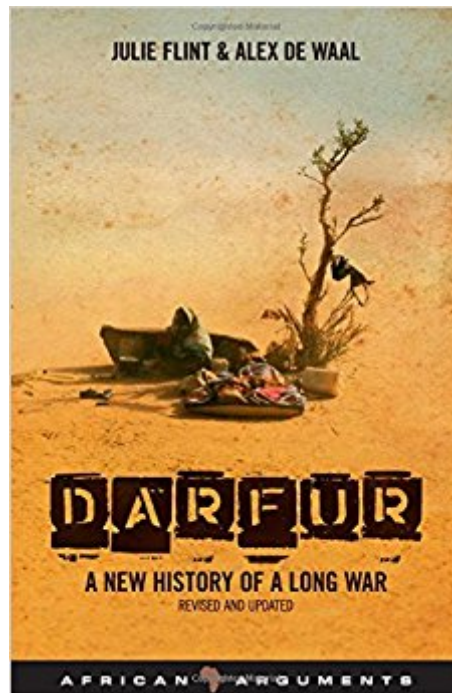




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Darfur: A Short History Of A Long War (African Arguments)



Synopsis

This book details the history of Darfur, its conflicts, and the designs on the region by the governments in Khartoum and Tripoli. It investigates the identity of the infamous "Janjawid" militia and the nature of the insurrection, charts the unfolding crisis and the international response, and concludes by asking what the future holds in store.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Both writers are intimately familiar with Darfur--Ms. Flint reportedly came close to getting herself killed there when traveling with rebels in 2004--and their accounts are as readable as they are tragic."--Nicholas D. Kristof, New York Review of Books

Julie Flint is an award-winning journalist and film-maker. Alex de Waal is a fellow of the Global Equity Initiative, Harvard; Director of the Social Science Research Council program on AIDS and social transformation; and a director of Justice Africa in London.

My review here covers the details that Flint uses in her synopsis. My opinion is in the final paragraph. If you're looking for the specific take of events from the author, read below. The Darfur conflict is hugely complex, a mix not only of ethnic diversity and languages but of border and international power struggles. The Fur felt they were losing more and more power in their region as the region was split in to three sections, making them minorities in each. Next, huge Chadian Arab

migrations flooded the land and its resources in a time of famine and great need. Does this become a war for survival? JEM, SLA and other rebel groups formed in the last ten years in response to government supported Janjawid. The SPLA (Southern Sudan) worked alliances with the Darfur rebels. Al-Turabi is said to have made connections with all Darfurians to support his umma party. There are many reasons why Khartoum would be worried about the Darfur and its power sapping energy. AMIS began a mission in Darfur with very little man-power, Nigerian dominance and little structure. The transition to a UN mission never came, even though there was a UNSC resolution 1709. Activists kept the Darfur in the news, biggest yet in 2004-2005, and even when the conflict had tapered off. It became an activist agenda not always reflecting the facts on the ground. By 2007 until now, the violence had lessened. Taha had negotiated the SPLA's CPA in 2005 and shortly after the government tried to negotiate with Darfur in Abidjon, without the same success. Flint makes Bashir (president of Sudan) look very counter to the secret negotiations that Taha had with Garang. Yet, somehow, Bashir is the 'hero' of the South for the current independence. The difference between patronage and representation is motive and unity. The Fur, Zaghawi and Arabs had different objects and goals in Darfur. They did not maintain unity against Khartoum. Even while they all had grievances against the capital they had no strong alliance. The Darfur story as described here makes its plight appear distant from world politics, lacking any global importance. Darfur has always been more of a moral issue than of any outside nation's personal or national interest. I'd recommend this as a summary of of Darfur's crisis.

I purchased this book for my class on Conflict and Conflict Resolution at San Diego State. This book is very detailed giving all the background on Sudan the country, its different tribes and groups as well as all of the individuals who have held or are seeking power in Sudan. The book also highlights the regional players and their motivations such as Libya, Chad, Eritrea who are seeking to keep Sudan destabilized for their own personal gain. The authors do an excellent job of also bring to light the international aspects as well as the local and national issues that helped to create the circumstances of the first civil war/ conflict of north vs south Sudan and then Darfur. Not to mention the problems that stem from the international communities poor foresight when it came to resolving the North vs. South Sudan issues and the treaty that has made it impossible to truly resolve the Darfur conflict. Also how the international community and aid agencies shot themselves in the foot by labeling Darfur a genocide - spending more time documenting the genocide than helping people get food and water in that barren land. However the one criticism I have of this book is the amount of shifting between different eras in history, players (wait till you get to the part about SLA vs SPLA vs

SLA W vs SLA M) essentially you need a felt board like they use in military strategies to keep track of the players and their movements around Sudan. I however despite my criticisms highly recommend this book as a primer for anyone interested in Sudan and the root issues of Darfur.

Good book, recommended reading if you require insight into the crisis in the Sudan

There are plenty of serious human rights abuses in Africa which Westerners, particularly American corporations and arms dealers have strong complicity in: the 4 million dead in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi, Equatorial Guinea under Teodor Obiang, Chad under Idriss Deby, Uganda under Museveni. One can also mention the horrors of the neoliberal economic model which African governments have followed so studiously. But Sudan and Zimbabwe seem to take up 90 percent of recent Western media reporting about abuses in the region. Both governments, vile as they certainly are, have struck independent courses via US power over the years and so are demonized in the US media. Former Senator John Danforth, US ambassador to the UN in 2004, stated on British tv in 2005 that the main reason the Bush administration made noises about Darfur in the election year of 04' was to please the voting block of fundamentalist Christians who have long believed the Sudanese regime to be satanic. There is plenty of stuff in this book about the barbaric atrocities of the Sudanese government and the Janjiweed, the paramilitary force which acts as a proxy for the Sudanese military in Darfur.. In Darfur, the driving Arab supremacist ideology was rooted in the "Arab Gathering" group which emerged under the backing of Colonel Qadaffi of Libya in the 70's and 80's. Many in Sudan's government have been influenced by this ideology. The authors provide much quotation from these brethren who stress the need to make Darfur a purely Arab homeland and to cleanse it of non-Arab elements. Qadaffi funded the Sudanese Islamist/Arab nationalist groups Ansar and Muslim Brothers against his enemy, Sudan's then dictator Jafarr Nimieri in the 70's and early 80's. Many in these groups ended up in positions of power after the Islamist regime took power in June 1989. Qadaffi also funded Arab supremacists in Chad during the 80's, many of whom found refuge in Darfur and have since made not insignificant contributions to the violence there. It also appears from the authors' discourse that the conflict is driven by the struggle for land and water in an area which has seen much drought, and a dwindling supply of water and arable land.....The authors point out that Arabs of the Bagarra Rizeigat--to which the majority of Arabs in Darfur belong--have kept out of the conflict.... A not insignificant number of the Janjiweed are violent criminals released from Sudan's prisons to serve in that body.....Bagarra Rizeigat have protected refugees from Janjiweed terror. The Bagarra Rizeigat

chief, Saeed Madibu has resisted efforts by the Khartoum government to bribe him and terrorize him into submission. The authors seem to imply that most of the Arab tribal elites in Darfur would greatly prefer peaceful social, political and commercial interaction between Arabs and African tribes instead of the apocalyptic ideology of a Darfur cleansed of all black people that Janjiweed leaders profess. Saeed Madibu, in a contumacious act to the Khartoum government, has resurrected meetings of Darfurian tribal elders to negotiate in an equitable fashion, land and resource issues. One of the two Darfurian opposition groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) is divided between two tribal based factions, the Fur, led by Abdel Wahid and the Zaghawa, led by Minnie Minawi. These two groups spend a lot of time making war upon each other, rather than upon the Sudanese army and Janjaweed. They mention that the SLA, perhaps a joint action of the two factions, attacked Bagarra Rizeigat territory in the Summer of 2004 and burned villages, stole livestock and engaged in other such activities at which the Janjiweed are such experts but Saeed Madibu's forces drove them out of their land. The JEM is much more sophisticated. Islamists disillusioned with the extreme corruption and violence of the Khartoum regime seem to make up a significant part of the JEM's leadership. In interviews with one or another of the authors, the JEM leaders disavow any association with Hassan Al-Turabi, the Islamist scholar who was Sudan's de facto ruler throughout the 90's until he lost a power struggle with the country's president General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir in 2000 and was thrown into prison. Turabi had attracted many to his cause in the 70's and 80's because he spoke of a brotherhood of Muslims regardless of race and spoke out against the extreme corruption and inequality in Sudan's society. JEM leaders, according to the authors' interview of them, think that Turabi is a disgusting fraud and don't want anything to do with him. However many of them are specifically committed to setting up an Islamic state in the Sudan, which they say will grant freedom of worship to other faiths and will fulfill the ideals of honesty and equality in government that Turabi's variety of Islamists promised back in the 80's but have made such a mockery of in practice. The leaders of the JEM are often former national and regional officials under the current regime and provide the authors with stories probably containing at least some truth, illustrating their own virtue when they were in the service of the current regime, in the midst of grotesque brutality and corruption. The authors mention the US and UK backed Naivasha accords that ended the civil war in Southern Sudan in 2005. In that accord the oil revenues are to be evenly divided between North and South, the SPLA has become the autonomous ruler of the South and army units in the capital are divided 50/50 in membership between the SPLA and the Sudanese army. SPLA leader John Garang was made first vice president of Sudan but he died in a mysterious plane crash shortly after the Naivasha accords. However the war criminals in both the Sudan government and the SPLA

were granted amnesty from prosecution.....The authors note the desire for stability in south Sudan with its strategically important oil wealth by the US and UK, the Naivasha accord backers. Darfur in contrast has no important resources.

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