# Is War Contagious? The Transnationalization of Conflict in Darfur

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**Abstract:** Scholars often regard the transnationalization of civil wars as unique expansions of the war and in doing so overlook the importance of the international system in contributing to the spillover of violence. The relationship between domestic situations and international contexts directly contribute to the transnationalization of civil war. I focus on the widening of the Darfur conflict from a domestic conflict to a war with strong international connections and ties. I argue that the transnationalization of war in Darfur is not the result of diffusion or contagion. Instead, the spillover of violence is the result of calculations on the part of the Sudanese government, which is using the violence in Darfur to wage proxy wars in Chad and the Central African Republic. A dangerous system of war has developed, with the governments of Chad, the CAR, and Sudan supporting and arming rebel groups in pursuit of wider political objectives and military goals.

On May 10, 2008, rebels from the Darfur region of western Sudan launched an assault on the capital city of Khartoum. The following day, Sudan severed all ties with Chad, its neighbor to the west. While the attack by the rebels was an act of civil war, tensions in Darfur have escalated to include neighboring countries. Indeed, a system of wars has emerged around Sudan. The violence is the result of distinct domestic politics and involves different actors and issues that have become entangled and have spilled across the geographical and political borders that divided them. The genocide in Darfur is frequently cited as the cause of tensions in neighboring Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR). The United Nations recently warned that the violence in Chad could turn into genocide similar to that in Rwanda in 1994.[1] Eastern Chad and Darfur have a similar ethnic composition, with nomadic Arab groups and black African farmers both seeking access to land and scarce water points. The violence in Chad follows the same pattern as in Darfur - mostly Arabs on camel and horseback and in pickup trucks attacking non-Arab villages. But, the war in Chad is not an extension of violence in Darfur.

Scholars often regard the transnationalization of civil war as unique expansions of the war and in doing so overlook the importance of the international system in contributing to the spillover of violence. Few political analyses focus on the role of international structures and politics to explain domestic conflicts.[2] Others instead ignore the domestic political environments

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that influence interstate relations. Yet, the relationship between domestic situations and international contexts directly contribute to the transnationalization of civil war.[3] As Karen Rasler observes, internal conflict "is a product of a complex synergistic relationship between domestic institutional arrangements and the context of competitive international political relations.[4] In an era when civil wars have emerged as the primary challenge to global peace and stability, understanding the external dynamics of intrastate wars becomes critical for explaining why conflicts spill across borders. External factors and relations between government leaders can provide more or less favorable opportunities for access to resources, legitimacy, and coalition partners.[5]

This article advances a model of state behavior that suggests that a threatened regime wishing to maintain its hold on power may allow and enable civil tensions to spill across borders and destabilize neighboring countries. This approach can be used as a means to consolidate power domestically and spread influence internationally. A civil war thereby becomes a proxy war between states with the advantage that governments can distance themselves from atrocities committed by their proxies by attributing blame to rebel factions. The transnationalization of the conflict in Darfur is indicative of the behavior of a state that fears impending failure.[6] The Sudanese government is concerned with regime survival and perceives regional stability and dominance as critical to that survival. An examination of the expanding conflict in Central Africa will develop this model and illustrate the causes and dynamics of the transnationalization of violence in Darfur.

The present essay focuses on the widening of the Darfur conflict from a domestic conflict to a war with strong international implications. The Darfur case study illustrates the argument that a government's domestic concerns and foreign policy goals can interact to produce the transnationalization of civil war. Specifically, the spillover of violence stems from calculations on the part of the Sudanese government, which is using the violence in Darfur to wage proxy wars in Chad and the Central African Republic. A dangerous system of war has developed, with the governments of Chad, the CAR, and Sudan supporting and arming rebel groups in pursuit of wider political objectives and military goals in the respective neighboring states.

## The Internationalization of Domestic Violence

In an effort to understand the internationalization of conflict in Darfur specifically and elsewhere in Africa more generally, we must ask how, why, and when do civil wars spill across borders?   The post-Cold War period is increasingly characterized by the prominence of internal conflicts Figure 1). Between 1989 and 2004, 111 out of 118 worldwide militarized conflicts were intrastate wars.[7] Even though the number of internal conflicts is greater than the incidence of international wars, civil wars are rarely isolated domestic affairs. Through refugee flows and/or violent interstate disputes, civil conflicts can affect entire regions.

Figure 1. Conflicts Worldwide 1989-2005
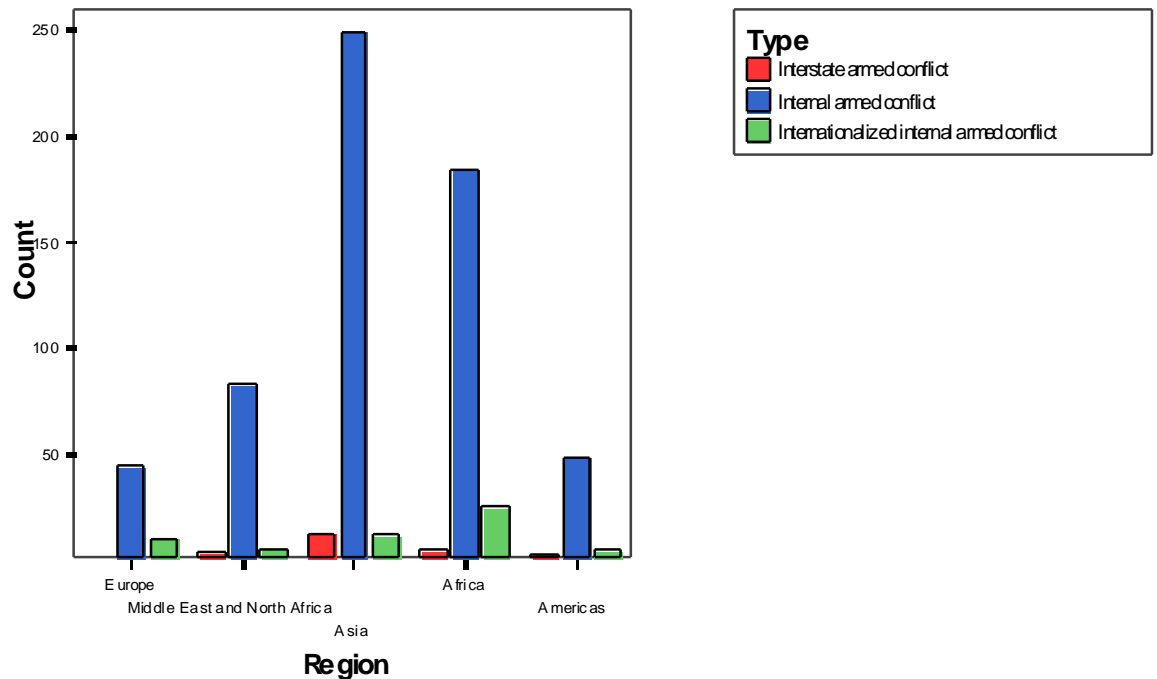


Many civil wars begin as intrastate disputes, but they become regional interstate crises when outside powers become involved. The idea of conflicts spreading is often compared to the contagion of disease, fire, and floods. President Bill Clinton, in discussing why the United States needed to send troops to Bosnia, explained that if the US failed to act, "the conflict that already has claimed so many people could spread like poison throughout the entire region."[8] This sort of contagion or "domino effect" is a common way of explaining the spillover of civil wars. It is a process known as *diffusion* and entails igniting conflict in other states or the spillover processes by which conflicts in one country directly affect neighboring countries.[9] Contagion, demonstration effects, information flows, and material and ideological support for ethnic diaspora are types of diffusion. An emerging literature addresses the issue of diffusion and argues in favor of "neighborhood effects," that is a state's regional context is an important influence on its conflict potential.[10] According to this argument, there are identifiable zones of peace and zones of conflict, which may have evolved simultaneously. The diffusion hypothesis considers transnational dependence and studies how cross-border interactions clearly influence the risk of civil conflict. The focus on the regional dynamics of the transnationalization of conflict has validity: a civil war in Sierra Leone, for example, is most likely not going to affect the likelihood of conflict in Sri Lanka but could affect the likelihood of conflict in Liberia. There are three types of transnational linkages that may affect the risk that a state will experience a civil war: the character of political institutions in neighboring countries; the willingness of states to seek support from members of similar ethnic groups in adjacent states; and the level of economic interdependence: if it is low, conflict is less costly to neighboring actors.[11] The recent

work on diffusion suggests that the decisions and acts of individuals, groups, and governments must be considered in order to understand the dynamics of the transnationalization of civil war, but this way of thinking about the regional dimensions of internal conflicts assumes that things move in one direction: from the place where the conflict started to neighboring states, which are characterized as the "passive, innocent victims of epidemics, firestorms, floods, and rivers of refugees…It sees things happening in an uncontrolled and uncontrollable fashion."[12]

This essay proposes that governments will civil wars to spread across borders in order to engage in proxy battles with neighboring states. Governments can use transnationalized conflicts to strengthen their hold on the state and to gain regional superiority. The spreading of violence across borders is thus calculated and controlled. Escalation of the conflict will then occur when groups forge alliances with affinity groups across their borders and/or when outsiders perceive opportunities in joining ongoing internal conflicts.[13] Outside groups (or states) will take advantage of windows of opportunity in order to capture the spoils, often resulting in intentional spillovers, irredentism, or border conflicts.[14] An example of this type of transnationalization of conflict can be seen with the Tutsis in Rwanda who allied with elements of Uganda's Hima ethnic group in the early 1990s to invade Rwanda and displace a Hutu-led regime.[15] Spillover of civil war also occurred in the late 1970s, when Somalis living in Ethiopia's Ogaden region forged alliances with kin groups in an irredentist attempt to separate themselves and the territory they occupy from Ethiopia.[16]

To be sure, conflicts can become transnationalized as the result of extreme insecurity and ethnic distrust. When kin groups live in neighboring states, civil conflict can spill across borders.[17] But whether or not conflicts become internationalized depends in large part on the international relations between African states. As states begin to look outward to expand their power and rally domestic support, they deliberately foment internal rebellions in neighboring states. External powers back internal rebellions in order to have local groups fight their international wars for them. By arming surrogates, they can advance their goals with minimum accountability and avoid international censure. It is therefore a mistake to think of internal conflicts spilling over from one place to another through a process that is beyond human control. Many--perhaps most--intrastate conflicts spill across borders because governments or political brokers perceive opportunities to wage proxy wars for whatever reasons against neighboring states. These transnationalizations of civil war are then the products of discrete decisions made by individuals, groups, and governments. During the Iran-Iraq war, for example, Kurds were often used as pawns between the two governments who at various times supported insurrection by their enemy's Kurdish population in order to indirectly attack each other.[18] In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda and Rwanda used claims of helping kinspeople defend themselves in order to access natural resources in northeast Congo. Ethiopia has also engaged in proxy wars with Somalia with the aim of crushing radical Islam at its roots in Somalia.

There is little evidence in the Sudan case to suggest that civil war is contagious. Common timing of exogenous changes, political motivations, and interstate relations appear to be more compelling causes than any apparent diffusion or geographic effect. There is, then, some reason to doubt that domestic conflict is as contagious as sometimes supposed. What is more likely is that Sudan observed the domestic unrest in Chad and the CAR and used that unrest, combined

with elements of violence in Darfur, to its advantage. International pressures and interests have further fueled the transnationalization of conflict and have contributed to the militarization of the political crises in Chad and the CAR, increasing the complexity between them and the Darfur conflict.

**The International Relations of African State**

The transnationalization of the conflict in Darfur illustrates the changing dynamics of Africa's relations between states. With the end of the Cold War and in the absence of the superpowers competition for global hegemony, the international community has decreased its interest and interaction with the African continent. As a result, African international relations have changed to become regional rather than global in orientation.[19] During colonialism and the post-independence period, most sub-Saharan African countries were so focused on consolidating domestic power that they generally respected the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Charter calling for noninterference in each other's domestic affairs.[20] This policy of non-interference was violated with the Ethiopia-Eritrea war that from 1998 to 2000 brought the largest-scale and costliest conventional interstate war to the African continent since the First and Second World Wars. The Eritreans and Ethiopians engaged in a test of wills over an impoverished and barren landscape where the border was never demarcated. Though border issues and tensions over currency and fiscal policies are often cited as causes of the war, the governments of both countries are widely accused of using the conflict as a basis for suppressing internal dissent.[21] As the Ethiopia-Eritrea case illustrates, African countries seem to be looking outward and have a renewed interest in regional international relations.

Part of the explanation for this shift and the emergence of interstate war derives from the changing distribution of power among African states.[22] As a result of almost forty years of uneven development and growth, the distribution of African states along a spectrum from weak to strong has widened. For some political leaders, the norms of sovereignty championed in the OAU charter must be loosened to permit them to extend their spheres of influence, tighten their hold on the reins of power, and engage in incursions beyond their borders as a diversion tactic from domestic dissent. How do states choose their diversionary targets? One possible answer is that because of "the emotions generated by ethnic loyalties and the historical grievances associated with them, ethnic rivals make particularly useful targets for shifting focus away from domestic instability."[23] In situations of asymmetrical power distributions, some states or groups make more useful targets than others for the purposes of rallying domestic support. The core realist hypothesis of international relations is that international outcomes are determined by, or at least are significantly constrained by, the distribution of power between two or more states.[24] As states weaken, they tend to look outwards as a means of consolidating support. And as surrounding states fall into political or economic crisis, stronger regional powers have additional incentives to intervene—in their own self-interest—to preserve order and, often, to take advantage of the economic resources and opportunities that exist in neighboring states. What then happens is that states can allow civil tensions to spill across borders and utilize the escalation of violence in neighboring countries as a proxy war between governments. Weak state capacity of many African states further allows the internationalization of conflict as governments have less control over their borders. Regimes benefit from proxy warfare versus

state-to-state violence because of the high level of deniability for atrocities committed across borders and the political legitimacy that comes from spreading power and influence.  Nowhere is this truer than in Sudan.

One of the most serious threats to domestic stability in Sudan comes from the Zaghawa ethnic group, which has the support of the Chadian state. The Zaghawa reside on either side of the frontier and are reputed to be excellent fighters. For Sudan, the Déby regime in Chad is nothing more than a Zaghawa state. Sudan is therefore determined to get rid of President Déby who Khartoum views as a weak leader unable to control his followers. In a calculation reminiscent of the 1990 victory against the SPLM/A that came with the toppling of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia, the Sudanese government believes that the solution to the war in Darfur lies in N'djamena, Chad's capital, and in the ousting of the country's president.[25] Chad has accused the Khartoum-backed Arab Janjaweed militia of attacking villagers in Chad. It says the militia has also attacked some of the 200,000 refugees that came to eastern Chad after fleeing violence in Darfur. Chad also alleges that Khartoum is backing the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), which is a coalition of armed rebel groups and army deserters who have launched cross border attacks from Darfur. Sudan claims that Chad is supporting Darfur's National Redemption Front rebels as they carry out cross-border raids. There have also been allegations that many of these rebels have become assimilated into Chad's national army. Chad has called for United Nations peacekeepers to patrol the border with Sudan while Khartoum continues to resist any UN deployment. Chad has accused Sudan of supporting the rebels in recent attacks in order to prevent peacekeepers from getting too close to Darfur.[26]

With regards to the Central African Republic, Sudan has used its poorer neighbor to the south as a staging ground for attacks throughout its civil war. As is common practice in sub-Saharan Africa, Sudan and Chad also used the CAR as a refuge for the losing side in political or military battles. The CAR says Sudan backs Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) rebels who have captured towns in the country. The government says the UFDR are operating from Darfur with the support of the Sudanese government. Chad has accused Khartoum of trying to destabilize both Chad and the CAR and has suggested an anti-Sudan alliance.[27] More than 46,000 refugees from the ethnic and political conflict in the CAR are currently in southern Chad. The CAR has thus been dragged into the violence of the countries that surround it, and its relations with its neighbors have exacerbated its own domestic instability.

**The Darfur Powder Keg**

The current conflict in Darfur in western Sudan began in February 2003 when insurgents attacked government targets, claiming that their communities were being discriminated against in favor of Arab groups. Darfur has faced many years of tension over land and grazing rights between the mostly nomadic Arabs, and farmers from the Fur, Massaleit, and Zaghawa communities. Darfur is a former independent state that the British annexed to their Sudanese colony in 1916. The region comprises a geographic area of about 500,000 square kilometers and is home to six million of Sudan's approximately thirty-eight million inhabitants. Darfur, however, has consistently received a far-less-than proportional share of economic and development aid from the central government, leaving it one of Sudan's most underdeveloped

regions. During the British colonial period, the colonial government invested primarily in the Nile Valley and in Khartoum: as a result, groups in other regions soon found themselves marginalized.[28] During the period of Darfurian autonomy and later of imperial neglect, diverse ethnic groups shared the region in relative peace. When the time came in the 1970s to decide how the province would be apportioned between pro- and anti-Khartoum populations, Darfur reappeared on the political scene and divisions between the African groups (who were mostly sedentary) and Arab groups (who were uniformly nomadic) became salient.[29] The first threat of civil war in the region loomed large in the 1980s, when the Sudanese government began arming Arab militias to contain the spread of violence from the South. In response to armament along ethnic lines, non-Arabs started to mobilize and acquire weapons to protect themselves against raids by nomadic Arab militias. What emerged in Darfur during this period was a classic security dilemma by which each side perceived preemptive actions from the other, armed itself in defense, and in doing so, sent off offensive signals. The 1984 famine exacerbated the situation by increasing competition for resources. By the time the Islamist government came into power in Khartoum in the late 1980s, the tensions in Darfur had escalated to the "stage of an undeclared sporadic war."[30]

The crisis that erupted in 2003 in Darfur was not simply the result of ancient "tribal" hatreds. Nor was it merely a response to drought and desertification. Instead, the origins of the war in Darfur are political. To be sure there has been historic conflict over land ownership in the region and longstanding grievances between ethnic groups, but the primary responsibility for the war lies with the peace process between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) that excluded certain groups from negotiations.[31] Insurgents in Darfur were fearful that exclusion from the peace process would further marginalize their region and concluded that though they were significantly weaker than the government, attacks against military garrisons could be a viable strategy for addressing long-term grievances.[32] Afraid of being excluded from the redistribution of power between the North and South, armed revolt seemed to be the only alternative to ensure a seat at the negotiating table. The rebels are divided into two loosely-allied factions, the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and have justified the violence as a response to decades of government marginalization. When insurgents began their targeted attacks, the Khartoum government responded with an indiscriminate counter-insurgency campaign carried out by nomadic Arab militias known as the Janjaweed. By the end of 2003, violence in Darfur had escalated into a full-scale civil war resulting in more than 200,000 deaths and more than two million displaced peoples, mostly from the nomadic and sedentary Zaghawa and the settled Fur and Massaleit ethnic groups, who collectively identify themselves as Africans.[33] By the time the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A was signed in January 2005, the crisis in Darfur had become, according to the United States, a full-scale genocide.[34] As the result of pressure from the international community (which began in April 2004 with an unworkable ceasefire agreement), negotiations began between the government of Sudan and the rebel movements in the region. The government and the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), the largest of the three rebel movements led by Minni Minawi, signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) on May 5 2006.[35]  February 13, 2010 marked the seventh anniversary of the war in Darfur, and until all groups can be

convinced to perceive greater benefits from peace than from continued war, the crisis can be expected to escalate.

## The Dynamics of an Internationalized Regional War

For many who follow the crisis in Darfur, Chad and the CAR are simply the neighboring countries that host the hundreds of thousands Sudanese refugees escaping armed militia attacks. While the conflict in Darfur has fueled and inflamed tension in Chad and the CAR, both are currently engulfed in their own civil wars.[36] The crises in Chad, the CAR, and Darfur have different origins and though they have become closely linked, both Chad and the CAR suffer from problems of their own which the Darfur conflict has exacerbated but not created.[37] Chad and the CAR each have long histories of unstable governance. During the colonial era, they were part of French Equatorial Africa, the federation of French colonial possessions in central Africa that extended northwards from the Congo River to the Sahara Desert. They became independent in 1960, but their economies were in shambles, they were under-populated, and they had small elites.[38] Since 1966, Chad has been plagued by civil and international war. The CAR experienced multiple coups until 1965, when the former colonial soldier, Jean-Bédel Bokassa, became the CAR's military ruler and crowned himself "emperor" in 1976. After Bokassa was overthrown in 1979 by French military intervention, the CAR returned to its pattern of coups and later rigged elections.[39]

Although divided by international borders, eastern Chad, northern CAR, and western Sudan are closely linked historically, economically, and socially, with numerous ethnic groups common to both countries. Chad, a Sahelian country, is divided between a Christian "African" South and a superficially Arabised Muslim North. In turn, the Muslim ethnic groups—some of which (particularly the Zaghawa) can also be found in western Darfur—are deeply divided among themselves by clan affiliations. Among the southern groups (many of whose members are Christians), some (notably the Sara) are the same as those of the northern part of the CAR. This ethnic situation "leads to a kind of continuous 'rainbow' where, from the west of Sudan to the north of the CAR, ethnic groups blend into each other without the colonially-created borders having much relevance."[40] The political dynamics in each region have resonating effects on the domestic affairs of the various states. Chad's President Déby and the president he deposed in 1990, Hissène Habré, came to power by launching military campaigns from bases across the border in Darfur, with the support of the Khartoum government.[41] Sudan backed Déby because it perceived his government to be friendly and indebted to Sudan. This relationship was short-lived, however, and while the Chadian Arab–Khartoum alliance endured, tensions mounted between Déby and Sudan.[42] Darfur became a base for Chadian dissidents in successive Chadian wars in the 1980s and, after 1986, Sudanese militias sponsored by Libya in its war with Chad were also active in the region.[43] Libya had aspirations to create a vast Sahelian empire and an "Arab Belt" into central Africa: a key component of this plan was the annexation of Chad. In exchange for weapons, Khartoum allowed Gaddafi to use Darfur as a rear base for its wars in Chad.[44]

Chad is currently ranked in the bottom five out of nearly 180 nations rated by the United Nations in its annual human development index assessment. The country does, however, have one source of wealth: oil.[45] Oil has only started to be tapped in the last few years, and while the

fighting in Chad is not directly about natural resources, oil has made control of the government an even greater political prize.

Like Déby, CAR President Ange Félix Patassé also needed outside "protectors" when he came to power in 1993. While Déby relied on the Sudanese and French, Patassé turned to Libya and the DRC rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba to keep him in power. There was open hostility between Chad and the CAR as the result of mutual animosity for their support teams. This tension was exacerbated by the increasing importance of the oil factor in sub-regional politics.[46] The situation was ripe for armed conflict, so that when the current conflict in Darfur erupted in February 2003, it proved to be the spark that ignited the fire.

Déby served in the Chadian army, and during the 1980s, he carried out brutal attacks against Chadian Arabs, causing a Chadian Arab migration into Darfur.[47] In 1989, Déby himself sought refuge in Darfur after a failed coup attempt against President Habré. Déby allied himself with Chadian Arab rebel groups in Darfur and enjoyed their support until 2006, when a rebel attack forced him to disarm and arrest Arab officers of the Chadian National Army.

Déby initially supported the government of Sudan against the rebels in Darfur. But, his ethnic identity came into play since members of his Zaghawa ethnic group were among the rebels. The rebel movements are comprised of members of the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups, and many Masalit and Zaghawa have ethnic kin across the border in Chad who have provided support and refuge throughout the conflict. In addition, some of the Sudanese Zaghawa who helped Déby seize power in Chad are still part of the Chadian military.[48] Members of the Janjaweed militia also come from ethnic groups that live on either side of the Chad-Darfur border. Moreover, Déby backed General Bozizé's CAR coup in 2003 and quickly found both Sudan and Libya against him. In 2003, he supported a coup in the CAR by General François Bozizé, switched alliances, and became an enemy of both Sudan and Libya. For its part, Libya has positioned soldiers along the Chad-Sudan border to ensure that it has a say in what happens in the region and to express its opposition to western peacekeepers in Darfur.[49]

Not only was Déby facing international opposition, but he also began losing support at home. He was accused of favoring the minority Zaghawa ethnic group by giving them influential positions and of corruption in the wake of his country's newfound oil wealth. When Déby declared his intent to run for a third term in office, some elements of the Chadian elite resorted to armed conflict with the aim of gaining political power and a share of the oil wealth.[50] Plans have been underway in Chad to build an oil pipeline from Chad through Cameroon to the coast. Chad received support from the World Bank for the project in exchange for a commitment to direct income from the pipeline towards alleviating poverty. The commitment was written into law, but the Déby government recently changed the law, giving itself greater discretion to determine the allocation of the oil revenue. Some of the money has been spent on arms.[51]

In October 2005, almost two dozen members of the Chadian Army defected to Darfur where they received support, including arms and ammunition, from the Sudanese government. In exchange, the Chadian rebels fought alongside the Janjaweed militia against the Darfurian rebels. Rebel incursions into Chad from Darfur began in December 2005: Chadian authorities immediately blamed the aggression on the government of Sudan.[52]

The Zaghawa ethnic group comprise one percent of the Chadian population: in order to maintain power, President Déby relied on political alliances. When he started to lose support at home, he forged new alliances with the Sudanese rebels who were eager to use the Chad-Sudan border as a buffer zone. By January 2006, the government of Chad was supplying the rebels with resources, including arms and munitions. Despite agreeing to a ceasefire in February 2006, Chad and Sudan continued to maneuver against each other and build alliances.[53] Two months later, Déby officially severed ties with Sudan after an attempted coup. The governments restored relations by August, but Chad's support for Sudanese rebel movements has been increasingly overt, and Khartoum has been encouraging Chadian opposition movements to unite under a single command.[54] Rebel groups from Darfur play a critical role backing security forces in Chad in their fight against Chadian insurgents.[55]

Two weeks after Sudan-supported rebels attacked the Chadian army in N'Djamena in October 2006, a Central African rebel group the *Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement* (UFDR) seized the capital of the Vakaga Prefecture in northeastern CAR. CAR President Bozizé immediately accused Sudan of aiding and training the UFDR rebels. The Sudanese government officially denies its involvement in these attacks, but evidence suggests that the activities of armed groups in Chad, Sudan, and the CAR are increasingly related.[56] While Sudan is allegedly supporting insurgents in northeastern CAR, rebels in the northwest have exploited developments in the Darfur-Chad crisis in order to expand their own areas of control.[57]

Violence in the CAR is occurring in a context of extreme underdevelopment and poverty where power and resources are distributed along ethnic lines. The internal conflict and rampant criminality are compounded by the international unrest that surrounds the country. War in Sudan has had repercussions for the CAR since well before the conflict in Darfur began in 2003. During the North-South Sudanese civil war, the CAR served as refuge for thousands of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers in the 1980s and as a base from which the Sudan Armed Forces launched attacks against the SPLA in the 1990s.[58] Refugees flowed from Sudan into the CAR: by the early 1990s, approximately 36,000 Sudanese refugees were living in Mboki in southeastern CAR. About half of these refugees were combatants who brought more than 5,000 weapons with them.[59] As the result of the availability of small arms and the subsequent threat to its staff, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) closed its Mboki offices in December 2002. The situation improved with progress in the North-South peace agreement and the camp was eventually reopened in February 2004. When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the North and South in January 2005, the SPLA withdrew from the CAR. Refugees from the North-South conflict have returned home, but new refugees from Darfur have arrived in the CAR, including an estimated 3,000 in May 2007 alone.[60] The CAR is also being used as a transit route for military activity originating in Sudan. During the April 2006 coup attempt against President Déby, the Darfur-based *Chadian Front Uni pour le Changement Démocratique* (FUC) rebels crossed through northeastern CAR en route to attack N'Djamena.[61] In a political gesture of support, President Bozizé closed the CAR border with Sudan, and while he maintains civil relations with the Khartoum government, he does not want to harm his alliance with Déby. An example of the importance of the CAR-Chad relationship came in December 2006 after Bozizé cancelled a scheduled visit to

Khartoum when Déby threatened to withdraw Chadian troops patrolling the CAR border region around Goré, as well as Bozizé's Chadian personal security unit, should Bozizé set foot in Sudan. The movement of arms and combatant continues from Sudan into the CAR and on to Chad as the Khartoum government seems intent on maintaining the CAR, for a staging ground for attacks against Darfur and Chad. CAR rebels are capitalizing on Sudan's use of CAR territory and with the support of Sudanese forces, are exploiting the security vacuums in Chad caused by the Darfur crisis. The Sudan/Chad/Central African Republic situation is far from being a simple spillover of the Darfur genocide. The three countries, however, have become entrenched in each other's domestic crises and are now fully engaged in regional wars.

**Sudan's Foreign Policy Agenda**

While the genocide in Darfur is not contagious, the common denominator in the three crises is Khartoum's political will that drives the spread of the conflict in the region for reasons of regime security, economic expediency, and ethnic pride. Khartoum is motivated by several factors. First of all, the Sudanese government wants to control Darfur and is using the present ethnic cleansing to create an "Arab" environment, designed to secure the province in case of (probable) secession of the "African" South Sudan, following a scheduled referendum in 2011.[62] Secondly, Khartoum is threatened by Déby's Zaghawa ethnic group, which it perceives as "African" and therefore a potential ally for rebels in Darfur. Sudan's main objective, therefore, is to either eliminate Déby or force him into a pro-Khartoum attitude. Khartoum is unlikely to thwart the spillover of violence from Darfur into Chad until Déby is either overthrown or made to change sides.[63] Control of oil in Chad is also a consideration for the Sudanese government. As long as Déby and the Zaghawa control the mineral wealth in the country, the Darfur rebels will have financial and material support. If that oil wealth were to be in the hands of a pro-Khartoum government, Khartoum could have a better chance of defeating the rebels and of enjoying some of the spoils itself. The CAR ranks lower on the agenda since it has no direct ties to Darfur and since its own oil wealth remains a distant prospect.[64] To be sure, the situation has become—as John Prendergast describes—"a power grab that goes beyond the Darfur-specific agenda."[65]

The old guard in northern Sudan has been substantially weakened by the North-South civil war and by the response to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Khartoum is now experiencing a lack of elite legitimacy that in turn leads to elite vulnerability. Weakening state structures, political transitions, pressures for political reform, and economic problems can traditionally bring about vulnerability. Each of the above is present in Sudan. The Khartoum government is determined to fend off emerging political challengers and anxious to shift blame for whatever economic and political setbacks the country may be experiencing. Moreover, ideological justifications for staying in power have been overtaken by events, and Khartoum now needs to develop new means for legitimizing rule.[66] As a result, the government is trying to bolster solidarity and its own political positions by engaging in power struggles with neighboring countries. In the case of Darfur, the governments of Sudan and Chad are each using ethnic alliances across their borders to consolidate and protect their positions at home.

Another important element that may be driving Sudan's current foreign policy agenda is the North-South dynamic in the country. With the threat of a renewal of large-scale violence between the North and the South looming large, the Khartoum government may be building its power in the region in order to make secession a less appealing option for the South. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has been significantly weakened by the failure of Sudan's ruling elite to share power with the former southern rebels as stipulated under the CPA. "In terms of political power and the economic sector, the [National Congress Party has] kept full control over the key ministries, and this is creating a credibility problem," said Alfred Taban, editor of the Khartoum *Monitor*, an independent newspaper. "The SPLM/A and many southerners [are] very disappointed and [have] lost faith in the intentions of the NCP."[67] It thus remains likely that the South will vote for independence in 2011. The Khartoum government may be using the transnationalization of conflict in Darfur as means of signaling to the South that the North is a key regional player and will politically and economically crush the South if it votes for secession.

**Implications of a Regional War**

The recent war in the Sudan region, coupled with the conflicts in the DRC, the Mano River region in West Africa, and in the Horn of Africa, suggests that transnationalized conflicts are on the rise in sub-Saharan Africa. This development has serious implications in terms of human casualties, flows of refugees and diseases, the destruction of infrastructure, trafficking in small arms, educational and health systems, and regional and domestic stability. Interstate wars are becoming more common as the result of the changing distribution of power among African states and the fact that African leaders are looking to international incursions to legitimize and consolidate domestic control.

It is not clear how the international community should respond to these developments. Perhaps the best use of external resources and experience would be in supporting strong regional and subregional organizations within sub-Saharan Africa. The international community could invest in training and providing logistical support for these organizations, thereby lending them capacity and credibility. Conflict management efforts should also focus on the decisions and actions of domestic elites who are responsible for sparking the transnationalization of conflict. For its part, the United States proposed the creation of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). AFRICOM was established in February 2007 after a ten-year deliberation process within the Department of Defense (DoD) that recognized the emerging strategic importance of Africa and the fact that peace and stability on the continent impacts not only Africans, but also the interests of the U.S. and international community. With AFRICOM, the goal is for DoD to "better focus its resources to support and enhance existing U.S. initiatives that help African nations, the African Union, and the regional economic communities succeed."[68] Rather than military intervention, AFRICOM's missions will focus on providing diplomatic, economic and humanitarian aid with the aim of preventing of conflict, rather than at military intervention.[69] There are concerns among American leaders that AFRICOM implies a permanent U.S. presence on the continent, most likely in Ethiopia. There is the concern that "stationing U.S. combat troops on African soil is counter-productive, unnecessary and impinges on the sovereignty of states."[70] Civil society groups, NGOs, and activists have formed a coalition

called ResistAFRICOM to speak out against AFRICOM, and specifically to protest the reallocation of many duties that previously belonged to nonmilitary US agencies—such as building schools and digging wells—to the DoD.[71] In response, a "networked, distributed command" idea is now being developed.[72] In a speech in Accra, Ghana on February 20, 2008, President Bush denied that the United States was contemplating the construction of new bases on the African continent.[73]

With the situation worsening in Darfur and the threat of renewed violence between the North and South in Sudan a real possibility, the current chances for peace in the region seem slim. The Khartoum government should be held accountable for the spillover of violence from Darfur. Without a change in leadership in Khartoum and a revision of policy goals, it is very likely that the transnationalization of the conflict in Darfur would involve not only the CAR and Chad but also Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Somalia, and thereby become Africa's second continental war.

**Notes**

1    "UNHCR Warns of Impending Genocide in Chad." Aegis February 16, 2007. Website available at:
     http://www.aegistrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=583&Itemid=88
2    Keller 1998; Skocpol 1979.
3    Gourevitch 1978; Putnam 1988;Muller and Risse-Kappen 1993; Risse-Kappen 1995; Keohane and Milner 1996; and Lobell 2003.
4    Rasler 1992, p. 94.
5    McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1997, p. 143.
6    Reno 1998.
7    Harbom and Wallensteen 2005.
8    Bill Clinton, quoted in "Clinton's Words: 'The Promise of Peace," New York Times, November 22, 1995.
9    Migdal 1988; Gurr 1993; Keller 1998
10   Gleditsch 2002; Saleyhan and Gleditsch 2006; and Gleditsch 2007.
11   Gleditsch 2006.
12   Brown 2001, p. 213.
13   Keller 1998.
14   Posen 1993; Van Evera 1999; Lake and Rothchild 1998, p. 23-32.
15   Keller 2002.
16   Keller 1998, p. 278.
17   Keller 1998, p. 277.
18   See http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-iran.htm
19   Keller 2002.
20   Few wars were fought between African states, with exceptions such as the conflict in Western Sahara, which involved Algeria, Mauritania, and Morocco, and destabilization campaigns undertaken by South Africa in Angola, Lesotho, and Mozambique.
21   Clapham 2000.

22   Weinstein 2000.
23   Levy 2001, p. 16.
24   Waltz 1979; Keohane 1986.
25   Marchal 2006, p. 479.
26   "Thousands of Refugees Flee Chad," BBC News, February 5, 2008.
     http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7228572.stm
27   "Darfur Conflict Zones," BBC News December 6, 2006.
     http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6213202.stm
28   Prunier 2005.
29   Prunier 2007; Flint and De Walle 2005.
30   Prunier 2006.
31   Blaydes and De Maio 2010.
32   Straus 2005. See also International Crisis Group, "Unifying Darfur's Rebels: A Prerequisite
     for Peace." Africa Briefing No. 32, 6 October 2005 and International Crisis Group, "Darfur
     Rising: Sudan's New Crisis." Africa Report 76, 25 March 2004.
33   Blaydes and De Maio 2010; Flint and De Walle 2005.
34   While the United States, several other governments, and human rights organizations have
     declared the violence as genocide, there is still some controversy about whether the war in
     Darfur constitutes genocide. The United Nations, for example, has acknowledged that
     there have been mass murders and rape, but states that genocidal intent appears to be
     missing. See "Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United
     Nations Secretary-General," 18 September 2004.
35   The largest of the rebel groups is led by Minni Minawi and is comprised of fighters
     predominantly from the Zaghawa people.
36   Ismali and Prendergast 2007, p. 1.
37   Prunier 2007.
38   Prunier 2007.
39   Prunier 2007 and Titley 1997.
40   Prunier 2007.
41   "They Came Here to Kill Us: Militia Attacks and Ethnic Targeting of Civilians in Eastern
     Chad." Human Rights Watch Report 19, no. 1(A), January, 2007.
     http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/chad0107/index.htm
42   Flint and De Waal, 2005, p. 29.
43   De Waal 2005-2006.
44   Flint and De Waal 2005, p. 25.
45   Chad has been exporting oil on a significant scale since 2003 and is estimated to have
     reserves of up to one billion barrels, which is a considerable amount with vast potential
     spoils by local standards. "Darfur Conflict Zones," BBC News. 6 December 2006.
     http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4906930.stm
46   Prunier 2007.
47   Chadian Arabs make up 15 to 20 percent of Chad's population and represent a crucial
     political constituency, particularly in the border zone (Marchal 2006).

48    UN Security Council. "Report Of The Panel Of Experts Established Pursuant To Paragraph 3 Of Resolution 1591 (2005) Concerning The Sudan," January 30, 2006: 29.

49    Prunier 2007.

50    "They Came Here to Kill Us: Militia Attacks and Ethnic Targeting of Civilians in Eastern Chad." Human Rights Watch Report 19, no. 1(A), January 2007. http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/chad0107/index.htm.

51    Many argue that mineral wealth in Chad is contributing to instability and making life worse for most people, rather than bringing them higher living standards. See Gregory, Mark. "Oil Politics Fuels Chad Violence," BBC News, 13 April 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4906930.stm

52    "Chad steps up claims of Sudanese subversion," Sudan Tribune, 31 December 2005, http://www.sudantribune.com/article_impr.php3?id_article=13301.

53    "They Came Here to Kill Us: Militia Attacks and Ethnic Targeting of Civilians in Eastern Chad." Human Rights Watch Report 19, no. 1(A), January 2007. http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/chad0107/index.htm.

54    Ibid.

55    Ibid.

56    See "A Widening War Around Sudan: The Proliferation of Armed Groups in the Central African Republic." Small Arms Survey: Sudan Issue Brief  5, January (2007): 1.

57    Ibid.

58    Ibid.

59    Berman 2006.

60    "3,000 Darfur Refugees in CAR After 10-Day Trek." Reuters. 29 May 2007.

61    "A Widening War Around Sudan," p. 2.

62    Prunier 2007.

63    Sudan and Chad's have recently begun a dialogue on normalizing relations between the two countries, but moves have yet to be made to reduce the power of their proxy militias. See "Sudan and Chad to End Hostilities," BBC News, 10 February 2010.  Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8507363.stm.

64    Ibid.

65    John Prendergast quoted in McCrummen, Stephanie. "Sudan Severs Ties With Chad, Blaming It for Attack on Capital." Washington Post, 12 May 2008, p. A12.

66    Brown 2001, p. 221.

67     IRIN, "Sudan: Year in Review 2005 - Ongoing Violence Jeopardises a Fragile Peace," 9 January 2006.

68    See http://www.africom.mil.

69    Statement made by Theresa Whelan, Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs. "US Creates Military Command for Africa," Voice of America, 6 February 2007.

70    See Ikokwu, Constance. "Nigeria: U.S. Troops Not Welcome On African Soil, Says Maduekwe." This Day. 3 October 2007. Available at: http://allafrica.com/stories/200710030234.html.

71   See ResistAFRICOM at
     http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1552/t/5734/content.jsp?content_KEY=3855.
72   Tisdale 2007.
73   Feller 2008.

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