The "Resource Curse": Oil Multinationals to Cut the Knot?

BRUCE M. EVERETT

REVIEW OF JILL SHANKLEMAN
Oil, Profits, and Peace: Does Business Have a Role in Peacemaking?
(Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007)
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The "resource curse" is the Gordian Knot of development studies—complex, frustrating, and intractable. Oil taunts some of the world's poorest people with the promise of a better life, but brings instead oppression, corruption, and dislocation. Western governments, development agencies, multilateral lending institutions, and Western NGOs have all tried unsuccessfully to untie this knot. Do multinational oil companies wield the sword that can cut the knot with a single blow?

Jill Shankleman, author of *Oil, Profits, and Peace*, seems to think so. Shankleman has considerable experience as a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace and as a corporate social responsibility consultant. This book, with its three concise case studies covering Azerbaijan, Angola,

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and Sudan, is a must for anyone interested in economic development in oil-producing countries. The case studies are factual, thoughtful, and devoid of the hyperbole and overstatement that plagues so much writing on this subject. At the end of the day, however, the book's conclusions are disappointing. The analysis starts on solid ground but ends up lost in clouds of vague generalities and truisms.

First, a few areas of agreement. The "resource curse" is real. Countries lacking democratic institutions have a hard time with huge inflows of funds. Strong-arm leaders, with ideals closer to Al Capone's than to Thomas Jefferson's, steal some and use the rest to consolidate power through force and by showering largesse on supporters. Oil wealth allows some countries to pursue military action outside their borders, increasing levels of violence on a regional or even global scale. Finally, multinational corporations have an interest in stability and good governance in developing countries. They also have legal and ethical responsibilities in developing countries. Legal responsibilities are by definition explicit. American corporations may not pay bribes or collude, and they must pay taxes, obtain required export licenses, comply with U.S. sanctions, and meet a host of other legal obligations. But what exactly are the ethical obligations of multinational corporations, and what results should we realistically expect?

Shankleman's analysis becomes problematic when she proposes four recommendations for corporate action. All sound good, but none is actionable for an oil company.

The first is to "facilitate effective revenue management." Easier said than done. Oil revenues can indeed finance conflicts, but when ExxonMobil seeks the right to explore for oil, what exactly should it do? The company could, for example, make a reasoned argument to the host government that revenue transparency would reduce public criticism of oil operations, both locally and in the West, and thus make oil operations easier to conduct. Unfortunately, the most corrupt governments tend to be utterly indifferent to this type of argument. What then? Do we want ExxonMobil to threaten to walk away unless its revenue transparency demands are met? Few, if any, governments tolerate such behavior from foreigners, and the result is likely to be ExxonMobil's elimination from the list of acceptable companies. If every oil company in the world refused to do business with conflict-prone regimes, government leaders might respond. In reality, the withdrawal of private Western oil companies is likely to result in their replacement by state oil companies from China, Malaysia, or the Middle East that have no such scruples.

Shankleman's second recommendation is to "contribute to conflict

prevention by not creating grievances." Agreed, but investors should not stand by while local people are abused by military and police authorities, have their land confiscated, or are forcibly resettled. Investors should take the time and make the effort to consult with local people and NGOs and pay fair compensation for land and other disruptions. Most Western oil companies already do this. ExxonMobil's consultations in Chad and Cameroon were lengthy and detailed. But even the most extensive and conscientious consultation will not *eliminate* grievances. Economic growth is inherently a process of dislocation with winners and losers. The replacement of traditional ways of life with twenty-first century opportunities will be an enormous boon to some people and leave others miserably behind.

Moreover, oil revenues generally end up in the central government's coffers, leaving local people in oil-producing areas unhappy. Unless 100 percent of the revenue stays with the locals, however, there will always be grievances or, even worse, secessionist movements. In Cabinda, for example, the issue has always been independence, not an appropriate sharing of revenue with the central Angolan government. Even many Scots are unhappy with the flow of North Sea oil and gas revenue to London rather than Edinburgh. Oil companies cannot fix this problem. If ExxonMobil's representatives in Washington approached Congressional leaders with a proposal to channel more federal Gulf of Mexico oil royalties to the state of Louisiana for Katrina relief, they would probably be thrown out on their ears, and rightly so.

The presence of a cash-rich multinational in a poor area will always generate grievances. Local people are entitled to fair compensation for their property, but what is "fair?" Should an oil company pay *all* claims made against it? In the U.S., people have a tendency to slip and fall disproportionately on the front steps of wealthy people's houses. The oil company has no choice but to try to determine which claims are valid and which are not. Those whose claims are rejected will remain disaffected, often enlisting support from local organizations, tribal groups, and Western NGOs that are sometimes eager to take up humanitarian causes of dubious merit. We should not see a series of vocal grievances as a *prima facie* case of oil company wrongdoing.

The third recommendation is to create employment. Oil activities are capital intensive, and most permanent jobs are highly skilled. Project construction often creates short-term demand for unskilled labor, which disappears when the project begins operation. Offshore petroleum activities, like those in Angola, tend to be carried out by specialized workers living in expatriate enclaves with little local interaction. Shankleman notes

that at the end of its civil war, Angola had 113,000 demobilized soldiers and four million displaced people. The aftermath of war is heartbreaking, but what exactly can an oil company do? The Angolan oil industry does not employ many people, and demobilized soldiers and refugees may not have many useful skills. Several oil companies have instituted programs in countries like Angola that will help—to a degree. Using local contractors where possible, facilitating small-business start-ups to provide supplies and services, setting up training programs, and offering scholarships can create local good will and reduce criticism from Western NGOs, but can oil companies really change the fundamental calculus of economic development?

The book's final recommendation suggests that they can. Shankleman wants oil companies to start out with a "vision of oil and gas development as a social development project." Really? The author argues that this approach will somehow guarantee the investor a secure operating environment. Corporations are commercial entities. It's not at all clear that we even want them to have social and political "visions." This concept seems to be a throwback to the old American company towns where workers lived in company housing, shopped in company stores, and sent their children to company schools. Most people don't like this paternalistic control over their lives by unelected, unaccountable, and particularly *foreign* organizations.

If, as Shankleman suggests, oil companies could recoup the high cost of massive philanthropic programs through the benefits of a more tranquil social and political environment, their managements would make those calculations and act accordingly. Unfortunately, the leverage oil companies have in developing countries is way too small to expect such grandiose results. Oil prices and exchange rates also have a major and immediate impact on company earnings, but no single company can set these parameters in the highly competitive international oil market. Companies tend to spend their money and effort on things they can control, such as cost and efficiency. Like oil prices and exchange rates, the political landscape is an important but uncontrollable variable.

Furthermore, it is most unlikely that "transformative visions" will, or even should, be welcome. What would happen, for example, if BP, a European company, were to undertake a lobbying campaign against the death penalty in the U.S.? Many Europeans (and some Americans) would laud such "progressive" efforts, but many more Americans would probably be appalled at such inappropriate interference in domestic politics. Campaign contributions by foreigners are illegal in the U.S.—and for good reason.

The international political and legal system, for all its flaws, is still based on the nation-state and the essential concept of sovereignty. The United States and international organizations like the United Nations occasionally take steps to limit the sovereignty of rogue states through sanctions and even military actions. American corporations should follow international sanctions law and the foreign policy directives of the American government in dealing with rogue states. Companies should, and do, refrain from doing business in countries where conditions are so bad that the costs of doing business outweigh the benefits. However, judgments regarding which states are rogue states and which should be subject to sanctions until their behavior improves are inherently political decisions and must remain the province of governments, not companies.

On balance, *Oil, Profits, and Peace* tends to reinforce the myth that oil companies could, if they wished, cut the Gordian Knot of the "resource curse," if only they had the resolve to do so. If we can pressure them enough through shareholder resolutions, demands for action, boycotts, "name and shame" campaigns, and other tactics, so the argument goes, they will ultimately relent and do what's right. If Western governments, the UN, the World Bank, human rights NGOs, and the media can't pressure these governments into action, however, why should we expect that an oil company can?

In reality, the role of oil companies in economic development has to be much more modest. Operating in a safe and environmentally responsible way, compensating their employees fairly and giving them safe working environments, resisting the temptations of corruption, and behaving as good corporate citizens are the only levers these companies have—and they are positive ones. On balance, multinational companies play a positive role in economic development by adding economic value and serving as a role model for efficient, honest, and responsible operation. Companies that fail in this area should be subject to public criticism. But if we demand more than multinational corporations can actually deliver, the result is likely to be a retreat of Western investment from where it is most needed, and the replacement of Western corporations by entities not only much less interested in human rights, but much less susceptible to Western influence. ■

Suicidal Ambitions: Human Bombs and the War in Iraq

MATAN CHOREV

REVIEW OF MOHAMMED M. HAFEZ

Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom

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Since 2003, according to the United States Library of Congress, over 800 books on the Iraq war have been published in the U.S. alone, each of which aspires to provide some explanation for the seemingly inexplicable patterns of violence in Iraq. Any contribution to this mountain of printed knowledge faces the increasingly ambitious task of adding a semblance of clarity to the exceedingly complex conflagration that is Iraq's Hobbesian reality.

In *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*, Mohammed M. Hafez applies his earlier research on Palestinian suicide bombers and the causes of rebellion in the Islamic world to analyze the patterns of suicide attacks in Iraq. His goal is twofold. First, Hafez assesses whether existing theories on suicide terrorism offer an analytic lens capable of explaining the phenomenon in Iraq. Second, he endeavors to explain the nature and goals of the insurgency, what it portends for the future of Iraq and the United States' objectives, and its global repercussions.

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In the book, Hafez examines conflict data from March 22, 2003, to August 18, 2006. Naturally, this timeframe disappoints. It predates important moments in the conflict, including the implementation of the latest effort at "victory," the Baghdad Security Plan (i.e., "the surge") announced in January 2007. Nonetheless, the study's findings remain relevant in spite of the author's rightfully modest insistence that they be viewed as "preliminary and subject to further research."

During the period in question, approximately 514 suicide attacks took place—a figure greater than the number of suicide attacks reported in all other conflicts combined. Hafez argues that although they constitute a small proportion of insurgent activity in Iraq, "suicide attacks have a disproportionate impact on political developments in Iraq because of their targets, lethality, and psychological potency."

To be sure, the book is an invaluable resource for understanding who exactly is volunteering to fight and die in Iraq and why they are willing to do so. The author's analysis makes important advances to existing theories that try to explain the existence, spread, and use of suicide bombings. Overall, however, the reader is left unconvinced as to whether the analytic prism of suicide terrorism advances, rather than distracts from, efforts to analyze the Iraqi conflict.

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Hafez demonstrates that suicide terrorism in the Iraqi insurgency differs in important respects from its use in other conflicts. First, most of the suicide bombers are foreigners. Of the 102 known suicide bombers in Iraq listed by Hafez, 44 came from Saudi Arabia, by far the leading exporter of human bombs to Iraq. Second, suicide attacks primarily target fellow Iraqis, typically Shi'a civilians and members of Iraq's security services, and thus have been a major precipitating factor in Iraq's civil war. Finally, rather than nationalists fighting to expel occupying forces (the argument evinced most persuasively by University of Chicago's Robert Pape in *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*), the plurality of Iraq's suicide bombers are affiliated with a "Jihadi Salafist" movement championed by al-Qaeda and its associated movements mobilized by informal networks. The book aptly demonstrates that the existing theories are insufficient in explaining the Iraqi case.

Hafez expounds upon social movement theory to offer a persuasive multi-causal explanation to those who wonder why so many volunteer to

fight and die in Iraq. His narrative includes the well-documented grievances of the insurgents, as well as the abysmal administration of the post-war political and security environment. Its main contribution, however, is its prescient analysis of the essential role of transnational networks that linked Arab, as well as European, Muslim jihadi aspirants with the necessary persons and know-how to make it to Iraq to fulfill their dreams of martyrdom.

It is here that Hafez's regional expertise and ability to sift through the Arabic press, as well as the bottomless "jihadosphere," helps color the book with distinctive analysis and insight. Readers will learn about how the ideology of martyrdom is framed and promoted, and how horrific violence—even against fellow Muslims—is justified. It reveals the significant fissures that exist within the Islamic world. It is this struggle that will likely determine the progress of conflict in the region. It is also a confrontation on which the United States has minimal direct influence.

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Hafez reserves the most intriguing analysis for the end of his book. He methodically demonstrates that the conditions which gave rise to the "second generation of jihadists"—those that succeeded the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan and brought down the towers in New York—are replicating in Iraq and will give birth (if they haven't already) to a third generation of global jihadists with access to ever-deadlier weapons, more formidable transnational networks, and a new safe haven in Iraq. This finding is widely shared but has rarely received a sophisticated and well-substantiated treatment.

But do the figures about suicide terrorism in Iraq reveal anything more broadly about the complex warfare in Iraq? Hafez believes so. He attributes the majority of suicide attacks to "Jihadi Salafists" and "ideological Ba'athists" who are committed to a system collapse strategy—"the complete dismantlement of public order, governing political and economic institutions, and state security forces." The ensuing failed state will allow global jihadists associated with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to establish "a new safe haven to replace the one al-Qaeda lost after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001."

The major Sunni insurgency in Iraq, however, is led by Islamic nationalists committed to a "system reintegration" strategy. Groups like the Islamic Army in Iraq share with AQI the goal of ousting the American occupiers, but they do not seek to dismantle the Iraqi government. Their

goal, rather, is to reverse their marginalization in the postwar Shi'a Arab- and Kurdish-dominated political arrangement and to guard against regional federalism.

This taxonomy is well within the consensus judgment of the analytic community. It is remarkable only because it counters the Bush administration's imagined, if not fabricated, view of reality. In an effort to link the insurgency in Iraq with Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda, President George W. Bush consistently blames AQI for carnage in Iraq. As noted by Andrew Tilghman's provocative "The Myth of AQI" in the October 2007 issue of *Washington Monthly*, the President mentioned al-Qaeda 95 times in a single speech last July. The strategy works. *The New York Times* Public Editor Clark Hoyt, in a July 8, 2007, article, censured his newspaper for wholesale adoption of the administration's rhetoric that, through its uncritical journalistic practices, gave credibility to what Anthony Cordesman has understatedly called the "almost absurd" notion that AQI is a central element of the insurgency.

Hafez makes the case that suicide bombers have "dragged Iraq into civil war." This analysis exaggerates the degree to which this tactic is a precipitating factor in Iraq's civil war. Sectarian conflict is the inevitable outcome of the Bush administration's bungling war effort to superimpose itself on the most inauspicious of preconditions. The Shi'a insurgency, which unfortunately is largely untreated by Hafez (if only because of the dearth of Shi'a suicide bombers), and parasitic local militias struggling for power and spoils likely play a greater role in fanning the flames of sectarianism in Iraq. As the August 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) notes, "Iraqi society's growing polarization, the persistent weakness of security forces and the state in general, and all sides' ready recourse to violence are collectively driving an increase in communal and insurgent violence and political extremism." In Iraq, human bombs are but one ingredient in a most unsavory stew of violence.

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There is little doubt in Hafez's finding that the Iraq war has served as a "field of dreams for jihadists seeking training, expertise, and experience in the ways and means of terrorism and guerilla warfare." The Iraq war never had a thing to do with the war on terror, except, of course, that it went a long way in setting back its objectives. The new generation of terrorists and the millions of hearts and minds lost as a cause of this war will undoubtedly prove to be one of the most tragic of its innumerable negative consequences.

Decreased U.S. influence in the region will necessitate a return to the Cold War primacy of stability approach and thus sustain the very conditions that allow radical Islamic groups to mobilize support. Hafez correctly argues that the Iraqi petri dish is not likely to offer Jihadi Salafis a campground as favorable as the one they enjoyed in Taliban Afghanistan. For one, this chafes against the country's secular tradition. Second, Iraq's Shi'a majority is hardly a prospective bedfellow for Sunni Salafist ideology.

But how does one contend with the fallout of U.S. failure in Iraq? On this point, the author is unsatisfactorily mum. Were one to follow Hafez's analysis to its natural conclusion, it would reveal two important observations. The first is that continued U.S. occupation will slow, not accelerate, AQI's demise. This debunks the Bush administration's last great reason for staying the course in Iraq. The second is that al-Qaeda has been rescued from extinction after the war in Afghanistan and has now, as the July 2007 NIE assessed, restored the "key capabilities it would need to launch an attack on U.S. soil." To refocus the fight against al-Qaeda will require quickly extracting ourselves from the Iraq morass. Hafez's valuable study rings the alarm bells on the difficult challenges just over the horizon. We can only hope someone is listening. ■

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Complicating Darfur

DAVID LANZ

REVIEW OF ALEX DE WAAL, ED.
War in Darfur and the Search for Peace
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The conflict in Darfur, as commonly reported by North American journalists and activists, has a familiar narrative. Darfur, in these accounts, is a place where history is of little importance in understanding the present, where an evil Arab government has induced Arab tribal militia to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent black African victims and displace millions more. The sole heroes in the tragedy are Western aid workers and activists who courageously save lives and speak out against the atrocities. Through these voices, Darfur is portrayed as a place where the forces of evil will continue to wreak havoc on a population of suffering victims without any agency until Western military forces intervene to save them.

War in Darfur and the Search for Peace, edited by Alex de Waal, fundamentally contradicts the simplicity of this typical mainstream account; indeed, it represents a welcome attempt to "complicate" the situation in Darfur. De Waal, an anthropologist currently based at Harvard's Global Equity Initiative, is undoubtedly one of the foremost Sudan experts, having worked in (and on) the region for more than 20 years. *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* features contributions from an impressive group of scholars from Sudan and the West. The result is a sophisticated and highly relevant collection of essays that is likely to become one of the most important reference guides on the conflict. The book addresses three main themes: first, the

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causes of the war; second, the international efforts to resolve the conflict; and third, how the conflict in Darfur has been described and perceived in the United States.

UNDERSTANDING DARFUR

The Darfur conflict is best understood as a "witch's brew," a convergence of local, national, regional, and international factors that erupted into massive violence in 2003.[1] Nationally, the roots of the conflict lie—similar to the long-lasting North-South war—in the central elite's greed, the concentration of power and resources in Khartoum, and the systematic exploitation of the country's peripheral areas. In terms of the conflict's causes, de Waal links the center-periphery dimension with another persistent feature of Sudanese politics: "the inability of any one elite faction to establish unchallenged political dominance over the state."[2] Thus, Sudan is a "turbulent state" affected by "chronic political instability," making it impossible for its rulers to realize a long-term vision of democratic governance. Instead, as de Waal points out, they "have become skilled at the default option of short-term crisis management," including the manipulation of provincial elites and the arming of tribal militias.

The piece "Native Administration and Local Governance in Darfur: Past and Future," by Musa A. Abdul-Jalil, Adam Azzain Mohammed, and Ahmed A. Yousef, focuses on politics at the local level. The authors dissect the role of the native administration, a local governance system based on tribes that British colonial masters adopted from the pre-colonial Fur Sultanate and adapted for their "indirect rule" of Darfur. Post-independence governments have tried to undermine the authority of traditional tribal leaders and to instrumentalize them in order to gain control of Darfur. These policies have, according to the authors, "resulted in the politicization of the native administration and the increasing polarization between tribal groups in Darfur."

Land is also relevant in this context, as Jérôme Tubiana, in "Darfur: A Conflict for Land?," draws attention to the fact that Darfur's traditional land tenure system, the *hakura,* excludes certain camel-herding Arab tribes of northern Darfur. Desertification, population growth, and asset depletion since the 1980s have fostered growing competition for land in Darfur and have threatened the existence of landless tribes. It is not surprising, Tubiana remarks, that the infamous *Janjaweed* militias consist primarily of young men from exactly these tribes.

Roland Marchal, in "The Unseen Regional Implications of the Crisis in Darfur," contributes an interesting perspective on the regional dimen-

sion of the Darfur crisis. Given its central location, Darfur has become the terrain of regional power struggles, which contributed to upsetting a delicate balance between local tribes. In the 1980s, Libyan leader Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi sought to topple then-Chadian leader Hissène Habré and used Darfur as a springboard for his military adventure. Marchal notes that, in this context, "Arab tribes benefited from generous military supplies, which helped militarize land disputes and social contradictions in Darfur." Eventually Habré was brought down and, with the support of Tripoli and Khartoum, Idriss Déby, a member of the Zaghawa tribe from the border region between Darfur and eastern Chad, installed himself in N'Djamena in 1990. The Darfur conflict broke out 13 years later, and Déby remained neutral so as not to jeopardize his alliance with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who had helped bring him to power. When Khartoum began sponsoring rebel groups in eastern Chad, Déby himself was put under pressure by members of his own Zaghawa clan. In this context, he desperately needed military support from the Darfur rebel movements, many of whose leaders are also Zaghawa. Consequently, the Chadian government began to provide logistical and military support to the rebels in 2005, protracting the conflict and turning Darfur into the stage for a regional proxy war.

It is no coincidence that Darfur's current rebellion erupted when the North-South peace process was in its final stages. The fruit of this process, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), does not include specific provisions for Darfur. In his piece, "The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Darfur," Adam Azzain Mohammed points out that proponents argue for the CPA being "a charter for the transformation of governance in Sudan," which benefits all the peripheries, including Darfur. However, as Mohammed argues, "the CPA cannot solve all of Darfur's problems," in particular with respect to power-sharing. Cognizant of the inadequacies of the North-South peace process, the Darfur rebels, following the example of the southern insurgents, the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M), decided to stage a rebellion in order to obtain compromises from the government at the negotiating table at a later stage. Also, the international community was heavily involved in the CPA negotiations and wanted to avoid "rocking the boat" by criticizing the Sudanese government for what was happening in Darfur.[3]

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NEGOTIATING DARFUR

On May 5, 2006, the Sudanese government and the Minni Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in Abuja, Nigeria. A few months later, it was clear that the DPA was a complete failure; not only was the agreement never implemented, it actually made matters worse. In their piece, "Darfur After Abuja: A View from the Ground," Abdul-Jabbar Fadul and Victor Tanner confirm that violence actually increased after the DPA was signed, and that signatory and non-signatory rebel groups fought each other instead of uniting against the government. Significantly, the authors note, the DPA also compromised the neutrality of the African Union (AU) peacekeepers, who were obliged to defend a deeply unpopular agreement that most rebels vehemently resisted. As a result, attacks on peacekeepers multiplied.

Much of the second part of *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* attempts to explain why the DPA failed so miserably. The shortcomings of the mediation and negotiation process, particularly in the final days leading up to the signing of the DPA, are the central focus of the book's contributors, all of whom, including de Waal, were members of the AU mediation team. Peace talks began in Abuja in July 2004, with little subsequent progress made until April 2006, when the international community—in particular the United States—lost patience and resolved to put an end to the negotiations by using "deadline diplomacy." One week later, just short of the deadline, the AU mediation team drafted a compromise proposal. International heavyweights, including former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, then descended upon Abuja to close the deal. With the government's agreement to the AU mediation team proposal largely assured, Zoellick and Obasanjo turned their efforts to the rebel factions, using both threats and inducements to broker consent. Ultimately, Minawi signed, but both his SPLM/A rival, Abdel Wahid Mohamed al-Nur, and the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Khalil Ibrahim, refused to do so. In the weeks after the signature of the DPA, the AU continued to mediate between the Sudanese government and al-Nur, and apparently they came "desperately close to an agreement, which . . . would have tipped Darfur towards peace."[4] The authors of *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* univocally blame the failure of the Abuja negotiations on a rushed international community that destroyed the process by imposing artificial deadlines. In "The Making and Unmaking of the DPA," Laurie Nathan argues that the precipitous conclusion of the DPA hampered the flexibility of the mediators, contributed to a lack of direct

negotiations between the parties, made it impossible to involve stakeholders from Darfurian society and most importantly "precluded . . . the parties' ownership of the DPA."

Explaining the failure of the DPA, the contributing authors of *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* place a surprisingly large emphasis on the negotiation process rather than the broader political context. Elsewhere, de Waal enumerates four conditions for successful peacemaking in Sudan: "solidification of central decision making . . ., cohesive leadership of the provincial insurgency, containment or resolution of conflicts in the neighboring states, and a cohesive international approach."[5] As de Waal pointed out himself,[6] none of these conditions were met during the Abuja negotiations. One can argue, therefore, that given the political context, it was never realistic for the parties to achieve an effective and durable peace agreement for Darfur—even if al-Nur had signed the DPA and the final mediation had been less rushed and less manipulative.

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The Abuja talks kept the parties engaged in a peace process and may have selectively contributed to de-escalating the conflict; however, the authors demonstrate that the DPA had an unmistakably negative impact on the situation in Darfur. It is not clear whether the Abuja negotiations have done more harm than good, and thus it is questionable whether peace talks should even have taken place under the prevailing conditions. Answering this extremely difficult political and moral question would be presumptuous. However, it is unfortunate that the book does not provide a more critical perspective on the limits of peacemaking as a conflict resolution tool and that it fails to assess the feasibility of alternative approaches.

NARRATING DARFUR

The third part of the book describes the media coverage of the Darfur conflict in the United States. In her essay "Narrating Darfur: Darfur in the U.S. Press, March–September 2004," Deborah Murphy examines more than 80 editorials and Op/Eds on Darfur. Most pieces perpetuated a "narrative, which assigned polarized Arab and African identities to the perpetrators and victims, usually labeled it genocide, and assumed the government control-

led the violence." In terms of remedies, most writers urged outside military intervention, often invoking the shame of international inaction during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Murphy finds that "most of the articles reviewed were not really about Darfur itself." Rather, she says, "Darfur was the latest forum for the still-unresolved debate over what role the U.S. will play in the world when its values are in jeopardy but its interests are not at stake."

Press reports were instrumental in the emergence of an influential Darfur advocacy movement in the U.S.—arguably the largest of its kind since anti-apartheid in the 1980s. There is no doubt that advocates have played a positive role, but at present they are stuck in the simplistic narrative they created to grab the world's attention. "For them, Darfur is not a place with a complex history; it's a moral high ground," notes Julie Flint, an independent journalist and co-author (with de Waal) of *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War.*[7] Projecting remedies based on simplistic assessments and flawed analogies onto a complex reality can be dangerous. The full-fledged war and widespread campaigns of destruction of 2003–2004 are over, and the humanitarian situation has become relatively stable. Therefore, de Waal argues, Darfur needs a viable political process, not foreign military intervention. In the concluding chapter, "Darfur's Elusive Peace," he complains that advocates' insistence on military solutions and unrealistic demands for a robust UN peacekeeping mission undermined peacemaking efforts and accounted for U.S. impatience with the Abuja negotiations.[8]

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The criticism could have been carried further and the perverse effects of Darfur advocacy campaigns more clearly identified. Elsewhere, de Waal has highlighted how dangerous it is to attribute collective victim and perpetrator labels to apparently distinct ethnic groups.[9] Quite obviously, this contributes to the polarization of already antagonistic identities. It also fosters neglect of reverse categories; the international community tends to brush aside crimes committed by "African" rebel movements and ignore the voices of moderate Arabs, who are hardly ever heard despite the crucial role that their empowerment plays in the peace process. Another problem relates to advocates' insistence on labelling the conflict in Darfur as genocide, as well as their tendency to exaggerate the estimated number of people killed.[10] Indeed, this transforms concern for Darfur into an ineffective dis-

cussion about legal categories and numbers. Is it genocide or "only" crimes against humanity? Did 200,000 or 400,000 people die? Such debates carry a high opportunity cost in terms of energy, resources, and time. Resources spent arguing could be put to better use to try to improve the situation. *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* provides a welcome antithesis to the simplistic nature of the current Darfur debate, which would have been even more useful had it formulated an explicit and comprehensive critique of the Darfur advocacy movement.

David Kennedy, a Fletcher School alumnus and recently appointed Vice President for International Affairs at Brown University, cautions us that "the darker sides can swamp the benefits of humanitarian work, and well-intentioned people can find themselves unwittingly entrenching the very things they have sought voice to denounce."[11] The Darfur advocacy movement provides a case in point in this regard. Therefore, it is time for advocates to assess how far they have come and settle upon a new strategy for the future, one that will make a constructive contribution to a lasting resolution of the conflict in Darfur. Reading Alex de Waal's new book on Darfur would be a good first step. ■

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ENDNOTES

1 Helen Young et al., *Darfur: Livelihoods under Siege* (Medford, MA: Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, June 2005), 12-39.
2 Alex de Waal, "Sudan: The Turbulent State," in de Waal, *War in Darfur,* 4.
3 Young et al., 24.
4 Alex de Waal, "Darfur Peace Agreement: So Near, So Far," in *openDemocracy,* September 28, 2006, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-africa_democracy/darfur_talks_3950.jsp> (accessed November 4, 2007).
5 Alex de Waal, *Sudan: International Dimensions to the State and its Crisis* (London: LSE Crisis States Research Centre, Occasional Paper No. 3, April 2007), 15.
6 Ibid., 18-19.
7 Julie Flint, "Darfur, Saving Itself," *The Washington Post,* June 3, 2007, B2.
8 See also Alex de Waal, "Darfur and the Failure of the Responsibility to Protect," *International Affairs* 83 (6) (2007): 1039-1054.
9 "Dueling Over Darfur" in *Newsweek,* November 8, 2007, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/69004> (accessed December 3, 2007). See also Alex de Waal, "Reflections on the Difficulties of Defining Darfur's Crisis as Genocide," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 20 (Spring 2007): 25-33.
10 Sam Dealey, "An Atrocity That Needs No Exaggeration," *The New York Times,* August 12, 2007, 10.
11 David Kennedy, *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), xiii-xiv.