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DARFUR'S PEACE: POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

Gubara Said Hassan¹, Cuneyt Yenigun², Hani Omar Albasoos³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, College of Economics and Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University. ORCID: [0000-0003-4309-8864](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4309-8864)

²Director of International Relations and Security Studies Graduate Programs, Founder Head of Political Science Department, College of Economics and Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. ORCID: 000-0002-1258-5582

³Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, CEPS, Sultan Qaboos University.

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ABSTRACT:

Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, the paper introduces the background to the conflict in Darfur, including its origins, main causes, and related consequences and impacts. The causal factors of the conflict include colonialist and post-independence policies of economic and political marginalization, environmental degradation, demographic pressures and ecological hardships, ethnic and tribal conflicts fuelled by the then Al Bashir's governmental inaction or partial support, and wider regional conflicts and intervention. Later the paper addresses Darfur Peace process from a general perspective. Then, the third part of the study sheds lights on the vital needs and tremendous challenges of Darfur's post-conflict reconstruction, respectively. The paper concludes that addressing these all-encompassing and overlapping needs and challenges represents the indispensable conditions for post-conflict reconstruction in Darfur, without which the recovery, sustainable development, and prosperity of greater Darfur region are likely to be negligible or insignificant.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Conflicts in Africa, as elsewhere and as including Western Sudan's Darfur region, are a 'constituent of history'. They have had their historical roots or origins in the contentious, of mainly, the post-independence state and nation building, the arduous search of justice and equality, the difficult challenges of national identity, good governance and sustainable development as well as the severe rivalry over scarce natural resources.

The conflict in Darfur region has also been explained through investigating some historical facts and 'political dualities' that have shaped the modern history of the Sudan (macro context). The intention is to provide insights into the historical, political, socio-economic and cultural conditions and experiences that germinate and nurture the seeds of hegemony, disharmony and conflict in the Sudan, including Darfur region (micro context). This general macro-contextual historical examination of Sudan has been followed by situating the conflict within the micro-context of Darfur region. In this sense, certain features in the region (for example, geography, history, tribal and ethnic composition and religious affiliation, the economic problems of land ownerships and limited natural resources usage and management, inter-group political rivalry, successive central governments' regional policies, etc) have their tremendous impacts to the Darfur conflict.

The conflict context in Sudan, in general, and Darfur region, in particular, consists of two clusters of interrelated basic root causes or factors: colonialist policies and their legacies and the post-colonialist or post-independence crises: failed sectarian and elitist policies, authoritarian military governments or regimes, regional economic underdevelopment or regional developmental disparities, social malaise and ethnic-cultural conundrum. In addition, the Chadian factional conflicts, the Libyan-Chadian wars and regional and international interventions have played their role as catalytic events to the conflict in Darfur meaning as major developments that have impacts upon the political dynamics in Darfur region in a fundamental way.

These clusters of interrelated fundamental root causes of Darfur conflict are antagonistic to the simplistic or reductionist narratives that attempt to explain such conflict in the light of struggle over scarce natural resources: grazing lands (In Arabic: hawakeer), water, and pastoralist migration routes (in Arabic: masarat). The "complexity of the Darfur conflict cannot be simplified to a single theory of competition over natural resources." (Buchanan-Smith & Bromwich, 2016). A more sophisticated analysis of the complexity of the conflict acknowledges the interdependence and overlapping of three levels: local, national and regional or micro, macro contexts. Differently expressed, "the conflict has drawn in a complex web of local, national, and transnational interests, which play out in different types of conflict throughout the region." (Young et al., 2009). It reflects "five types of conflict are identified in the region: local, subnational, national, regional, and international. These are interrelated, interdependent, and overlapping conflicts." (Ahmed & Harir, 1982; Harir, 1994).

At the local level, the conflict is taking place between different ethnic groups or groups with different livelihood strategies, each competing for power and access to natural resources. In 2010, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) gave attention to a disconcerting trend of local-level conflict between various communities in Darfur. "Local conflicts have been exacerbated in the recent years by environmental degradation, demographic growth and the weakening of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms. In addition, the conflicts have become increasingly lethal owing to the proliferation of weapons among communities in Darfur" (Hippacher, 2012).

At the national level, the conflict is between Darfuri rebel groups and the colourful political leadership of the post-colonial Sudan and post-independence failed federal governments in Khartoum. This level reveals ‘long-term rivalries, ‘inequalities’ (Al-Haq et al., 2003; Salih, 2005; Stewart, 2002) and developmental disparities between the center and the periphery, and the concentration of political power and economic wealth by ruling elites in the center’ (Anonymous, 2004; Cobham, 2005; Niblock, 1987). In this sense, the conflict in Darfur is often depicted as a logical product of the historical marginalization of Darfur as a region by subsequent national governments over time. In addition, the abolition of traditional leadership mechanisms or Native Administration (In Arabic: Idarah Ahliyyah) by the then Al-Bashir’s government created an imbalance of power and tensions between Darfur’s diverse ethnic and tribal communities. The abolition deprived such communities from freedom to control the relatively fair or equitable allocation and use of ever-depleting natural resources and to ensure a peaceful coexistence between them, especial during critical periods of ‘ecological/environmental distress’ (Ibrahim, 1984; Johnson, 2003; Young et al., 2005) and scarcity of such resources. At the wider regional level, the conflict involves Sudan’s neighbouring countries, especially Chad, Libya, and the Central African Republic. Historical struggles for political power in in these countries and Sudan have been closely intertwined, with the respective governments in Khartoum and, for instance, Chad frequently supporting rebel movements or armed insurgent groups in the other country.

The interaction of these three levels is critical to understanding current events in Darfur and the role of natural resources in the conflict dynamics. Competition between different tribal and ethnic groups over natural resources, and especially land, and water, has long been a source of tension in Darfur. In the current conflict, this has become a major fault line at the local level, exploited by conflicting political agendas, tactical coalitions, interests, and preferences at the national and regional levels. (Tubiana, 2007).

The Darfur conflict has ‘disastrous consequences’ (Collins, 2006) on the region: humanitarian, economic and environmental. First, coherent witness accounts, consistent testimonies of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and other conflict-related victims, satellite imagery as well as ‘fieldwork and visits’¹ to Darfur itself. These reports, account, testimonies and imageries describe a noticed pattern of deliberate and indiscriminate chaos (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, 2005) against civilian population in scattered villages and communities the systemic destruction of their ‘basic sources of livelihood or survival’² (Young et al., 2005), and the forced internal “population displacement (IPD)” in all the three regions of Darfur, Northern, Southern and Western, and externally to Sudan’s neighbours, Chad in particular. These parties in this chaos were the former government, its surrogate Janjaweed militias and, to a lesser extent, by the two rebel movements, the split Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), as well as the armed outlaws or bandits. As an emphasis and in

¹One of the authors, Dr. Hassan, conducted a field work in Southern Darfur State during February-March 2005. He managed to tour five refugee camps and settlements that are still located in the surroundings of Nyala City and including Otash, Musa A and B, Al-Sereif and Kalma. He also interviewed different Darfuri tribal leaders, governmental officials, and administrators or managers of internally displaced persons’ camps. The author documented such field visits or/and tours by shooting about more than one hundred photos. ‘Memories of Darfur: A Photographic Journey by Dr. Gubara S. Hassan’ was a one-month exhibition of such photos at the Visual Arts Gallery- Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, USA, (April- May 2006). Available at <http://www.mscc.tamu.edu/events/shows/3239>.

²Among the other objects considered indispensable to the survival and livelihood of the civilian population include foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, granaries, livestock, and irrigation works or installations. See Young *et al.*, 2005.

similarity with aerial bombardments, most of the ground attacks resulted in indiscriminate mass killings and summary executions of civilians and their burial in mass graves, sexual violence (Amnesty International, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2004a, 2004b, 2005), slavery, forced disappearances, domestic labour, destruction of markets and means of survival as well as massive internal or cross-border displacement, pillage, abduction, detention and torture leading to permanent paralysis and other disabilities. The issue of territoriality as a source of disputes and conflicts within and between African states does not stop at border issues, but becomes an integral part of broader consequences generated by such disputes and conflicts. This crucial observation is nowhere more evident than in the case of the Darfurian conflict and its tremendous impacts on Sudan's western neighbour: Chad.

As a result of the spill-over of the Darfur conflict into Chad and the presence of large numbers of refugees along the border, the Chadian-Sudanese border has become increasingly militarized over the last few years, with a proliferation of arms trade and armed groups operating on both sides of the border, with multiple and various interests. This is partly related to the fact that 'geography is against Darfur'. In a different sense, one of Darfur's geographical misfortunes is that it shares not only extensive borders with Chad (and Libya) but also intermixed tribal and ethnic groupings. Tribal and ethnic mixture and geographical adjacency have exposed Darfur to long-running detrimental effects of inter-states conflicts, including population internal displacement, refugee syndrome and regional insecurity.

The inception of the Darfur conflict has two disastrous effects on the region, both of which have long-term implications and will only be solved by long-term post-conflict reconstruction planning. First, the conflict destroyed the last remnants of effective natural resource management, which had eroded in previous decades as a result of weakening and abolition of mechanisms of traditional leadership and local governance meaning, Native Administration (in Arabic: Idarah Ahliyyah). According to Abdul-Jalil, Mohammed, and Yousuf, "for more than half a century the native administration provided a system of local governance that managed the use of natural resources and allowed various groups to live in relative peace and stability" (Abdul-Jalil, Mohammed, & Yousuf, 2007). Traditional leaders were primarily responsible for maintaining law and order within their particular identity or ethnic group. In addition to settling disputes, they were also responsible for protecting the environment upon which livelihoods have depended.

For the last sixty years, however local governance has been in a constant state of flux and native administration has become heavily politicized, usually serving the interests of the central government rather than the interests of local communities. Administrative boundaries have been redrawn a number of times, most controversially in 1995 when Darfur was divided into three states. This move, which split the Fur heartland among the three states, was contested by many Darfuris, who perceived it as weakening the social integrity of the region. As a consequence of these trends, there has been a gradual weakening of both traditional leadership structures and of formal local governance structures. This, in turn, has degraded the mechanisms and processes for sustainable and equitable management of natural resources (Curtis & Scoones, 1990). Differently expressed, the incidences of violent conflict over natural resources increased as local governance and traditional leadership deteriorated and obliterated.

Second, the above-mentioned violence and consequential massive internal and external population displacement and unprecedented migration to cities have accelerated and distorted processes of urbanization affecting all such cities, and severely strained the environment around the urban areas. Internal population displacement and migration have swollen these

cities' population further and produced unplanned urban settlements that experience appalling living conditions. As a consequence of the destruction of their traditional sources of livelihood, the Darfurians who live in such settlements have resorted to the unsustainable exploitation of the already depleting natural resources as a coping strategy for survival. For instance, those who used to buy and sell other commodities have become greedy traders of timber for construction, firewood, and charcoal. Such avaricious traders have become the most significant drivers of further deforestation, ecological imbalance, and 'environmental degradation leading to an accelerated process of natural resources exhaustion or depletion'(Bromwich, 2008). In 2010, the UNSC gave attention to a disconcerting trend of local-level conflict between various communities in Darfur by stating that:“local conflicts have been exacerbated in the recent years by environmental degradation, demographic growth and the weakening of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms. In addition, the conflicts have become increasingly lethal owing to the proliferation of weapons among communities in Darfur” (UN Security Council, 2010).

The results of the conflict in Darfur are not only 'violations of international human rights and international humanitarian laws'(International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, 2005) but also one of the 'worst humanitarian crises' experienced in the very recent history. The handling of this Darfurian humanitarian crisis requires, by necessity, a complex system of post-conflict reconstruction that should address many recommended basic needs and fundamental challenges. In other words, acquaintance with the overlapping human, economic and environmental consequences of the Darfurian conflict is essential for envisioning or conceptualizing a strategic plan for post-conflict reconstruction or rebuilding and rehabilitating a destroyed Darfur. Such envisioning would be delineated in the pages that follow the tracing of Darfur Peace Process from a general perspective.

2. DARFUR PEACE PROCESS: A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE:

Like most theoretical terms, peace is somewhat difficult to define. The pure absence of violent conflict might be too less precise to define it. Webel gives a historical explanation in combination with human nature: “peace, like justice and happiness, is an historically shifting condition of our individual and collective natures, of our psychoses and politics, that at some times is less intangible and at other historical moments shines in the most distant horizons of our imaginations and desires”(Webel, 2007).

Actually, peace is not tangible. A state of peace is hard to explain, looking from the collective to the individual dimension. Resolving a conflict at this stage must involve a change in attitudes of the parties as well as a transformation in relationships about the clashing interests at the core of the conflict. In the case of Darfur, one could observe an asymmetric conflict. Here, many parties are involved, operating at different levels. An asymmetric conflict arises between dissimilar parties. Competition over resources led to violent clashes between tribes and ethnic groups. Next to the insurgent activities against the Al-Bashir-led Government of Sudan (GoS), inter-tribal clashes came in the political reconciliation agenda just recently. There have been a number of international attempts to end the violence and forge a peace agreement in Darfur. The first peace agreement for the most recent conflict in Darfur was signed in May 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria. After an extended peace process that started in 2004, this Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed between the largest of the three major rebel movements at the time (MinniArkoMinnawi's faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/a) and the GoS. MinniMinawi was appointed senior presidential adviser but was largely excluded from government decisions and could not deliver on DPA promises.

The DPA was not welcomed by the local population, particularly the two million displaced persons and Arab communities that felt the government was not representing them. The deal failed, however, because it included only one major rebel faction, excluded civilians, created an artificial deadline that did not give rebel factions time to consult their constituencies and poorly addressed such important issues as inter-tribal reconciliation. The fact that two key rebel movements (Abdel Wahid's faction of the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement) were not signatories, exacerbated the conflict in Darfur in the following years. There was no peace, and the rebel movements subsequently fractured and multiplied. An additional shortcoming of the DPA was its failure to address the land issues that are at the heart of the conflict—including land tenure, grazing, and water rights—as well as issues of local governance. By simply reaffirming land rights associated with the hakura, land that was originally allocated to particular clans or tribal groups by the colonial authorities, the DPA unhelpfully reasserted the pre-conflict status quo and failed to address one of the major sources of conflict at the local level—the tensions between those with hakura and those without. After the signing of the (DPA), in 2006, these issues were passed onto the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation process (DDDC), set up by the DPA and intended to give Darfuris a voice in the peace and reconciliation process.

After Abuja, the non-signatories won victories against government and (SLA-MM) troops and grew stronger by attracting the latter's defectors. They also experienced increasing ethnic fragmentation; some splinters initially joined the DPA, but even more the new talks in Libya. African Union (AU) mediation was transformed in 2006 into a more complicated framework: theoretically joint, but actually separate UN and AU chief mediators (respectively Sweden's Jan Eliasson and Tanzania's Salim Ahmed Salim), with fatally different perspectives. Their credibility suffered from continued international support for the DPA and a development agenda, while humanitarian access decreased, due to rebel infighting and government restrictions. The mediators tried to engage non-signatories in the Libyan talks. Unlike Abuja, which had ignored rebel fragmentation, these addressed it by welcoming all factions, but by attracting, even creating, irrelevant splinter groups, they repelled the main movements. That the DPA remained largely unimplemented also aggravated distrust, leading to the new talks' failure.

The negotiations that resumed in Qatar in 2009 led to the creation of a joint AU-UN mediation mechanism, which encouraged formation of the umbrella Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) to represent JEM and SLA splinter groups. The mediation also invited hundreds of civil society representatives to attend three conferences in Doha, to produce documents reflecting civilian views. Signed in July 2011, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) was the product of a new settlement attempt that began in June 2008 under the auspices of the AU, the UN and Qatar. It was built on earlier unsuccessful peace processes and agreements, in particular the 2006 DPA and 2007-2008 talks between the government and rebel factions in Libya.

Among the reasons that led to the failure of DDPD one could include, first, the DDPD was signed on 14 July 2011, just five days after South Sudan's independence, when internationals and Darfur rebels alike were preoccupied with Sudan-South Sudan relations, how they would be impacted by the renewed war in South Kordofan between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N, once the northern branch of the movement now in power in Juba) and whether that war would spread to Blue Nile. These three interconnected developments pushed the rebels to explore new alliances in both parts of the

now divided country, to continue the conflict, rather than rush into another peace agreement. Second, partial implementation of power sharing arrangements that were relevant to the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA), which was mostly not accepted as a supra-state institution. Implementation has focused on individual appointments rather than steps with broader impact, thus undermining already limited support for the DDPD and its signatories. More substantial and potentially more popular provisions, in particular the vote on Darfur's administrative status, have not been implemented. Another unimplemented provision involves integration of Darfurians into the civil service and regular government forces in numbers relative to their share of the national population.

Only a few symbolic provisions of the other main DDPD chapters – on wealth sharing, compensation and return of IDPs, justice and reconciliation, security arrangements and organisation of a Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC) – are in place. These include a special court for Darfur, and an amnesty provision (in principle excluding war crimes) that has allowed the LJM to obtain the release of 101 prisoners. Third, Insufficient money is the main reason given for the lack of promised compensation, reconstruction and development. The DRA accepted the argument that the increasing economic crisis Sudan has suffered since the South's independence, including a shortage in foreign currency, was the main justification for these multiple variations from DDPD provisions.

Fourth, Security Dilemmas that were relevant to Integrating LJM troops, disarming government militias Internal divides among the Darfurians humanitarian paralysis due to shrinking humanitarian relief and donor agencies especially in rebel-controlled Jebel Marra, Lack of popular support Inability to fulfil its promises is a major reason for the DDPD's lack of popularity. In addition, the lack of results, local support and cooperation has led to increasing international scepticism about the DDPD, with some describing it as "dead". But while blind support for the DPA led to a lack of international engagement with non-signatory rebel groups, the subsequent scepticism has led to renewed engagement with the armed opposition, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) in specific. The four rebel movements LJM, JEM, SLAAW, and SLA-MM, formed the SRF, an alliance largely dominated by the SPLM-N, due both to its strength, history, privileged links with South Sudan, and the cementing role it plays between the still divided Darfur factions. In addition, the guardianship of the current peace negotiations in its capital, Juba.

The topple of Al-Bashir regime in 2019, in the aftermath of the Sudanese December 2018 Uprising, and formation of the transitional civilian-military government in Sudan led to consensus about the adoption of a national agenda and a comprehensive approach to solve all conflicts in Sudan, including Darfur. A main lesson from the failed DPA and the DDPD was that an agreement signed by only one of the fragmented Darfur rebel movements would be unlikely to stop the fighting or be well received on the ground. That the policy of splintering groups and signing piecemeal deals with factions would not work.

International players UN, AU, US, EU, Qatar) alike have been recently more united on Sudan Transitional Government's crucial choice: the adoption of a national holistic approach to solve all Sudanese conflicts at once. 'International partners and positions' (Sudan Tribune, 2020) on the national approach to an inclusive and sustainable peace, development, and prosperity throughout Sudan have been even more united and supportive. At the beginning of the Darfur conflict, its national dimension was denied by most who saw the Darfurian rebels as potential spoilers of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with pre-independence South Sudan and rejected linking it to the "comprehensive" peace talks. A national solution

to Sudan's conflicts now seems to have more support, including from the AU and US. Both tend to see the DDPD as an obstacle to international consensus, including within the UNSC, because some members can invoke it as an excuse not to fully support a holistic approach. The acknowledgement of the SRF "as a reality, militarily and politically" and as a single negotiating umbrella for peace helped rally all opposition around them, made the Juba-based negotiations more productive. The Transitional Government decided to go full steam ahead, pre-empted and incorporated all peace processes into a national one.

The need for a comprehensive approach does not mean the DDPD should be discarded. Some of its elements address interconnected issues largely specific to Darfur that would be difficult to tackle in detail within a national process. These include provisions for reconstruction and development, IDP return, compensation for the war-affected population, local reconciliation, restoration of traditional land rights and the role of the 'native administration' (traditional chiefs). Addressing such local root causes and consequences of the conflict will take time, as there are many obstacles, some linked to the current situation, others that will likely outlast even the recent and future political changes and reforms in Khartoum. Impediments include insecurity in Darfur, the economic crisis and perhaps the acrimonious debate over the International Criminal Court's (ICC) indictment, which may be both destabilizing a soft functioning of the current Transitional Government in the centre and impeding local reconciliation in greater Darfur region.

3. JUBA PEACE AGREEMENT (JPA)

Ending Sudan's internal, violent, and devastating conflicts and achieving peace have been a top priority of the Transitional Government. In addition, Sudan has been looking towards a brighter future after initializing the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) on 31 August 2020, an essential phase towards bringing peace to Sudan's conflict-ridden regions: Darfur, the Two Areas of the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states, and laying the foundations for a genuine democratic transition, political stability, and economic prosperity throughout the country. The JPA was 'signed'³ in October 2020 by the Sudan's Transitional Government and the SRF, a broad alliance of armed and other movements: SLM/A, JEM and the General Agar's faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North. It has been generally hailed as a 'historic Sudanese achievement'. And as Prime Minister AbdallaHamdok put it: 'this is a Sudanese peace, made with our own hands and by our own efforts'. EU Foreign Affairs Chief JosephBorrell also praised the Government of South Sudan's role and its efforts to bring the Sudanese parties to the negotiating table and mediated peace deal that will benefit the two Sudans. (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020).The US, the UK, and Norway (the Troika) have welcomed the signing of the JPA as it "marks an important step toward meeting the calls of the Sudanese people for freedom, peace, and justice, especially for those affected by conflict in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, and other parts of Sudan". For the UNs' Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, "the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement signals the dawn of a new era for the people of Sudan(UN Secretary General, 2020).The leaders of the neighbouring countries and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) groupcalled on the international community to provide the urgently needed financial assistance for the implementation of this agreement. In a similar

³Guarantors of the Juba peace deal from Chad, Qatar, Egypt, the African Union, European Union and United Nations also put their names to the agreement. The heads of states of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Chad were present at the ceremony while Uganda was represented by its prime minister. The Kenyan government dispatched its special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan.The Sudanese were also at ease to gather ministerial delegations from the Gulf countries despite the current crisis and divisions in the strategic and oil-rich region.

vein, in a meeting held on 12 August 2020, the ‘Friends of Sudan Group’ underscored that sustainable peace and democracy require the continuous support of the partners for the transitional government⁴(Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The Agreement is crucial for Sudan’s politics because it creates a stimulus for negotiations with the last remaining rebel groups: Abdelaziz al-Hilu and Abdelwahed M. Al-Nur and reconfigures the balance of power among major political factions of the country. This new configuration chips away at the influence of the dominant socio-economic, political and cultural groups from the centre or the Nile regions — the “riverine” tribes that inherited the state from the former colonial power: UK. It could help address regional developmental disparities or imbalances, cultural marginalization, and social injustices or inequalities that have fed armed insurgencies throughout Sudan’s history. It could also mark a step towards ending wars in the Sudanese peripheries if it thrusts holdover-armed movements to make peace with the Transitional Government in Khartoum. In addition, the agreement could be a milestone on the long road to sustainable development, progress and prosperity if it is holistically implemented in the spirit of genuine co-operation and compromise.

The handling of this Darfurian humanitarian crisis requires, by necessity, a complex system of post-conflict reconstruction or rebuilding that should address many recommended basic needs and fundamental challenges. In other words, the earlier acquaintance with the overlapping human, economic and environmental consequences of the Darfurian conflict have been essential for envisioning a strategic plan for post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitating a destroyed Darfur.

4. POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION: ESSENTIAL NEEDS AND TREMENDOUS CHALLENGES:

Post-conflict reconstruction is understood as a complex system that provides for simultaneous short-, medium- and long-term programs to prevent disputes from escalating, avoid relapse into violent conflict, and to build and consolidate sustainable peace and development. Post-conflict reconstruction involves building or rebuilding both ‘formal and informal authorities’(del Castillo, 2008; Girod, 2015; Langer & Brown, 2016). First, it involves the creation and restoration of infrastructure and facilities, minimal social services and structural reforms and transformations in the political, social, economic, and security sectors.

Second, transition from conflict to peace and developmental reconstruction should be informed by its own socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances. Each specific post-conflict reconstruction system emerges in response to that conflict system’s set of circumstances and it will thus be unique in its composition, prioritization, timing and sequencing. In these senses, the arduous task of post-conflict reconstruction should also be located in the complex micro-context of Darfur where the overlapping factors of geography, history, tribalism, ethnicity and religion, as well as the legacies of natural disasters (drought, desertification and desert encroachment), economic injustice, political domination, cultural exclusion and interest-based foreign interventions have their significant role in the eruption and escalation of the Darfurian conflict. The grave nature of such conflict has catalysed attention on the multiple needs and challenges of the reconstruction or rebuilding. Furthermore, the end of the conflict does not necessarily mean the end of the humanitarian crises and problems associated with and resulting from it. The transition process from war to

⁴ The Friends of Sudan Group includes USA, France, Germany, Britain, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt.

peace entails not only overcoming the structural causes that originally sparked the fighting, but also mitigating ongoing conflict and dealing with the multi-faceted consequences and legacies of the conflict. These consequences define the needs and challenges of the post-conflict process of reconstruction.

Third, the composition of post-conflict reconstruction system is determined by the interaction of specific present internal and external actors, the history of conflict and the processes that resulted in a peace agreement. Post-conflict reconstruction systems have five fundamental dimensions: security; human rights; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; political transition, governance and participation and co-ordination and resource mobilization. These five aspects need to be programmed to simultaneously, collectively and cumulatively develop momentum to sustainable peace and development. Differently expressed, post-conflict reconstruction mirrors or reflects a range of needs that must be addressed early in societies and communities emerging from conflict if the ground is to be paved and secured for a lasting peace and sustainable development.

As far as Darfur is concerned and in similarity with other conflict situations, the range of essential needs includes: (A) security where demobilization and re-integration must be enhanced; the role of law promoted and refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) voluntarily returned to their pre-conflict places of residence. (B) Food security. (C) Infrastructure recovery, including water, sanitation, health care, shelter, education, transportation and communication networks. (D) Environmental, pastoralist and agricultural rehabilitation, including land tenure designation and registration. (E) Restoration of Native Administration (in Arabic, Al-Idara Al-Ahliyyah). (F) Accountability, transparency and compensation. (G) Tribal and ethnic reconciliation, (H) enhancing the customary mechanisms of conflict resolution, management, and prevention, and (I) socio-economic well-being or welfare, including provision of employment opportunities and other income-generation sources for both individuals and households. (J) Political transition, governance and participation, women in particular, and (K) mobilization and co-ordination of resources, national, regional and international.

In addition to the above-mentioned range of essential needs that must be addressed urgently in the Darfurian societies and communities emerging from conflict, myriad challenges will complicate Darfur region's post conflict reconstruction. Critical factors that threaten to destabilize or limit successful post-conflict reconstruction include: (1) inherited and escalated tribal and ethnic competition over natural resources, and hatred, mistrust, and uncertainty in the relations between the Transition Government of Sudan (TGoS) and the holdover armed rebel movements, the SLM/A-Abdel Wahid Al Nur and the SPLM/A-Abdel Aziz Al Hilu. (2) Centre-Periphery asymmetries and other conflicts. (3) The presence of diverse tribal and ethnic militias as well as armed banditry that have been facilitated by a flourishing cross-border trade in light and small weapons and a state of lawlessness. (4) The large-scale population movement meaning internally displaced persons' and refugees' and their voluntary return and re-settlement. (5) Other spoilers and regional players, for example, Chad and Libya that share extensive borders (meaning no-man zones or ungoverned areas) and tribal and ethnic groups with the Republic of Sudan. (6) Lack of accountable and transparent governmental structures, fear, and uncertainty about institutions' non-transparent uses of post-conflict reconstruction resources, national, regional and international.

As regards the first challenge, although distinctions between tribes and ethnic groups are not clear-cut, however, they tend to sharpen when conflicts erupt and individual allegiances are

still heavily determined by tribal and ethnic affiliations. The deep-rooted historical tribal and ethnic structure is still in effect, despite its weakening by successive political regimes at the centre. Differently expressed, in the context of the present conflict in Darfur, and in the years preceding it, the distinction between the so-called African and Arab tribes has come to the forefront, and the tribal and ethnic identity of individual Darfurians has increased in significance. The distinction derives, to a large extent, from the cumulative effects of natural disasters, prolonged underdevelopment, marginalization, cultural exclusion, land-based competing economic interests and, more recently, from the political polarization which has engulfed the region. The Arab and African distinction that was always more of a passive distinction in the past has now become the reason for standing on different hostile sides of the political divide: the former GoSand its Janjaweed militias and the split-ridden rebel movements (SLM/A and JEM). The fact that these movements are enjoying the popular support amongst certain so-called African tribes, for example, Zaghawa, Fur, Massalit, means not only the sharpening of tribal, ethnic and political divisions but also shaping the current conflict, hence presenting a tremendous challenge to the recently signed (JPA) meaning its practical implementation to resolve the Darfurian conflict and address the grave humanitarian crisis resulting from and aggravated by it.

After few years of conflict, inherited deep layers relating to identity and escalated tribal and ethnic rivalry over natural resources (for example, land) and political power and the consequent hostilities and animosities will definitely affect, define and challenge the historical relationships of intermarriages, mutual cultural-economic exchanges and peaceful co-existence among the diverse tribes and ethnic groups in greater Darfur region. The bloody Darfurian conflict and the challenging humanitarian crisis and ethno-tribal hatred resulting from it are matched only by yet another challenge, the shared historical mistrust between the governing elites at the centre and the armed rebels at the periphery, West, East and South Kordofan and Blue Nile. In other senses, the governing elite's failures and unfulfilled promises have resulted in centre-periphery asymmetries, as a second fundamental challenge in the process of post-conflict reconstruction in Darfur region. To emphasize, these asymmetries or inequalities have been reflected in the monopoly of power, development and modernization by the Centre (in Arabic: Markaz) to the exclusion and marginalization and suppression of the peripheries of the country, South Kordofan (Nuba Mountains), 'East'⁵, West, and Blue Nile districts.

A third fundamental challenge in the process of post-conflict rebuilding in Darfur region is the presence of tribal and ethnic militias as well as armed banditry. These militias have been responsible for some of the 'most heinous abuses committed against Darfurian civilian population during the conflict'⁶(Flint & de Waal, 2005). They are the most unpredictable element of the security situation and are arguably among the greatest threats and challenges to the current and future peace agreements between the warring parties and post-conflict reconstruction in Darfur region. The large-scale population movement meaning internally displaced persons' and refugees' and their needs for protection and security, voluntary return, re-settlement, reintegration and rehabilitation represent a fourth challenge to Darfur's post-conflict rebuilding. These needs and the challenges to meet them relate to a set of rights of

⁵ The historically marginalized Eastern Sudan has recently experienced violent protests, with demonstrators disrupting the country's largest port, threatening to cut off oil supplies and calling for independence from Khartoum after the signing of Juba Peace Agreement on the 3rd of October 2020.

⁶See various reports by International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, and Flint and de Waal, 2005.

the internally displaced persons and refugees and the obligations towards them by relevant authorities.

The rights of the internally displaced persons and refugees which represent a real challenge in the process of post-conflict reconstruction in Darfur region include: (1) physical security, protection against further arbitrary displacement, and freedom of movement/mobility. (2) Protection from all forms of discrimination, security and protection during voluntary return to their places or regions of origins or to areas of resettlement, and the rights to the earlier - mentioned essential needs, for example, food, water, shelter, health care, sanitation, education, etc. (3) Issuing of necessary documents such as birth and marriage certificate, personal identification, passports to internally displaced persons and refugees by the authorities. Registration of the internally displaced persons and refugees shall be undertaken by the relevant authorities or their agents for the purpose of facilitating documentation, monitoring population movements and planning for support to the process of providing re-integration assistance, rehabilitation and recovery. (4) Family reunification and integrity, quality of life of the displaced and refugees as well as access to property and land for housing, cultivation, and animal husbandry. (5) Promoting sources of livelihoods and productivity of the internally displaced persons and refugees and public awareness of their rights via mass media (TV, radio, the press, internet, etc).

Hardliners within the current TGoS and the ranks of the rebel movements in Darfur and the presence of regional spoilers such as Chad, conflict-plagued Libya and Eritrea are a fifth challenge that faces the post-conflict rebuilding in Darfur region. While those hardliners continue to argue that the price of peace is too steep for their interests in Darfur, Sudan's neighbours such as Chad, Libya and Eritrea could fuel destabilization in Western and Eastern Sudan, respectively. In addition, the rebel groups in Darfur have been expressing their scepticism towards Chad for her grossly flawed and counterproductive role and/or consistent manipulation of the peace process. Furthermore, the rebels' internal divisions or splits, inter- and intra- fighting, lack of unified political vision placed them at a great disadvantage in the Darfurian peace process. They are also a proof of the international community's failure to coordinate efforts and press the warring parties to reach a desperately needed peace agreement to facilitate humanitarian relief and launch post-conflict rebuilding.

A sixth and final challenge that confronts the process of post-conflict reconstruction in Darfur region relates to, first, the still lack of accountable and transparent governmental structures. This lack has been worsened by the abolition of the traditional 'Native Administrative System' which has resulted in creating a power vacuum and hence the difficulty to manage tribal and ethnic affairs, especially land rights, tribal conflict prevention, management, and peaceful resolution or settlement. In addition, it is this lack that motivated the Darfurian rebel movements to call for the adoption of peaceful transition of power as a strategic option that means securing the stability and unity of Sudan, and transparency and accountability in governance. This strategic option is reflected in the JPA's articles that relate to power-sharing, wealth-sharing, and good governance.

The system of governance, for the Darfurian armed movements, should be democratic, federal and based on political pluralism, the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers. It should also have commitment to international human rights conventions and treaties and guarantee the freedoms of expression, association, forming of political parties and non-governmental associations for all the Sudanese without any discrimination. Commitment to an equitable distribution of the national wealth and the

allocation of a special proportion of such wealth to support sustainable development in war-affected regions and areas should be of paramount significance in the process of post-conflict rebuilding, especially in Darfur region. Due to Sudan's massive external debts, macro-economic imbalances, and squabbles of traditional and ideological political parties, post-conflict reconstruction or rebuilding will be greatly dependent on the generosity of regional and international donors as well as the sound management, transparency and accountability relating to humanitarian assistance and allocation and usages of resources. It will also rely on the dedication and Sudanese-led efforts to holistically implement the JPA in the true spirit of cooperation, compromise, and transparency.

5. CONCLUSION:

In Sudan, as elsewhere in Africa and the world at large, conflicts are part and parcel of the dynamics of societies and communities. There is perennial struggle among individuals, families, clans, ethnic groups, tribes and communities, both agriculturalist and pastoralist, and nations for control over scarce natural, economic, and political resources. In other words, the main causes of conflict are resource-based. However, whether it is a struggle to control or access or exploit scarce resources, conflict is inherently economic and political in nature meaning driven by the eternal struggle for survival, power-sharing, and wealth-sharing.

While conflicts are a constant experience in African history, African conflicts, including the Darfurian one, should be viewed, investigated and analysed against their specific micro and macro historical, socio-economic and political contexts. According to this dynamic perspective, what changes is the nature and intensity of the conflict as a function of internal societal factors (such as ethnicity, tribalism, and religion) and of change in the (sub-regional, regional and international) environment, with various degrees and levels of influence on the internal situation. Differently expressed, the nature and intensity of African conflicts, including Western Sudan's Darfur region, is a result or product of a complex, dialectical relationship between micro/local factors and the structures and dynamics of the environment at the external levels, macro/national, regional and international. In this sense, the conflict context in the Sudan, in general, and Darfur region, in particular, consists of two clusters of interrelated basic root causes or factors: colonialist policies and their legacies and the post-colonialist or post-independence crises: failed sectarian and elitist politics, military governments, regional economic underdevelopment or regional development disparities, social malaise and the ethnic-cultural conundrum. In addition, the regional influences of the Chadian factional conflict, the earlier Libyan-Chadian wars and regional and international interventions have their role to play as catalytic events to the conflict in Darfur meaning as major developments that have impacts upon the political dynamics in Darfur region in a fundamental way.

Against the above- mentioned background and besides its root causes, the conflict in Darfur region represents yet other research challenges that relate to, first, the historical origins and evolution of the conflict and the major actors to it meaning the conflict, their ideological position, organization and strategy. A second challenge is the human, economic and environmental/ecological consequences of such conflict and, third, the domestic, regional and international responses to the grave humanitarian crisis generated by such conflict as well as the daunting task of post-conflict reconstruction.

As an emphasis, the challenges and issues that are relevant to the conflict in Darfur region significantly relate to the legacies of the colonialist policies of 'divide and rule', the abysmal failure of post-independence Westernized ruling elites, both civilian and military, and the

dialectical relationship between the 'hegemonic centre' and the marginalized and under-developed periphery'. To these one could add the differential impacts of development or 'developmental inequalities' on the creation of regional or peripheral armed movements, organizations and groups. Conflict over national identity, the form of the state, the sharing of power and national wealth and the consequent crises of social malaise and cultural divide along religious, tribal, ethnic and linguistic lines, all converge to germinate and nurture armed insurgencies or rebellious groups. SLM/A, JEM and their splinter groups in western Sudan's Darfur region are just empirical examples of such armed insurgencies or rebellions.

For the Darfurian rebels meaning the SLM/A, the JEM and their splinter groups and as indicated by the anonymous 'Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in the Sudan', the political, economic and cultural hegemony of riverine Sudan, Darfur's economic underdevelopment, marginalization and under-representation in Sudan's consecutive political regimes are among the main reasons that led to their armed resurgence on the stage of Sudanese politics. Through their armed and political strife, they represent not only essential players in Darfur's conflict but also a significant element in the process of reaching a peaceful settlement to such conflict as well as post-conflict re-construction in an environment ridden by one of the worst humanitarian crises.

Diverse reports from different sources including Governments, international organizations, for example, the UN, NGOs, mass media and relief agencies reflect multiple patterns of the economic and environmental consequences of the Darfurian conflict as well as the humanitarian crisis generated and aggravated by it. These reports also reflect grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws in Darfur region. As has been noticed, these violations began and increased in magnitude, intensity and consistency since the emergence of the conflict in early 2003. The escalation of these violations coincides with the intensification of the armed conflict between GoS and the rebellion movements. Highlighting the multi-faceted impacts of this conflict on the Darfurian civilians, their sources of livelihood and environment represents an essential brick in a well-informed post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. In other words, acquaintance with the overlapping human, economic and environmental consequence of the Darfurian conflict is essential not only for implementing a holistic peaceful and equitable settlement to such conflict through JPA but also for envisioning or conceptualizing a strategic plan for rebuilding and/or rehabilitating a destroyed and a humanitarian crisis-ridden Darfur.

In addition, the handling of the Darfurian humanitarian crisis requires, by necessity or/and definition, a complex system of post-conflict reconstruction that should address many recommended basic needs and fundamental challenges. It is important that such system should also be informed by Darfur region's own socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances. In other words and finally, the arduous task of post-conflict reconstruction should also be located in the complex micro-context of Darfur where the overlapping factors of geography, history, tribalism, ethnicity, religion, as well as the legacies of natural disasters (droughts, desertification and desert encroachment), economic injustice, political domination, and cultural exclusion by riverain Sudan, and interest-based regional and international interventions had significant role in the eruption, escalation and continuation of the conflict in Darfur: Sudan's far western region. It is a true national, regional and international hope that the signing of the JPA as a historical Sudanese achievement will pave the way for inclusive peace, sustainable development, and prosperity in the whole country, and would be a significant step towards addressing the December 2018 revolutionary demands of the Sudanese people for freedom (hurriyah), peace (salam), and justice (adalah).

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