

# Conflict Management and Opportunity Cost: the International Response to the Darfur Crisis

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On the morning of 14 July 2008, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), submitted a request to the judges of the pre-trial chamber to issue an arrest warrant against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. Later in the day, Moreno-Ocampo held a press conference, where he presented evidence alleging that al-Bashir had committed genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. In the words of the Prosecutor, Al-Bashir had “masterminded and implemented a plan to destroy in substantial part the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa groups, on account of their ethnicity [...] His alibi was a ‘counterinsurgency.’ His intent was genocide.”<sup>1</sup> Moreno-Ocampo’s announcement provoked contradictory reactions in Sudan and in other parts of the world. Human rights activists saluted his courage and praised his move as a milestone in fighting impunity and deterring crimes in the future. Humanitarian workers and peacekeepers worked in fear of targeted attacks, even as the UN immediately evacuated its ‘non-essential’ staff from Darfur. Those in charge of relaunching the Darfur peace negotiations and others interested in the continuation of the North-South peace process invoked doomsday scenarios, portraying the ICC as an insurmountable obstacle to peace in Sudan. Arab and African heads of states rallied behind Al-Bashir, castigating Moreno-Ocampo’s decision as an attack on the principle of sovereignty or, more bluntly, as an act of Western neo-imperialism.

The reaction to the likely ICC indictment of President al-Bashir stands as a microcosm for the international response to the Darfur crisis: there is a lot of noise and there are many actors with good intentions, but their interests and strategies differ so starkly that their combined voices appear incoherent and ultimately cancel each other out. Indeed, despite the reluctance in the Arab world, the Darfur conflict has triggered an international response that eclipses all other conflicts in Africa: the world’s largest humanitarian operation takes place in Darfur; the largest and most expensive peacekeeping mission is currently being deployed; a plethora of special envoys and mediators have been appointed to make peace in Darfur; the Darfur conflict has generated a highly influential advocacy movement; for the first time, the U.S. government has declared the ongoing conflict as genocide and permitted the UN Security Council to refer a case to the ICC. In a sense, Darfur is the antithesis of Samantha Power’s criticism that mass atrocities and genocide are considered ‘a problem from hell,’ with people and politicians preferring to look away when they are being committed.<sup>2</sup> Despite all the attention, however, the Darfur conflict appears further than ever from resolution. This paper attempts to get to the heart of this paradox. It first distinguishes five dimensions of the international response to the Darfur conflict: delivering aid, negotiating peace, enforcing peace, promoting justice, and securing the ‘New Sudan.’ It then considers synergies and contradictions between these dimensions. The aim is to contribute to a pragmatic assessment of international efforts to end the conflict in Darfur and, more generally, to sharpen perceptions about opportunity costs in conflict management.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘ICC Prosecutor presents case against Sudanese President, Hassan Ahmad AL BASHIR, for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur’, ICC, 14 July 2008. Available from: <http://www.icc-cpi.int/press/pressreleases/406.html>

<sup>2</sup> Power, S., *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2003

## Five dimensions of the international response to the Darfur conflict

While both the Arab League and Arab public opinion remained largely silent, the Darfur conflict provoked a strong response in the West, with a multitude of actors getting involved in trying to 'manage' the conflict in Darfur. Their common denominator is that they are inspired by humanistic ideals and motivated by a genuine humanitarian impulse, a desire to do something to mitigate the suffering of Darfurians and to aid the resolution of the Darfur conflict in the long run. However, these actors differ in terms of their perspective on the conflict, their interests, their worldview, and the activities and strategies they pursue to bring sustainable peace to Darfur. Broadly speaking, five strategies can be distinguished.

### *Delivering aid*

Humanitarian organisations were quick to respond to the Darfur crisis. In early 2004, they set up a massive operation geared towards delivering aid to the victims of violence, particularly in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Today, roughly 13,000 humanitarian workers and one hundred relief agencies work in Darfur, making it the largest humanitarian operation in the world. As a result, mortality rates have been reduced to pre-war levels in many areas and the overall health situation has improved, although it remains fragile.<sup>3</sup> Humanitarians see Darfur through a pragmatic lens, as they try to function effectively in an environment fraught with tricky operational, political and ethical dilemmas. Their aim is to help the neediest, while avoiding as far as possible the pitfalls of humanitarian assistance that can cause harm. The default option for humanitarian organisations is political neutrality, which means that they are careful not to express opinions or carry out activities that conflicting parties perceive as biased. It is true that political neutrality is something of a myth and that humanitarians have sometimes become intermingled with dubious politics in the past.<sup>4</sup> However, in Darfur, humanitarian agencies have generally been careful not to express explicit positions on delicate issues such as humanitarian intervention, the peace process, or the deployment of UN peacekeepers. This does not mean that they have condoned violations; on the contrary, many organisations have protested against destructive government policies such as attempts to forcibly repatriate IDPs or the use of rape as a weapon of war<sup>5</sup> - but the humanitarians have generally abstained from the grand politics surrounding the Darfur conflict.

### *Negotiating peace*

Within months of the escalation of the Darfur conflict in early 2003, attempts were made to bring Darfur rebel movements and the Sudanese government to the negotiating table. After an unsuccessful ceasefire agreement signed in N'Djamena in April 2004, the parties met in Abuja, Nigeria for comprehensive peace talks mediated by the African Union (AU) and supported by many Western states. As a result of intense pressure, one of the three principal rebel factions, as well as the government, signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006.<sup>6</sup> However, the DPA was never implemented and arguably made matters worse on the ground.<sup>7</sup> The AU, together with the UN, tried to relaunch the Darfur peace process in summer 2007, but to no avail. The basic premise of mediators is that the Darfur conflict is a product of the skewed centre-periphery dynamics in Sudan and the historic marginalisation of Darfur associated with

<sup>3</sup> Weissman, F., 'Humanitarian Dilemmas in Darfur', June 2008. Available from: <http://msf.fr/drive/214a9aa0483c6e560e05cdafb00beb11.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> For a damning criticism of the politics of humanitarianism, see Rieff, D., *A Bed for the Night*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002

<sup>5</sup> Weissman, 2008, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Nathan, L., 'No Ownership, No Peace: The Darfur Peace Agreement', Working Paper, LSE Crisis States Research Centre, September 2006. Available from <http://www.crisisstates.com/download/wp/wpSeries2/WP5.2.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Lanz, D., 'Complicating Darfur' - review of de Waal, A. (ed.), *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*, 2007 - in *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 32, no. 1, 2008, pp. 213-219. Available from <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/forum/archives/pdfs/32-1pdfs/Lanz.pdf>

it. Thus, peace can be achieved by engaging the political and military elites of Darfur alongside the regime in Khartoum in order to find a compromise that satisfies the underlying interests of both parties. The North-South peace process and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of January 2005 serve as a model in this regard. Peacemakers work to build a reputation as trusted intermediaries of the conflict parties and are therefore sceptical about the accusatory discourse of Darfur advocates. In their view, the demonisation of the Sudanese government by human rights activists and the ICC is particularly unhelpful.

### *Enforcing peace*

Galvanised by the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide in April 2004, an influential Darfur advocacy campaign emerged in North America and later in Europe.<sup>8</sup> The analogy between Rwanda and Darfur was very dominant from the outset, and many advocates saw Darfur as a test of whether or not the international community had learned its lesson in terms of bearing silent witness to another ongoing genocide.<sup>9</sup> Darfur was equally considered a test case for the 'responsibility to protect,' a concept promoted by liberal internationalists which permits the use of force in situations when the humanitarian benefits of an intervention clearly outweigh its costs.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, there were strong calls for the use of military power to stop the conflict in Darfur. Maximalists like Eric Reeves demanded an intervention similar to NATO's operation in Kosovo, one that would go beyond Darfur and bring regime change in Khartoum.<sup>11</sup> Others were more pragmatic and focused their efforts on the deployment of a robust UN peacekeeping mission with a strong mandate to protect civilians. What they have in common is the belief that peace in Darfur is possible through military means, and that there is a moral imperative to intervene that trumps the principle of sovereignty as well as traditional considerations of national interest. Evidently, a NATO intervention did not materialize and it took two years of fierce campaigning to get UN peacekeepers on the ground.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in July 2007 the Security Council established the hybrid AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) to replace the discredited AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS). UNAMID has a relatively strong, albeit ambiguous mandate. At full strength UNAMID will have 20,000 troops and 6,000 additional police and civilian personnel. However, due to different logistical and political problems, only 10,000 peacekeepers have been deployed so far.

### *Promoting justice*

Advocates and human rights activists also spearheaded a campaign to ensure justice and accountability for crimes committed in Darfur. From an early stage, they lobbied to get the situation in Darfur recognised as genocide.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in July 2004, the U.S. Congress called Darfur a genocide, followed by a similar declaration two months later by the then Secretary of State Colin Powell. Around the same time, the UN Security Council charged a Commission of Inquiry

<sup>8</sup> For a critical appraisal of the Darfur advocacy movement, see Haeri, M., 'Saving Darfur: Does Advocacy Help or Hinder Conflict Resolution?', *The Fletcher Journal of Human Security, Praxis*, Vol. 13, 2008, pp. 33-46

<sup>9</sup> Brunk, D., 'Dissecting Darfur: Anatomy of a Genocide Debate', *International Relations*, Vol. 22, no. 1, 2008, pp. 25-44

<sup>10</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty: 'The Responsibility to Protect', Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, September 2001. Available at: <http://www.iciss.ca/report-en.asp>

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Reeves, E., 'Regime Change in Sudan', *The Washington Post*, 23 August 2004. Available from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A25073-2004Aug22.html>

<sup>12</sup> Van der Lijn, J., 'To Paint the Nile Blue: Factors of Success and Failure of UNMIS and UNAMID', The Hague: Clingendael Institute and Radboud University Nijmegen, 2008. Available from [http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2008/20080100\\_csccp\\_paper\\_lijn.pdf](http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2008/20080100_csccp_paper_lijn.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> For debates surrounding the determination of the Darfur conflict as genocide, see Mamdani, M., 'The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency' in *London Review of Books*, 8 March 2007. Available from [http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n05/print/mamd01\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n05/print/mamd01_.html). See also Cohen, R., 'Darfur Debated' in *Forced Migration Review*, Issue 29, 2007. Available from [www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR29/55-57.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR29/55-57.pdf). Another interesting case of the entanglement of law and politics in the context of genocide is the rift between Rwanda and France, exacerbated by the accusations in French and Rwandan tribunals against senior political leaders of the respective countries. See, e.g., Braeckman, C., 'Accusations suspectes contre le régime rwandais' in *Le monde diplomatique*. January 2007. Available from <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2007/01/BRAECKMAN/14367>

led by the eminent international jurist Antonio Cassese to determine whether genocide had occurred in Darfur. The Commission conducted various field trips and concluded in its final report of January 2005 that there was no proof that the Sudanese government had pursued a genocidal policy, but that the crimes committed in Darfur were “no less serious and heinous than genocide.”<sup>14</sup> One of Cassese’s recommendations was to refer the situation in Darfur to the ICC – the Security Council followed suit in March 2005, after intense lobbying to overcome the U.S.’ initial opposition.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in May 2007, the ICC issued arrest warrants against the former Sudanese Minister of Interior Ahmed Harun and the militia leader Ali Kushayb,<sup>16</sup> followed by the Prosecutor’s recent charges against President al-Bashir. Human rights activists and international criminal lawyers tend to have an ethnic view of the Darfur conflict. They see the non-Arab tribes of Darfur as the victims of a deliberate campaign of extermination planned by the Arab regime in Khartoum and carried out by Arab tribal militia in Darfur, the infamous Janjaweed. For them, much like for advocates of humanitarian intervention, Darfur is a test case for a new global order based on the international rule of law, where crimes are systematically pursued and consequently deterred. They further see justice as a pre-requisite for sustainable peace. Unless perpetrators are removed from power and held accountable, the past properly dealt with, and victims compensated, conflicts will come to the fore again, in Darfur and elsewhere. Thus, justice activists can be sceptical of peace negotiations, especially when the cynical price for peace appears to be appeasing perpetrators and abandoning justice for the victims.

### *Securing the ‘New Sudan’*

When the Darfur conflict broke out in 2003, peace talks to end the 20-year North-South war between al-Bashir’s ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and John Garang’s Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) were underway in Naivasha, Kenya. Darfur and Darfurians were largely excluded from the talks, and some authors have argued that this initial ignorance reflected a sensitivity within the UN and many states not “to rock the boat” by criticising the NCP for what was happening in Darfur.<sup>17</sup> However, not all arguments in favour of giving priority to the Naivasha talks and, later, of the implementation of the CPA, are tantamount to neglecting Darfur. To the contrary, there are some UN members of staff, diplomats, members of the SPLM, and Sudanese politicians and academics, who share a genuine concern for Darfur, while stressing that peace in Darfur depends on the success of the CPA. They see the Darfur conflict in a national Sudanese context: the marginalisation of Darfur and other regions can only be remedied if peace takes root in the whole of Sudan. The CPA provides both a blueprint and a roadmap for a democratic ‘New Sudan,’ where political power and wealth is shared equitably between the centre and the peripheries.<sup>18</sup> Thus, international efforts to build peace in Sudan must focus on the continuation of the North-South peace process and the implementation of the CPA, in particular the smooth organisation of the elections in 2009. Conflict management efforts that treat Darfur outside of its Sudanese context can be counter-productive.

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<sup>14</sup> Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General, pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004, 25 January 2005. Available from [http://www.un.org/News/dh/sudan/com\\_inq\\_darfur.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Kaufman, Z., ‘Justice in Jeopardy: Accountability for the Darfur Atrocities’, *Criminal Law Forum*, Vol. 16, 2005, pp. 343-360

<sup>16</sup> For an interesting account of the politics surrounding the ICC before the charges against al-Bashir, see de Waal, A., ‘Darfur, the Court and Khartoum: The Politics of State Non-Cooperation’ in Waddell, N. and P. Clark (eds.), *Courting Conflict? Justice, Peace and the ICC in Africa*, London: Royal African Society, March 2008. Available from: <http://www.crisisstates.com/download/others/ICC%20in%20Africa.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Prunier, G., *The Ambiguous Genocide*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007

<sup>18</sup> Azzain Mohammed, A., ‘The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Darfur’ in de Waal, A. (ed.), *War in Darfur*, op. cit, pp. 199-213.

## Synergies and contradictions between dimensions of the international response to the Darfur conflict

At first sight, the synergies between different conflict management strategies in Darfur seem obvious. The huge attention to the Darfur conflict generated by advocacy groups undoubtedly contributes to mobilizing resources to sustain the world's most expensive humanitarian and peacekeeping operations as well as political capital to leverage peace negotiations. Furthermore, in theory, there seems to be a functional complementarity between different approaches: humanitarians contribute to de-escalating armed conflict through aid delivery, allowing mediators to facilitate a peace process, which will eventually result in a peace agreement. Peacekeepers subsequently implement the peace agreement, while international lawyers manage transitional justice, which contributes to popular buy-in and to functioning local justice mechanisms. Successful peacebuilding in one area then spills over to the rest of the country and the region, providing momentum for other peace processes. Evidently, the reality of conflict management is much more complicated and messy, Darfur being the quintessential example. There are undoubtedly synergies between different conflict management strategies, but there are also important contradictions and dilemmas. The following section briefly outlines five contradictions in terms of conflict management in Darfur: peace vs. justice, good vs. good, military vs. political resolution, Darfur vs. the rest, and symptoms vs. causes.

### *Peace vs. justice*

The establishment of war crimes tribunals since the end of the Cold War has provoked a debate about whether the pursuit of justice in times of war hinders efforts to make peace between warring parties. In 1996, an anonymous writer in the *Human Rights Quarterly* famously criticised the role of the human rights community and the The Hague tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: "thousands of people are dead who should have been alive - because moralists were in the quest of the perfect peace." The writer also added: "if one wanted peace, then one had to accept the principle that whatever the parties could agree to freely was acceptable to the peace negotiators."<sup>19</sup> This anonymous statement seems exaggerated, but it does reveal a tension between peace and justice, between providing warring parties with incentives to stop fighting and trying them in war crimes courts.<sup>20</sup> The genocide charges against Sudanese President al-Bashir raise similar questions and have sparked heated debates. Some observers fear that al-Bashir and his ruling clique now have nothing to lose and will expel peacekeepers and humanitarians and escalate violence against civilians in Darfur. Others are more optimistic and hope that by exerting pressure through the ICC, the Sudanese government will become more cooperative.<sup>21</sup> However, there is no denying that the indictment against al-Bashir will have a negative impact on opportunities in terms of peacemaking. It will be more difficult for countries and organisations to get involved in the Darfur peace process and to assist in negotiating a peace settlement with the Sudanese government. It will also be harder to offer peace incentives to al-Bashir because the ICC indictments remain, whether he signs a peace agreement or not. Finally, the indictments divide the international community, Arab and African states being predominantly critical, while the West supports the ICC.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, 'Human Rights in Peace Negotiations', *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 18, no. 2, 1996, pp. 249-258, at 252 and 258.

<sup>20</sup> For details see Lanz, D., 'Of Peace and Justice: The Impact of Human Rights in Peacemaking', Medford, MA: The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2008. Available from: <http://ginn.fletcher.tufts.edu/mald/2007/lanz.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> For an overview, see de Waal, A., 'Sudan and the ICC: A Guide to the Controversy', 11 July 2008. Available from: <http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/darfur/2008/07/11/sudan-and-the-icc-a-guide-to-the-controversy/>



### *“Good vs. good”<sup>22</sup>*

Tensions arose between humanitarian organisations and advocacy groups over the latter’s call for military intervention in Darfur. The humanitarians, on the one hand, were anxious that the interventionist rhetoric of advocates in the U.S. would frighten the Sudanese government and lead it to retaliate by targeting relief organisations and by restricting humanitarian access in Darfur. There are also fears that calling for a ‘humanitarian’ intervention could jeopardise the core principle of humanitarian organisations, i.e. their neutrality. Darfur advocates, on the other hand, have criticised humanitarian operations for prolonging the suffering of Darfurians, without offering sustainable solutions. They argue that there is no point putting “a Band-Aid on a cancer”<sup>23</sup> - instead, they argue that intervention is required to tackle the root cause of the conflict, that is, the genocidal policy of the Sudanese government.

### *Military vs. political resolution*

Calls for humanitarian intervention in Darfur also affect peace negotiations. Alex de Waal, a long-time Sudan expert and member of the AU mediation team in Abuja, has pointed to two perverse effects of the responsibility to protect in Darfur. First, it has distorted the views of Darfur rebel movements and encouraged them to make unrealistic demands, out of sync with their actual military and political power. For example, one rebel leader, Abdelwahid al-Nur, alluding to the intervention of NATO in the Balkans, told the mediators in Abuja that he would only sign a peace agreement if he got “a guarantee for implementation like in Bosnia.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, the responsibility to protect has fostered maximalist positions and allowed the rebels to hide behind the prospect of foreign military intervention, without seriously working on a political settlement. Second, the insistence of advocacy groups on peace enforcement made the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force the first priority of the U.S. and other states.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, they wanted a peace agreement fast and used ‘deadline diplomacy’ to bring the Abuja talks to a premature end - they consequently deprived the parties of their ownership of the process and produced a peace agreement, the DPA, that lacked popular support and was not signed by all rebel factions.<sup>26</sup>

### *Darfur vs. the rest*

The Darfur conflict has received massive amounts of publicity and, consequently, more resources were spent on conflict management in Darfur than in most other conflicts. Some observers think that the attention and funds given to Darfur - for relief operations, UNAMID, Darfur peace talks, the ICC - are crowding out resources for managing other conflicts. Thus, there is a perception within Sudan that the implementation of the CPA is being neglected because the actors with the strongest leverage focus on Darfur. After his resignation as U.S. Special Envoy in Sudan, Andrew Natsios has pointedly and repeatedly pleaded for a refocusing of international attention on the North-South peace process and the elections. A failure to do so increases the risk of a collapse of the CPA, which could destabilise the whole of Sudan, including Darfur. Therefore, treating the Darfur conflict separately and neglecting its national dimension, be it in the realm

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<sup>22</sup>This section is based on Rieff, D., ‘Good vs. good in Darfur’ in *Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 2007. Available from <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jun/24/opinion/op-rieff24>

<sup>23</sup>Rieff, 2007, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup>Quoted in de Waal, A., ‘I will not Sign’ in *London Review of Book*, 30 November 2006. Available from [http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n23/waal01\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n23/waal01_.html)

<sup>25</sup>De Waal, A., ‘Dilemmas of Multiple Priorities and Multiple Instruments: the Darfur Crisis’ in *Accord*, Issue 19, 2008. Available from [http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/incentives/darfur\\_1.php](http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/incentives/darfur_1.php)

<sup>26</sup>Nathan, 2006, op. cit.

of peacekeeping, mediation or aid, is a potential boomerang that could come back and undo progress in Darfur and elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> Natsios also warns of the ramifications of the ICC indictments against President al-Bashir on the national level: the ruling clique within the NCP is now more desperate to cling to its power and is therefore less likely to accept free and fair elections as foreseen by the CPA.<sup>28</sup>

### *Symptoms vs. causes*

Relief agencies are credited for successfully stabilising the humanitarian situation in Darfur to the extent that mortality rates in some areas are lower today than they were before the war. This is all the more notable considering the dangerous environment that humanitarians operate in. However, this development should be considered within the prism of a fundamental critique of the humanitarian enterprise in Darfur and elsewhere. Namely, if armed conflict is a disease, then humanitarian aid alleviates its symptoms without tackling its causes. Worse, fighting symptoms may mean that the treatment of causes becomes more difficult in the long-run. Indeed, there is a concern that humanitarian aid has entrenched the Darfur conflict. Aid has had far-reaching consequences on Darfurian society and contributed to its urbanisation whereby one third of the population now live in IDP camps in the proximity of towns and cities. Land abandoned by IDPs has been taken over by other groups; displacement has fostered the emergence of a new leadership structure and marginalised many traditional leaders; camps also breed a new generation of Darfurians that grow up in a very poor and highly politicised environment.<sup>29</sup> All of these factors make it difficult to resolve the Darfur conflict in the long-run, even if a compromise is found between the rebels and the Sudanese government within the next few years.

## Conclusion

Darfur is located in one of the remotest regions of the world, and yet ordinary people from all over the globe have heard the call to “save Darfur.” They know that a horrific conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Many of them think that the international community has once again failed to respond to the crisis, just like in Rwanda ten years before. Yet, the reality is different. There has been a far-reaching and multi-faceted response to the Darfur crisis - but it has not been effective. Perhaps our expectations are too high to start with - civil wars in Africa tend to have multi-layered, extremely complex structural causes, which cannot be simply resolved through the intervention of external actors. However, the fact remains that despite the very substantial resources that have been spent on conflict management in Darfur, little has been achieved, save perhaps the stabilisation of the humanitarian situation. The image that comes to mind is that external actors in Darfur have one foot on the gas and the other one on the break: the most powerful states lobbied for the establishment of the world’s largest UN peacekeeping operation, but the mission is now unable to obtain the equipment it needs to operate effectively in Darfur; the situation in

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<sup>27</sup> Natsios, A., ‘Beyond Darfur: Sudan’s Slide Toward Civil War’, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2008. Available from <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080501faessay87306/andrew-s-natsios/beyond-darfur.html>

<sup>28</sup> Natsios, A., ‘A Disaster in the Making’, 12 July 2008. Available from <http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/darfur/2008/07/12/a-disaster-in-the-making/>

<sup>29</sup> Weissman, 2008, op. cit.

Darfur was referred to the ICC by the Security Council, even though the permanent members are not willing to enforce the arrest warrants. Hopes for peace concentrated on the talks in Abuja, only to be abruptly brought to an end because its supporters needed to quickly produce a peace agreement and so on and so forth.

There are no simple solutions for the contradictions outlined above - they represent complicated dilemmas and tricky trade-offs. It would be naïve to call for more coordination among external actors in Darfur, as the difference of their approaches is structural and reflects their respective interests and contexts. There are, however, two lessons that we can learn. The first is that resources are scarce and effective conflict management requires priorities. It is not possible to simultaneously run a humanitarian operation, deploy peacekeepers, try the Sudanese President in an international court, negotiate a peace agreement, and foster the democratic transition of Sudan. We need to think about what is most important and concentrate our resources - money, political capital, personnel - to achieve this objective. The second lesson is that actors working in or on conflict, whatever approach they take, must be aware that their decisions and actions have opportunity costs and that they can "do harm." As David Kennedy writes, "the darker sides can swamp the benefits of humanitarian work, and well-intentioned people can find themselves unwittingly entrenching the very things they have sought voice to denounce."<sup>30</sup> Also, those involved in the grand scheme of managing conflict Darfur must realise that they are in essence projecting their morals and a Western political agenda and that, consequently, their good intentions may not be perceived as such, especially in the Arab world. Indeed, moving from self-centred and self-righteous dogmatism to a pragmatic assessment of causes and consequences would be a big step, and it would certainly improve our ability to manage conflicts in Darfur and elsewhere.

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<sup>30</sup>Kennedy, D., *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. xiii-xiv.



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