

Sudanese conflict essay sample

War



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1. Background/history of the country and profile of the country today.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Located in the northern part of the continent, it is bound to the east by Eritrea and Ethiopia, to the south by Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda; to the west by Chad, the Central African Republic, and Libya and to the north by Egypt (CIA, 2008).

With its capital in Khartoum, it is divided into twenty five administrative divisions known as “ Wilayah” and is currently ruled by the Government of National Unity, a product of the union between the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party that was formed following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Nairobi in January 2005. Its president is Omar Hassan el Bashir (CIA, 2008).

Sudan’s population stands at slightly over 40 million people, with the majority of this population (52%) being blacks. Other ethnic groups include the Arabs who comprise 39% of the population, foreigners who make up 2% of the population, and the remaining 6% belong to the Beja ethnic group (CIA, 2008).

Seven out of every ten Sudanese are Sunni Muslim, with Christians and animists making up 5% and 25% of the population respectively. The country has two official languages - Arabic and English. Some of the native languages spoken include “ Nubian, Nilo-Hamitic, Ta Bedawie, Nilotic and Sudanic languages.” In general, the Sudan is a rich tapestry of ethnic groups speaking a total of 400 different languages (CIA, 2008, p. 2; Youngs, 2006).

Sudan's legal system is based on the English Common Law and the Sharia law. The Islamic Sharia Law is mandatory for all citizens of the North, irrespective of their religious affiliation, but is not operational in the Christian and animist south. Thanks to the CPA, the Islamic law also does not apply to non-Muslims living in Khartoum. (CIA, 2008).

With investment in oil production being stepped up since 1999, the country's economy has entered the fast growth lane, registering up to 10% annual growth from 2006. However, agriculture also remains an important economic activity, employing up to 80% of the population and contributing more than 30% of the country's GDP. As at 2007, the country had a GDP (on a power parity basis) of \$80. 98 billion and a per capita income of \$1, 900. However, the rate of poverty in the country remains high, with 40% of the population estimated to live below the poverty line (CIA, 2008).

Besides oil and agricultural resources, the country is also rich in other resources which include " copper, tungsten, mica, hydropower, chromium, gold, zinc, and has small reserves of iron ore." For most of the twentieth century, the Sudan has been wracked by civil wars, pitting the Muslim and Arab north against the Christian / animist and black south. The conflicts have been brought about by the social, political, and economic domination of the south by the north (CIA, 2008, p. 3).

The first civil war ended in 1972 but erupted again in 1983, leading to the displacement of up to four million people and the deaths of two million others over a period of twenty years. Concern over the effects of this civil war led to concerted efforts to seek peace, efforts which got renewed force

and vigor between 2002 and 2004, and involved the signing of several peace accords that ultimately led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which was signed in 2005 and gave the southern rebels autonomy for six years. However, another conflict continues to rage in the Darfur region which is in the western part of the country. Since independence, the country has been governed by Islamic-oriented governments which have had the support and backing of the military (CIA, 2008).

1. colonial rule:

The Sudan was colonized by the British and Egyptians from 1899 till 1956 when it gained independence. Before 1946, the British had ruled the Northern part of the country as a separate entity from the South. In 1946 however, the British decided to amalgamate the two regions and to administer them as one entity. The south is made up of Christians and animists, while the North is made up of Muslims. The southerners are black, and consider themselves to be part of sub-Saharan Africa while the Northerners are Arabs and consider themselves to be an integral part of the Arabic world. Culturally, the southerners share a striking affinity with their East African neighbors of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania while the northerners have a strong sense of kinship with their Egyptian neighbors (Marup-Adot, 2006).

These differences contributed to tension between the two regions. With the North being more powerful, there was always livid fear in the south that it may be subordinated to the north. By forcing the two disparate regions into an unequal alliance, British colonial rule helped sow the seeds of the conflicts that have wracked this country since its independence. By failing to ensure <https://assignbuster.com/sudanese-conflict-essay-sample/>

that they followed through on their promise to have the country ruled by a federal government with a largely autonomous south, the British were particularly culpable for creating ideal conditions that would trigger off the civil wars in the Sudan (Marup-Adot, 2006).

It can also be argued that being a dominant power over Sudan and sharing a particular affinity with the Arab north, Egypt helped tilt the balance of economic, political and social power in favor of the north, disenfranchising and alienating the south in the process, thereby fuelling resentment between the two that would later blow into an all out conflict (Marup-Adot, 2006).

After independence, when it increasingly became clear that the North was reluctant to create a federal government that would grant meaningful autonomy to the South as promised by the British, the tensions flared and erupted into a full blown insurgency, that later evolved into a secessionist movement championed by guerilla fighters known as the Anya Nya rebels (Marup-Adot, 2006).

1. Civil war I and civil war II:

The first civil war in Sudan erupted in 1955, on the eve of the country's independence from Britain, and persisted for seventeen years until 1972 when the main protagonists arrived at a mutual understanding under the Addis Ababa Accord and agreed to lay down their arms (Pike, 2005).

Earlier, the decision by the British to amalgamate the south and north and have them administered as one was influenced by the Northerners. With this amalgamation, Arabic was made the official language of the South, which until then had English as its official language. Northerners took up
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administrative positions in the south, and locked out the southerners from governing themselves. They also filled all the important civil service and other government positions. After independence, the North retained most of the power, in complete violation of the British promise to create a federal government that guaranteed an autonomous south. This fuelled resentment by the southerners against the north and led to the eruption of the first civil war. It is estimated that close to half a million people perished in the first civil war in Sudan (Pike, 2005).

The first civil war began as a mutiny by southern troops at a place called Torit in Equatoria Province in 1955. Rather than submit to the Khartoum government, the mutineers fled to the bush with their arms, formally marking the start of the first civil war. By the end of the sixties, these rebels had managed to make useful contacts through which they received arms. Some of the arms came from Israel, which also helped train the Anya Nya rebels; from international arms dealers and from Congolese rebels. Other weapons were also obtained from captured government troops. The weapons were routed into the rebel bases through Ethiopia and Uganda, and funds for their purchase were obtained from Sudanese communities exiled in the major capitals of the world. The Khartoum based government on its part sourced its weapons from the Soviets and Egypt (Pike, 2005).

The Anya Nya rebels controlled most of the countryside in the south, while the Khartoum based government held sway in the major towns (Juba, Wau, and Malakal). The rebels were however militarily inferior both in numbers and weaponry. In addition to the Anya Nya guerillas, various other rebel groups also cropped up in the south to lend their weight to the fight for an

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independent south. In 1971, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), which united all the Anya Nya rebels behind Joseph Lagu, was created, and became the primary body that represented and fought for the interests of the south. By 1972, the Khartoum government, under the leadership of President Gafaar Al-Nimeiry, had established contact with the SSLM, leading to consultations between the two protagonists and to the Addis Ababa Accord that was brokered with the assistance of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie (Pike, 2005).

The Addis Ababa Accord gave autonomy to the south. The south was to be governed by a regional president whose appointment was to be done jointly by the Southern Regional Assembly and the national president. The accord also provided for the Anya Nya rebels to be integrated into the southern command and the national army. The regional president would also appoint a cabinet which would oversee certain operations. In addition, the accord recognized English as the south's official language (Pike, 2005).

While the economic, political and social marginalization of the south by the north played a significant role in triggering the conflict, resource distribution in the country also played a big role in stoking the flames of the conflict. The North is located in close proximity to the Sahara desert and therefore most of it is arid and no meaningful agriculture can take place there. In contrast, the south is rich and fertile, with the tributaries of the Nile running rings around it. With more reliable rainfall patterns, meaningful agricultural activities can be carried out in the south. In addition, the south is rich in oil, which contributes close to 70% of all the Sudanese revenues. The resource-poor North's attempt to control these resources and the southerners'

stubborn insistence on holding on to them has also played a significant role in fuelling the conflict.

According to al'Salaam (2006), geopolitical factors also escalated the tensions and therefore helped fuel the civil war: As he writes, " The government in Khartoum was under constant pressure and influence from the nations involved in the Cold War. Sudan was used as a proxy with arms and aid as the bait. Eventually, the Arab Muslim nations along with China and Russia won the favor of Sudan and became semi-permanent allies" (al'Salaam, 2006, p.).

With the coming into force of the Addis Ababa Accord, the first civil war would be stamped out and Sudan would get respite from civil wars for the next eleven years. However, in 1983, the Sudanese president Gaafar al Nimeiry issued a decree that incorporated the Islamic Sharia law into the Sudanese penal code and imposed it on the Christian/animist south, an act that triggered off the second civil war in Sudan. This civil war lasted for two decades, in which up to four million people were displaced and two million others lost their lives. Gafaar's decree was a violation of the Addis Ababa Accord and reignited the old tensions that had sparked off the first civil war. Following the violation of this agreement in 1983, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, under the leadership of John Garang, was formed with the aim of fighting the central government, bringing to an end to the perceived injustices against the south, and establishing an independent southern state (Pike, 2005, Marup-Adot, 2006).

Even as the rebel insurgency in the south against the Khartoum government raged on, Gafaar's government was overthrown in a military coup in 1985, after which power was handed over to a new civilian government after a short transition period. This government was headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi, who, under direction from the military, opened negotiations with the Garang-led SPLA in 1986. Immediately after the coup, the military had moved to rescind Sudan's intent to become an Islamic state as had been decreed in 1983 by Nimeiry. All these efforts were aimed to reconcile the two warring regions (Pike, 2005).

Together with several Sudanese political parties, the SPLA made the "Koka Dam Declaration" in Ethiopia which demanded for the abolition of Islamic law, a freeze to the state of emergency that had earlier been declared by Al Nimeiry, and the freeze of military covenants that had been made between the country and Egypt and Libya, demands which were eventually accepted by the DUP (Democratic Unionist Party). This was done in 1986. Meanwhile, the civil war raged on (Pike, 2005).

However, before the implementation of the plan, another government headed by the current present Omar al Bashir overthrew Sadiq's government and repudiated this agreement, stating that it wished to negotiate without any preconditions, but the negotiations did not bear any meaningful fruit. In 1991, Bashir's government introduced a new penal code and other reforms that essentially placed the south under sharia law (Pike, 2005).

Sudan's neighbors (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) were in the meantime involved in a series of peace initiatives organized under the

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) since 1993. Their efforts led to the formulation of the Declaration of Principles (DOP), which the Khartoum government eventually signed in 1997 after suffering a series of stinging defeats at the hands of the SPLA. In the same year, several rebel factions such as the one led by Riek Machar signed peace agreements with the Khartoum government (Marup-Adot, 2006).

Sudan's other neighbors - Libya and Egypt, were also involved in peace initiatives aimed at reconciling the south with the North. In 2000, they came up with a framework for peace known as the Joint Initiative on Sudan, which made a raft of concessions aimed at appeasing the south. The initiative called for power sharing between the north and the south, for reforms to be done on the constitution, and for an interim government to be put in place pending elections. However, this framework was rejected by the south due to the fact that it was silent on the southerners' right to self-determination and failed to resolve the contentious issue of the relationship between the state and religion (Marup-Adot, 2006).

Attempts to resolve the Sudan civil war were not just limited to the country's African neighbors. Major world powers such as the US, and supranational institutions such as the African Union and the United Nations were also involved. The UN and the African Union for examples sent troops to the region to enforce peace and opened up corridors for humanitarian assistance (Marup-Adot, 2006).

Between 2003 and 2004, efforts at peace gathered steam, eventually culminating to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in

Nairobi in January 2005. Among other things, the combatants agreed to grant autonomy to the southern region for a period of six years, after which a referendum would be held to determine whether the south should secede from the north. In addition, the two parties agreed to integrate their armed forces into a single army should the referendum determine that the south is not interested in secession. According to the CPA, oil revenues were to be shared equally between the two regions and the south was given the right to determine its legal system, with sharia laws being applicable only to the Muslim north. The signing of this CPA brought to an end the second civil war that had gone on unabated for twenty two years (Marup-Adot, 2006).

1. Discuss Darfur and the attempts at peace by outside governments.

As the second civil war in the Sudan abated, a new conflict was breaking out in its western region of Darfur in 2003. Described by the UN as the worst humanitarian disaster in the world, the Darfur crisis, as it has come to be known, has to date seen the internal displacement of more than two million people and the deaths of 400, 000 others. According to Youngs (2004), another 150, 000 have fled to the neighboring Chad as refugees. The conflict pits rebel forces on one hand and the government, backed by the Janjaweed militia, on the other. The rebel groups involved are the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) (Youngs, 2004).

According to Youngs (2004), the outbreak of the Darfur crisis can be explained by a combination of factors. Like is the case with all previous conflicts in the Sudan, the Darfur crisis was triggered by feelings of resentment by a region that felt marginalized economically, politically and

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socially, with the target of the insurgency being the dominant group typified by the north and its Khartoum government.

The second reason and which provided the immediate trigger to the Darfur crisis was the successful negotiation of the north-south conflict through the comprehensive peace agreement. The protagonists behind the conflict – the JEM and the SPLM/A were apprehensive that the achievement of such a negotiated settlement between the north and the south, especially if it resulted in the equal sharing of resources (and mainly revenues from oil) would disadvantage Darfur both economically and politically (Youngs, 2004).

The other reason that has often been cited as a cause of the Darfur civil war is the competition for scarce and diminishing resources in the region. Even though the Darfur region is inhabited by more than thirty ethnic groups, these groups can be broadly categorized as either Arabic or African. The Arabs inhabit the south and north of this region while the African ethnic groups dwell at the center. While the Africans are mostly sedentary farmers, the Arabs are largely nomadic. Increased desertification, drought and scarce water resources have pushed the nomadic Arabs towards regions occupied by the African sedentary farmers, triggering off conflicts between the two. Increasingly, the conflict has also assumed significant racial undertones (Youngs, 2004).

The Darfur conflict started in February 2003 after the SLM/A capitalized on a lapse of order in Bashir's regime and carried out raids on military installations belonging to the government. The rebels stepped up their raids, with each of their raids meeting with stellar success. This forced the

Sudanese government to respond with a counter-insurgency campaign (Youngs, 2004). The Janjaweed Militia, made up primarily of Arabs, took the side of the government against the rebel outfits, which were composed of blacks. It is reported that this militia has, with the explicit support of the government, attacked villages perceived to be sympathetic to the rebels, leading to the present humanitarian crisis in Darfur (Youngs, 2004). The militia has been accused of gross human right violations, including the murder and wanton rape of innocent civilians in the region and the plunder of their resources and property. According to Youngs (2004), the Janjaweed militia is receiving support from the Khartoum government in the form of cash and arms. In addition, it has been reported that the government has on several occasions carried out air raids, bombing out entire villages in anticipation of raids by the militia.

Six months after the Darfur conflict broke out, the Sudanese government signed a ceasefire agreement in which it committed itself to releasing more than fifty SLA prisoners and to resolve claims of neglect of the Darfur region by the rebels. However, this agreement was short-lived, with accusations flying from both sides that either party had violated it. In December, barely two months after the ceasefire had been signed; the Janjaweed launched a fresh wave of attacks on Darfur villages, triggering a mass exodus of refugees into Chad. The attacks also targeted refugee camps along the Sudan-Chad border. The Sudanese government would also send its army into the region at around this time, exacerbating the fighting and causing thousands more to flee into Chad (CBC, 2008).

The fighting would go on unabated into 2004. However, in April of 2004, the Sudanese government and the rebels signed another ceasefire agreement, that also allowed the African Union to send its observers into the region. Like the previous ceasefire, this one also failed to hold. Barely six weeks after it had been signed, a village in the area was attacked and 45 people brutally murdered. Both sides denied responsibility and blamed each other for the attack. However, both sides agreed to allow observers into the region. These observers were drawn from the European Union, the US, Chad, and from the two warring factions. At around the same time, Kofi Annan, the then secretary general of the UN named Jan Pronk the body's special envoy to the country even as the US announced that it was reviewing the possibility that genocide was being carried out in Darfur. Colin Powell, the US secretary of State at the time, visited Sudan in an effort to apply pressure towards the end of the conflict, warning that relations between the US and Sudan would only be normalized after the Sudanese government took action against the Janjaweed militia. The UN secretary general promised to help broker a ceasefire (CBC, 2008).

In July 2004, the main rebel groups (JEM and SLM/A) walked out of peace talks convened in Ethiopia, committing themselves to the talks only if the Sudanese government undertook to disarm the Janjaweed and to pull out of Darfur. The talks, sponsored by the UN and the AU end in disarray. Four days after the talks broke, the US Senate pass a resolution, declaring the happenings in the Darfur region genocide, and followed this up a few days later with a proposal at the UN security Council to impose sanctions on

Sudan but later softened its position after protests from some members of the Council (CBC, 2008).

In August 2004, Rwanda sent a 150 strong contingent of soldiers to help keep peace in Darfur and in refugee camps in Chad, with the Sudanese government meeting the rebel groups in Nigeria at talks facilitated by the African Union, with the UN issuing an August 30th ultimatum for the Khartoum government to disarm militias and get them out of the troubled region. In September of the same year, China pressured the US to soften its stance of imposing oil sanctions against Sudan. Talks between the rebel groups and the government took place for three weeks but broke down again after three weeks (CBC, 2008).

In September 2008, the Security Council passed a resolution threatening sanctions against Sudan if it does not bring the Darfur conflict to an end, and allowing for the expansion of the AU force. In March 2005, it imposed travel bans and froze the assets of all those involved in war crimes in the conflict. It also allowed the International Criminal Court to commence investigations and possible convictions of people alleged to be involved in war crimes in the region. In September 2005, yet another round of peace talks on the crisis were started in Nigeria although one faction of the SPLM/A kept away from the talks. Like all previous talks, these talks also collapsed. Talks were restarted again in November 2005 in Nigeria but the year ended without much progress having been made. In March 2006, an attempted attack on the Chadian capital was foiled by the country's troops, with the country

severing diplomatic relations with Sudan accusing it of sponsoring the attacks (CBC, 2008).

In May 2006, a new peace deal flopped after the two main rebel groups refused to sign it, with only a breakaway faction of the SLM/A and the government agreeing to it. In the same month, the UN Security Council agreed to send troops to take over from the AU troops. A report by Amnesty International accused countries such as Russia and China of not being committed to the resolution of the conflict, preferring to put their interests ahead of human rights. In January 2007, an international organization known as Save Darfur Coalition, brokers a two month ceasefire deal with the Khartoum government, but this too fails to hold. In May of that year, the US president announce additional sanctions against Sudan and blacklists thirty on Sudanese firms, stopping them from conducting any business in the US or with US firms, a move that draws criticism from China. A new UN peacekeeping force is approved, with Britain and France leading mandated to lead it. With the conflict still raging, the prosecutor of the ICC filed genocide charges against Omar al Bashir, the Sudanese President, for crimes against humanity in Darfur, eventually issuing warrants of arrest for him (CBC, 2008).

Faced with the threat of arrest by the ICC, the Sudanese president eventually announced a ceasefire in November 2008, at an event boycotted by the main rebels, where he pledged to compensate the people affected by the conflict, to disarm the Janjaweed militia and pull them out of the area, and to help develop the Darfur region (Heavens, 2008).

1. Discuss if peace will last today.

In my opinion, it is highly unlikely that peace will last in the Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the north and the south dictates that the south would be granted autonomy for six years, after which the south would be left to decide, through a referendum, whether it wants to secede.

The bulk of oil in Sudan is to be found in the south. Given the sharp differences between the southerners (black, Christian / animist) and the northerners (Arabic, Muslim), and the strong suspicions they have against each other, it is highly unlikely that the south will choose to remain part of the larger Sudan. It is almost certain that the south will secede. Since the south holds most of the oil and most of the fertile land, it is highly unlikely that the Arab north will let the south secede without putting up a fight. The most probable scenario will be for the North to either intimidate southerners from voting for their independence or to hold onto the south by force. In this, the Khartoum government will be assured of support from its Arab neighbors who share a strong affinity with the Arabic north. These countries are Libya and Egypt. The southerners are unlikely to take this lying down, and the inevitable result will be another conflict come 2011. In the short run therefore, north-south peace will hold but after 2011 when the referendum is held, another conflict is likely to crop up.

In the western region of Darfur, the situation is unlikely to be any different. The Sudanese president only announced the ceasefire due to unbearable pressure from stemming from the ICC's decision to have him indicted at the criminal court in Hague, not because of any real commitment he had towards

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peace (Heavens, 2008). Secondly, the Darfur presents a greater threat to Bashir, far much greater than the insurgency from the south. This is because Darfur is closer to Khartoum, the Darfur insurgency was supported by Muslims (some of whom included his fierce opponent Al Turabi), and fifty percent of the Sudanese army is from this region. During the announcement of the ceasefire, these rebels boycotted the event. For a just and lasting solution to any crisis, there must be genuine understanding between the protagonists and the antagonists, which we don't see here (Youngs, 2004).

In addition, prior to the November 2008 ceasefire announced by Bashir, there had been many other ceasefires as outlined in the preceding section, none of which was honored. Going by the established precedence, there is no reason to believe that this time round there will be any difference. The other reason to be skeptical of the deal is that the UN/AU capacity to monitor adherence to the ceasefire is questionable. With only 11, 000 troops in Darfur, 15, 000 short of the number initially pledged, the UN/AU force remains critically understaffed and has never been able to secure the immense Darfur region. Finally, even though Bashir has pledged to compensate victims of the conflict and to spur development, some issues that can be attributed to be the main cause of the conflict were not addressed. For example, the ceasefire deal was silent on political representation of this region. As long as the real political, economic and social issues that triggered the conflict are not addressed, they will continue festering beneath the veneer of peace and are likely to explode into another conflict at the slightest provocation (Heavens, 2008).

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