



Civil War and Genocide in Darfur: Chinese and Saharan Dimensions

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Good afternoon, and thank you for the kind introduction. I appreciate being here at the American Enterprise Institute and having the opportunity to address the regional dimensions of the Darfur conflict.

American news coverage typically zeros in on Darfur specifically, but to truly understand the conflict and its larger implications, it is important to look beyond western Sudan. One must also consider internal dynamics in neighboring nations Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) and examine each country's relationships with one another.

The U.S. approach to the conflict in Darfur fully recognizes its regional dimensions. We consult frequently with other governments in the region, including those of Chad, CAR, and Libya. On his first visit to Africa in his new capacity, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte visited Sudan, Chad, and Libya earlier this month.

Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios has also consulted with Chadians and Libyans on the way forward in Darfur and participated just last week in a meeting on Darfur convened in Tripoli. I personally visited Chad and CAR earlier this month. In short, we fully understand that the regional neighbors have a key role to play in a solution to Darfur.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chad and CAR have a long history of instability and war that can be attributed to a combination of domestic and regional factors. Neither country has a record of good governance, rule of law, or democracy. This leaves both countries vulnerable to external interference and limits options for peaceful resolution of internal problems.

Since achieving independence in 1960, both Chad and CAR have been subject to several power struggles and periods of civil conflict. Chad experienced an almost continuous civil war from 1965 to 1993, when current President Deby initiated a national reconciliation process.

Chad and Sudan have a complex relationship in which national borders are subordinate to tribal loyalty or the fight for natural resources. In eastern Chad and in western Sudan, for example, limited access to water and arable land leads to conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists on both sides of the border. Familial and ethnic ties also exacerbate economic tensions.

Chadian rebels have long used Sudan as a base for attacks into Chad, sometimes with Sudanese government complicity. Both Chadian President Deby and his predecessor Hissene Habre assumed power through military campaigns based in Sudan, thus establishing enduring connections with Sudanese actors.

The current Chadian rebel movements, which gained strength in late 2005 and 2006 due to defections of high-ranking civil and military officers, including members of Deby's tribe, also enjoy Sudanese government support.

CAR's president, Francois Bozize, came to power by overthrowing former President Patasse in a coup in 2003 with Chadian support. He subsequently won the 2005 presidential election, which international observers deemed acceptable, so as not to contradict the will of the Central African people. Bozize, who resided in Chad while in exile, has strong personal ties to Chadian President Deby.

Rebels supporting Patasse stepped up operations in the north and northwest parts of the country during 2005. Groups with alleged links to Sudan took over four northeastern towns in October and November 2006. After being defeated by government forces with French support, the rebels attacked again in early March 2007, but they were quickly defeated.

Three of the country's rebel groups, including the main northeastern group, the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity, which is commonly known by its French acronym, UFDR, have now signed a peace agreement with CAR's government and pledged to stop all attacks.

REGIONAL ASPECTS OF CRISIS

Support for rebel groups across the border flows in both directions – back and forth between Chad and Sudan. Tribal loyalty appears to be at the heart of Chadian support for Sudanese rebel groups, including those that have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement.

President Deby and many members of the Chadian elite belong to the Zaghawa tribe, which dominates some Darfur rebel groups, including the Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM. There are reports that JEM fighters have engaged Chadian rebels alongside the Chadian military (ANT).

An example of internal Chadian politics affecting Darfur -- President Deby originally prohibited his supporters from backing Darfur rebel groups, but he has been weakened politically by defections and can no longer afford to restrict Darfur rebel support and risk alienating his remaining supporters.

While the population in northwestern CAR, including the rebels, does not appear to have direct ties to Sudan, the population in northeastern CAR has ethnic and familial links to the Sudanese population residing across the border.

CAR rebels appear to be linked to their Chadian counterparts. It is unclear whether the Sudanese government is supplying any support to the rebels in northeastern CAR; however, there are reports that Chadian rebels have, and could in the future, traverse northern CAR to attack N'djamena from bases in Sudan.

Most of CAR's territory is ungoverned space, which makes it both extremely unstable and incredibly attractive to rebel groups looking for either refuge or unobserved transit points.

As in Sudan, communal tensions have grown in Chad in recent years due to conflict over land and natural resources, particularly water, in an area of environmental extremes. This rise in communal tensions, coupled with a security vacuum -- due to the Chadian military's engagement with the rebels -- has led to ethnic-based militias, similar to the Sudanese Janjaweed, engaging in violence to settle scores, loot villages, and raid cattle and livestock.

In response, other ethnic groups have formed self-defense militias with the assistance of the Chadian military. Finally, there are also reports that Sudanese Janjaweed have crossed into Chad to attack Chadian Africans. While these Janjaweed are partially responsible for some of the recent attacks, most have been conducted by Chadian Arabs. There are few reports of inter-ethnic violence in CAR.

THE HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGE

This violence has negatively impacted civilians, who are subject to attack by rebel groups, government forces, and ethnic militias. The United Nations (UN) estimates that there are 230,000 Sudanese refugees and up to 140,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in eastern Chad, many of whom have suffered secondary displacement and whose numbers have doubled in the last five months.

The UN also estimates that 290,000 Central Africans are displaced, of whom 212,000 are IDPs, 50,000 are refugees in southern Chad, 25,000 are refugees in Cameroon, and 3,000 are refugees, who have fled to Sudan.

Attacks against international workers and facilities in Chad led to UN and international non-governmental organization (NGO) staffing reductions of about 50 percent. At present staffing levels, the humanitarian community in Chad simply cannot accommodate new IDP populations or new refugee inflows from Darfur.

THE USG RESPONSE

The United States has taken a holistic approach to addressing stability and security in Chad and CAR, an approach that accounts for regional dynamics, as well as domestic political and economic realities. I visited Chad and CAR in early April to address our various concerns, and Deputy Secretary Negroponte visited Sudan, Chad, and Libya in April expressly to address regional dimensions of the conflict.

Our policy in Darfur has three prongs: humanitarian response, peaceful resolution of the conflict, and the implementation of a robust peacekeeping force. The U.S. continues to be the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance in Sudan, but our relief efforts have been hampered by insecurity in the region. We have called on all actors in Darfur – the government, the Arab militias, the rebel signatories and the non-signatories to cease all interference with aid delivery.

The Darfur Peace Agreement, or DPA, is the second prong. We continue to call on the government to implement key portions of the agreement now. We also have called on the non-signatories to join the agreement.

Lastly, there is peacekeeping. In an April 18th speech at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, President Bush laid out a series of steps, including sanctions, the United States is prepared to take if President Bashir does not allow for the immediate deployment of UN/AU peacekeepers, end his support for the Janjaweed militias, and permit unimpeded humanitarian aid to enter Darfur.

As in Darfur, our policy in Chad and CAR is focused on the three prongs of: humanitarian assistance, security, and peaceful resolution of internal conflicts. The United States is the largest bilateral provider of humanitarian assistance in both Chad and CAR, focusing on both refugees and internally displaced persons.

We have publicly and privately supported a robust United Nations peacekeeping operation in Chad and CAR that would focus on both protecting civilians and deterring cross-border attacks. While the mission would not have an express mandate to secure the Chad-Sudan and CAR-Sudan borders, we believe that its mere presence and execution of its civilian protection and monitoring mission would lead to a noticeable reduction in violence. In his recent meetings with Chadian President Deby in N'djamena, Deputy Secretary Negroponte underscored the importance of such a mission.

We are committed to generating the most robust force possible for the operation, and we have already approached several governments with requests for troop contributions.

We are also working to address domestic factors contributing to the instability in both Chad and CAR. We recognize that poor governance is the root of Chad's instability, and in our communications with Chadian officials, we have emphasized the importance of: democratic reform, dialogue, and transparent governance.

In Chad, this message has been delivered consistently at every level, from Secretary Rice to President Deby and via our working-level contacts. We have coordinated with our European Union, French, and UN colleagues on programs intended to reform the electoral process.

The U.S. has repeatedly condemned efforts by Chadian rebels to take power by force, and we have repeatedly urged the Chadian government to block support for Sudanese rebel groups that have not signed onto the Darfur Peace Agreement.

As in Chad, we engage regularly with CAR government officials about the need for democratic reform and good governance. I personally delivered this message to President Bozize during a visit to Bangui at the end of March.

The United States has also supported extending the mandates of the UN Peace-building Office inside the Central African Republic, known as BONUCA, and the Multinational Force of the Central African Monetary and Economic Community, or FOMUC, in order to promote stability in CAR. FOMUC troops have actively engaged rebel groups in their pursuit of peace in CAR, and we are optimistic that the combined impact of these efforts will yield positive results in the years ahead.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

We have seen efforts by several international actors to foster peace and security in the region. We welcome these efforts, but urge that all diplomatic activities should be coordinated with the AU and UN, who have taken the lead. The need for coordination with the AU and UN was underscored at the April 28-29 conference on the political process for Darfur in Tripoli, at which the U.S. was represented by Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios. The Saudi king mediated a meeting between Bashir and Deby today.

We also understand that there was a meeting today between the Sudanese and Chadian military chiefs and mediated by the Libyans and Eritreans, to discuss how to defuse tension and deploy forces on the Chad-Sudan border. Though we do not have full details of the results, this appears to be a positive step.

However, we remain convinced that the only way to effectively protect the camps and to stem further destabilization in the absence of fully-implemented and inclusive peace agreements on both sides of the border is to deploy two separate peacekeeping operations to the region, one in Chad and CAR and the other in Darfur.

Any policy in the region needs to consider seriously the role of Libya. Libya, which has its own complex relationship with both Chad and Sudan, appears to be committed to promoting stability and has sponsored numerous summits intended to compel Chad and Sudan to publicly reaffirm their commitments to peace.

Libya was also instrumental in brokering peace agreements with the Chadian government and the United Forces for Change (FUC) rebel group, as well as agreements between the Central African government and two of its rebel groups.

We're often asked about the roles that two key players, France and China, play in the region. France, as the former colonial power in both Chad and CAR, wields great influence and has military forces stationed in both countries. While French troops in Chad provide logistical support to the Chadian government, they do not directly

engage in fighting with rebel groups.

This is not the case in CAR, where French troops have directly engaged rebels in the northeast. It is said that much of France's engagement in Africa is based on President Chirac's personal relationships with several African leaders, including President Deby. Given the current post-election environment, we cannot predict how France's relationship with Chad and CAR will evolve. We think that this uncertainty affects actions in both Bangui and N'djamena.

We believe that China enjoys considerable leverage in Sudan, particularly due to its substantial economic investment, and we expect China to be part of the solution to the regional problems. The Chinese have been largely supportive of our efforts to resolve the Darfur situation through peaceful means and have been publicly encouraging Khartoum to allow the AU/UN hybrid force as agreed to in Addis.

China's Ambassador to the UN Wang Guangya played a vital and constructive role in helping to broker the November 2006 Addis agreement that committed Sudan to a three-phase operation leading to a hybrid force under UN command.

During his recent visit to Khartoum, Chinese President Hu Jintao encouraged Sudanese President Bashir to show flexibility and allow the AU/UN hybrid force to be deployed. While we welcome and encourage China's efforts to apply diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sudan, we look to Beijing to join with the international community in applying more forceful measures, should Khartoum remain intransigent.

China has long had a positive relationship with CAR and re-established diplomatic relations with Chad. While investment in CAR is limited compared to its investment in Sudan, Chinese investment is trending upward. China's relationship August 2006. While China's relationship with Chad is nascent, and it is too early to make predictions, we hope that China's economic interests and need for natural resources will cause China to take greater initiative to further regional peace.

Again, the Darfur conflict has important regional and international dimensions that must be addressed in the pursuit of peace. The United States Government is addressing these elements, as part of a comprehensive solution to the conflicts and humanitarian crises in Sudan and in neighboring countries.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

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