure to Sudan as part of its war on terror, negotiations for peace once again began in Sudan, culminating in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. This agreement at least **nominally** ended the civil war that by this time had killed two million. However, the conflict in Sudan was still far from over.

Darfur Rebellion

In 2003, the Darfur region of Sudan rose up in rebellion against the government. Two groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice for Equality Movement (JEM), united in order to fight against Bashir's government. The SLA was born twenty years earlier when government-backed Arab forces began **pillaging** indigenous farming communities. The indigenous population formed self-defense militias that eventually became the SLA. The emergence of the JEM was

Marginalized—to be relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

Penal code—a code of laws concerning crimes and offenses and their punishment.

Animist—a type of religion that attributes conscious life to objects in and phenomena of nature or to inanimate objects.

Disenfranchised—deprived of a legal rights or of some privilege or immunity, or generally excluded from the political process.

Nominally—existing or being something in name or form only.

Pillage—to plunder ruthlessly.

rooted in the struggle for power between Hassan al-Turabi and Bashir. Al-Turabi unofficially ran the government after Bashir's coup, but eventually the two leaders had a struggle for power. Bashir won and pushed al-Turabi, along with his group of indigenous Muslims, out of the government. The defeated faction went on to form JEM.

JEM saw a potential ally in SLA and the people of Darfur who had been neglected and left out of the peace talks. Together, these two disenfranchised groups started their rebellion. Fearing that the uprising in Darfur would hurt the emerging stability in the rest of the country, the Sudanese government cracked down harshly on the rebels, using both official forces and the *janjaweed* fighters. The government encouraged the *janjaweed* to fight against civilians backing the rebellion, and the renegade militias raped, murdered, and pillaged villages in their fight against the people of Darfur. In response to these acts of violence, many of the people of Darfur have fled the region; there are approximately 2.5 million refugees of the conflict.

Rape specifically is used as a major tool against the people of Darfur as a means of humiliating its people and disintegrating its tribal lines. In southern Sudan's culture, the ethnic lineage of a child is passed down **paternally**; therefore, the raping of women and the resultant half-Arab children threaten to cause great social upheaval in the region.

Paternally—*received or inherited from one's male parent.*

Recent Developments

International Response

In 2004, the US Secretary of State Colin Powell declared the crisis in Darfur a genocide, labeling the attacks on the indigenous ethnic groups in Darfur a "coordinated effort, not random violence." In accordance with this position, the US has lobbied for the United Nations to implement strong measures to help **quell** the violence. This position has remained unique to the United States, however, as no other nations on the United Nations Security Council have likewise declared the violence in Darfur genocidal.

Quell—*to thoroughly overwhelm and reduce to submission or passivity.*

In 2004, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1564, which created the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur. This group concluded that the acts committed in Darfur did not represent a systematic plan of genocide implemented by the government; the Commission viewed the acts as counterinsurgency measures rather than an attempt at **ethnic cleansing**. The Commission did state, however, that the "international offenses such as the crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been committed in Darfur may be no less serious and **heinous** than genocide."

Ethnic cleansing—*the expulsion, imprisonment, or killing of an ethnic minority by a dominant majority in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity.*

Heinous—*hatefully or shockingly evil.*

The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)

After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in Sudan in 2005, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1590, creating UNMIS in Sudan. Up to 10,000 UN military personnel were authorized to serve as peacekeepers with the members of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS); this represented an important upgrade in UN attention to the region.

The next significant resolution from the UN came in 2006 with UNSC Resolution 1706, which provided for 20,000 military personnel to enter into Sudan and take necessary action to protect civilians. The major **caveat** of this measure, however, was that the resolution stated that the action required the approval of the Sudanese government. President Bashir vehemently opposed the presence of foreign troops in his nation, claiming that Darfur would be a “graveyard” for UN troops. As a result, the resolution was little more than a gesture of UN support for civilians in Darfur.

A little less than a year later, the UNSC unanimously passed Resolution 1769, which attempted to make up for the shortcomings of the previous year’s resolution. This resolution called for the creation of the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur, a military organization with up to 26,000 military personnel. Unlike the previous resolution, Resolution 1769 required no approval of the Sudanese government. In light of the overwhelming international support for this resolution, President Bashir reluctantly agreed to the presence of the forces in Sudan.

Though the resolution marked a promising moment in resolving the crisis, its implementation has been highly criticized. A year after its passing, only 11,000 of the promised 26,000 UN peacekeepers were actually in Sudan and the force suffered from a lack of sufficient supplies and personnel, leading critics to question the UN’s enthusiasm for the mission.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

The International Criminal Court is an organization based in the Hague in the Netherlands that seeks to provide an international venue to try individuals who have committed crimes against humanity. Though this organization is not directly affiliated with the United Nations, most UN nations recognize it as a legitimate body, the notable exceptions being the United States, Russia, and China.

Sudan does not recognize the legitimacy of the ICC, but the Security Council officially requested ICC involvement in Sudan in 2005 with the passage of UNSC Resolution 1593. The US and China abstained on this vote, as they do not recognize the ICC’s jurisdiction. Using this resolution, the ICC produced warrants in 2007 for the arrest of the Sudanese State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs as well as for the

Caveat—*a modifying or cautionary detail to be considered when evaluating, interpreting, or doing something.*

leader of the *janjaweed* militia. The Sudanese government rejected these warrants on the grounds that the ICC has no jurisdiction in Sudan; to date the arrests have not been carried out.

In July of 2008, the ICC filed 10 charges of war crimes against President Bashir. This action was met with great hostility by the Sudanese government, which proclaimed that there would be great unrest and violence in Darfur if an arrest warrant was issued. Currently, a panel of ICC judges is reviewing the case to determine whether or not to issue warrants for Bashir's arrest.

Focus of the Debate

Though the situation in Darfur is quite serious, an international response is difficult to formulate. An international solution would be extremely expensive, and the UN's past experiences with international missions, like that in Somalia, have had very mixed results. Further complicating the debate is the fact that many countries have their own interests in stake.

USA

The United States has been a leader in the UNSC in drafting policies to deal with the crisis in Darfur. Since 2004, the US has held the position that the situation in Darfur is genocide, a notion many in the international community reject. In the UNSC, the US has been in favor of an increased presence of UN troops in the region in addition to sanctions on the Sudanese government.

Though the US has some strong objections to the ICC and has therefore not signed on as a member country, it has expressed **tacit** approval for ICC prosecution of war crimes in Sudan.

Tacit—*implied or indicated (as by an act or by silence) but not actually expressed.*

Egypt

Egypt, a major leader among Arab nations, has been very reluctant to pressure Sudan. Though it has committed some troops to the UN mission in Darfur, it has a strong interest in seeing the current Sudanese regime remain in power. Southern Sudan will be able to vote for independence in 2011 under the 2005 peace agreement, and both Egypt and Khartoum have expressed firm opposition to that independence. Egypt's economy depends on the Nile River, which runs through southern Sudan. Egypt is fearful that if southern Sudan votes for independence, then their access to water in the Nile might be curbed. Because of this shared interest, Egypt has been protective of the Sudanese government and has opposed sanctions.

China and Russia

China has strong economic ties with Sudan and therefore has been very supportive of the Sudanese government. China is the largest purchaser of Sudan's oil and has even made an interest-free loan of millions of dollars to build a new palace for Bashir. One particularly troubling aspect of China's relationship with Bashir's government is that China has been selling arms to Sudan, ignoring the UN embargo. Chinese equipment and fighter jets have been sighted in Sudan, and there is even evidence that China has trained Sudanese fighter pilots to operate their jets, some of which have been subsequently sighted attacking civilians in Darfur.

Like China, Russia is on good terms with the Sudanese government. The nation has almost always fallen on the side of Khartoum on UNSC issues and has, like China, been accused of violating the arms embargo and selling weapons to Sudan.

Japan

Japan has taken a view similar to that of the United States on the issue of Darfur, calling for international intervention to prevent further humanitarian violations. Japan has been highly critical of China and its close ties to Sudan, and has partially **divested** from the region. Japan has donated substantial funds for humanitarian aid and has also supported the UN mission in Darfur.

Divested—to cancel investments previously made.

NGO Perspectives

Greenpeace

While Greenpeace has not directly addressed the crisis in Darfur, one of the issues that it rallies against has garnered some attention as a potential cause of the conflict. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has asserted that the crisis in Darfur came about in part due to climate change brought about by global warming. He believes that the rising temperatures of the Indian Ocean disrupted monsoon patterns, resulting in a drought in Darfur. Ban Ki-Moon says that this drought decreased the amount of **arable** land, and therefore created tensions between indigenous farmers and Arab herders that resulted in the conflict. This theory is certainly not the prevailing view on the origins of the conflict, but Greenpeace's mission to curb global warming certainly falls in line with the Secretary-General's worldview.

Arable—fit for or used for the growing of crops.

Amnesty International

Addressing the conflict in Darfur is one of Amnesty International's top priorities. The organization has decried the actions taken by the militants in Darfur as almost every war crime imaginable, including murder, rape, and displacement.

The organization calls for more international efforts in dealing with the crisis. While Amnesty supports the decision of the UNSC to send 26,000 troops into the region, it criticizes the lack of progress that has been made at getting the troops on the ground. Though UNSC Resolution 1769 called for an increase in UN troops in Darfur to 26,000, there are currently only 11,000 on the ground. Amnesty points out that every moment wasted in getting peacekeepers into Darfur allows for more crimes against humanity to be committed in the region. The organization calls for member countries of the UN to follow through on troop and equipment commitments as quickly as possible.

Amnesty has also stressed the importance of making arrests for the warrants put out by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The organization believes that accountability for crimes against humanity will work to prevent further atrocities from occurring. The ICC has no police force to make arrests for the warrants they put out, so Amnesty wants the United Nations Mission in Sudan to enforce the ICC warrants.

Oxfam International

Like Amnesty International, Oxfam has urged the UN to take steps to accelerate the process of troop deployment in the area. In particular, the organization calls for increased protection of refugee camps. It puts strong emphasis on the protection of women, advocating for armed forces to accompany them to markets to help **stave** off attacks from the *janjaweed*.

Stave—to drive or thrust away.

Aside from lobbying for policy, Oxfam takes many actions to help the people of the region directly. It works within Darfur itself in addition to serving displaced refugees in Chad. The organization works hard to promote sanitary living conditions and access to clean water. It also provides public health education to fight the spread of disease faced by the victims of the crisis.

Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a significant presence in Sudan of almost 1,600 personnel working to provide emergency aid to victims of the crisis. The ICRC has worked in partnership with the Sudanese Red Crescent organization and is one of the organizations with the most access to the rural villages of Darfur. The organization works to provide food, clean water, sanitation, and household materials to some of the most desperate villages of Darfur. The organization would greatly welcome an increase in security so that their workers would be able to safely reach all areas that need aid.

Possible Solutions

Work with Sudanese Government

Though the Sudanese government has been implicated in the *janjaweed* violence in Darfur and has often hampered UN efforts to increase troop levels or humanitarian aid, their recent acceptance of UNSC Resolution 1769 after rejecting a similar proposal a year prior shows that the Sudanese government may be increasingly open to international involvement.

Additionally, it appears that UN action without the cooperation of the Sudanese government may cause conflict between Sudanese militias and the UN peacekeepers. Conflict between the UN and the Sudanese government could reignite a civil war, dragging the entire nation into chaos. Though working with the Sudanese government may unnecessarily prolong actions to bring peace to Darfur, the alternatives to working with the nation may be quite costly.

Enforce ICC Warrants

While **pandering** to the Sudanese government may prevent renewed violence in the nation, other factors should be considered. Many maintain that it is important for the international community to hold nations and their leaders accountable for the war crimes that they commit so as to deter future atrocities. By allowing guilty parties in the Sudanese government to go free, the UN would be sending a message to the rest of the world that war criminals can avoid arrest if they threaten more violence.

Taking action to arrest those individuals **indicted** by the ICC would remove from the region those individuals who had the greatest role in inciting violence, and it would also serve as a warning to anyone else who would consider participating in the conflict.

Put Sanctions on Sudan, Threaten Military Force

Another potential solution would be to take a more forceful approach in dealing with the Sudanese government. The UN could decide that economic sanctions are necessary to force Sudan into cooperation and could punish the government for their disregard of human rights. Likewise, the UNSC could even consider overthrowing the Bashir regime in order to put into place a more just government.

Though these actions would undoubtedly **escalate** the conflict, at least in the short term, they would also send a clear message to leaders of nations that crimes against humanity will not be tolerated by the international community. However, such an approach may also be seen as threatening to other Arab nations in the region, who may view a large scale military action by the UN as a 21st century reincarnation of the imperialistic attitudes of the West. It would also require a dramatic shift in

Pandering—*providing gratification for others' desires; fulfilling others' wishes..*

Indicted—*charged with a fault or offense.*

Escalate—*to increase in extent, volume, number, amount, intensity, or scope.*

China and Russia's stance on the conflict.

Questions for Policymakers

Policymakers will have to answer a number of difficult questions when deciding how to address the crisis in Darfur. First and foremost, UNSC members will have to decide what type of action is appropriate. Does the crisis merit a full-blown military intervention, or is a more moderated approach in order, like sanctions and diplomatic pressure? Should the UN even be involved? Policymakers may also want to consider encouraging or supporting other possible agents of action, like the African Union or NATO. Also, what should be done with the current deployment?

Once delegates have decided the scale of the action and who should be behind it, they will have to work out many details that can have far reaching consequences, like who will pay for the action, who will supply troops, what role the government of Sudan will have in any action, and the limitations of UN personnel on the ground. They will also have to decide how to include other organizations like the African Union and NGOs, if at all. However, before delegates even begin thinking about these questions, they should decide how to proceed in a broad sense.

Conclusion

After the heavily publicized failure of the international community to take action against the genocide in Rwanda, many view the crisis in Darfur as a second chance for the world to take a strong stance against war crimes. However, the situation is heavily complicated by the limited cooperation of the Sudanese government as well as the continual delays in getting equipment and personnel to the region. It is up to the United Nations Security Council to devise a strategy to **alleviate** the suffering in Darfur in the face of the complicated political situation of the region.

Alleviate—to partially remove or correct.

Guide to Further Research

There is ample, readily available information on the crisis in Darfur. The situation has been very well publicized and awareness campaigns are widespread. Any news source would be a good way to find information on the current situation as well as on the history of the conflict.

The United Nations website, as well as those of various humanitarian groups like the NGOs mentioned previously, is a rich resource for

information on Darfur. The UN website in particular will allow you to look into the UN's official policies towards Darfur. Perhaps even more valuable, you will be able to find reports commissioned by the United Nations on the situation in Darfur. These reports are quite **comprehensive** and are a wonderful resource for delegates in this committee, especially since the UNSC would base its decisions on reports commissioned by the UN.

Comprehensive—of large scope; covering or involving much.

While researching, it is important to not only know the present situation in Darfur, but also the historical context of the conflict. Delegates should look into previous UN actions, such as those in Somalia and the Balkans. This research will help delegates not only model previous UN actions, but also avoid past mistakes and understand the UN's limitations. Additionally, delegates should research their assigned nation's relationship with the UN and UN interventionist policy. News sources and the websites for each country's respective department of state will likely be the most helpful source of this information.

Ultimately, delegates are not expected to come into committee with a previously formulated policy; in fact, it is discouraged. This committee will function best if each delegate comes armed with information but an open mind as well. Through your research, you will discover that there is no easy remedy for such a situation. However, if each delegate comes to the conference prepared, everyone will be able to contribute to a solution.

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