CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS TO THE 2003 DARFUR CONFLICT IN SUDAN AND AFRICAN UNION (AU) INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

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Abstract

There is no gainsaying the obvious that certain existential factors contributed immensely to the conflict in Darfur region of Sudan. This paper therefore is designed to interrogate into these factors with a view to establishing the extent they contributed to the escalation of the conflict. Using the theory of Relative Deprivation as a framework, the paper opines that structural inequality among the citizens and the different divides that make up the state of Sudan as well as the agitation of the perceived marginalized people of Darfur for inclusion in the political and economic gains of the country as the major causes of the conflict. The activities of the Sudanese government that used the janjaweed militias on the people instead reeling out policies for de-escalating the conflict was also a point of focus. The paper however commended the activities of the African Union especially her intervention that helped in de-escalating the conflict despite being hampered by poor funding and sophiscated military hardware. The paper however recommended for a more sincere political will on the part of the Sudanese to resolve the Darfur conflict and that the African Union should make more frantic effort aimed at providing its standby force with the necessary logistics to not only deal with the conflict in Darfur but in other troubled spot within the continent taking cognizance of the precarious nature of Africa.

Key words: Darfur Conflict, African Union, Intervention Strategies.

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Literatures on the current intractable conflict in Darfur region of Sudan, point to the fact that the conflict started in February, 2003, when the rebels in the area attacked government institutions and installations as a consequence of their perceived neglect in the hands of the government of Sudan. Be that as it may, there exist a lot of events that heralded the actual commencement of hostilities in Darfur region of Sudan.

Flint and De Waal (2005:91) have opined that events that led to the start of hostilities started in 2000:

> *Emerging from the mosque on a Friday in May 2000, the faithfuls were met by young men quietly distributing copies of a thick document, photocopied and stapled. In a tightly censored Khartoum, this was already surprising. But the contents of the Black Book - imbalance of power and wealth in Sudan, were more than surprising, they were revolutionary. This gave a detailed breakdown of where political and economic power in Sudan lay and documented how the state apparatus had been dominated ever since independence, by a small group from three tribes who live along the Nile, north of Khartoum – the Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyllin and Danagla. The book showed that all other regions in Sudan had been grossly marginalized. Not just the south, which had been fighting for a better deal – or failing that, for separation – for decades, but also Sudan's eastern and western regions.*

The Black Book spread like wild fire in Khartoum and other parts of Sudan and it was the work of a group that called itself 'the seekers of Truth and Justice'. Their meticulous statistics proved what everyone knew but never articulated that the vast majority of government positions in Khartoum, from cabinet ministers to their drivers and all the bureaucracy in-between, were held by members of three tribes which represented only 5.4 percent of Sudan's population. Demanding justice and equality, time and again, the black book showed that the northerners were overwhelmingly dominant in the Police and Military hierarchy, the judiciary, provincial administrations, banks and developmental schemes (Flint and De Waal, 2005:18).

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The damaging effect of the 'Black Book' was very obvious and it was a prelude to the Darfur hostilities against the government which started before February 2003. According to Prunier (2007:220)

> *The starting point of the conflict in Darfur region is typically said to be 26 February 2003, when a group calling itself the 'Darfur Liberation Front' (DLF) publicly claimed credit for an attack on Golo, the headquarters of Jebel Marra district. Even prior to this attack, however, a conflict had erupted in Darfur, as rebels had already attacked police stations, army outposts and military convoys, and the government had engaged massive air and land assault on the rebel stronghold in the Marrah mountains. The rebels' first military action was a successful attack on an army garrison on 25 February, 2002.*

Flint and De Waal (2005: 76-77) argue that "the beginning of the Darfur rebellion is better dated to 21 July, 2001". According to them, on this day, a group of Zaghawa and Fur met in Abu Gamra and swore oaths on the Qu'ran to work together to defend themselves against government-sponsored attacks on their villages. It is worthy to note that all the residents of Darfur are Muslim as well as the government leaders in Khartoum.

Theoretical Explication

The relevance of a framework in a research of this magnitude cannot be over-emphasized. This is in cognizance of the fact that theoretical framework is a dynamic explanatory device that links the problem of study with a relevant theory.

Thus realizing the presence of conflict in every part of the world, a lot of scholars have done very tremendous jobs in the postulation of theories that not only explain the causes and consequences of conflict but also on the very best way or methods through which such conflicts can be resolved.

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Such Theories developed by seasoned scholars include Eckstein's theory of Contingency and Inherency (1989): Quincy Wright's Concept of Individuals and Groups Inconsistencies (1951); Galtung's theory of Needs (1964) and Jabri, the Cognitive Rationality (1966) to mention but a few. These theories can appropriately be applied to the subject matter of conflict. However, for a better understanding and appreciation of the situation in Darfur, this paper will make use of the theory of Relative Deprivation.

Relative Deprivation is the experience of one being deprived of something to which one thinks he is entitled. Schaefer (2008.69) defines relative deprivation as "the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between expectations and present actualities".

To social scientists, especially political scientists and sociologists, relative deprivation is a potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading to extreme situations such as political violence in form of rioting, terrorism and civil wars or social deviance such as crime. (Merton, R 1938, Gurr, T 1950)

The central thesis of the theory of Relative Deprivation is that in every society or organization there are certain aims or goals which individuals or organizations want to attain; and that in certain circumstances these goals and expectations are not met or that attained goals are much lesser than expected goals. When this kind of development comes to the fore, these individuals and organizations have no other choice than visiting their venom on the governments or institutions that have contributed to the non realization of their goal expectation. This goes to show that when individuals or organizations are relatively deprived as a result of policies of government, such perceived deprivation will breed an atmosphere of anger that will lead to frustration which will invariably bring about aggression, a development which may lead to violent conflict.

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Scholars who have done tremendous work on this theory are Gurr (1970); Dollard (1939), Berkowitz (1962), Davies (1962), Feierabends (1969), Runciman (1966) and Anifowose (1982) among others. Their positions can be explained further.

For instance, Dollard (1939), Berkowitz (1962) and Yates (1962) agree that the most common explanation for violent behaviour stem from inability of individuals and groups to fulfil needs. They based their explanation on the psychological theory of motivation and behaviour which sees the human being as having the capacity to be aggressive but that this capability remains idle until stimulated by necessity or encouraged by success.

Lending credence to this position, Maclean (1978) and Lorenzo (1966) posit that "the human brain reacts violently when under stress and threat". Lorenzo explained further that:

It is possible for a person to experience conflict between what he is feeling and what he is thinking. This then determines whether such a person feels strongly about something or not and whether he acts on such feeling or decides to ignore the feeling. For this reason, when people are under stress, and under certain conditions, their reaction can conform or differ from what others expect. In essence, humans are naturally capable of being aggressive but do not display violent behaviour as an instinct. When violence occurs, there is the possibility that it is being manipulated by a combination of factors within and outside the individual's control.

Runciman (1966) notes that there are four preconditions of relative deprivation (of object X by person A)

- A does not have X

- A knows of other persons that have X

- A wants to have X

- A believes obtaining X is realistic

Runciman believes that relative deprivation is "a sense of deprivation and a comparison with the imagined situation of some persons or groups". He opines that relative deprivation provides the key to the complex and fluctuating relation between inequality and grievances. He further states that relative deprivation may vary in degree and intensity, where the magnitude of deprivation is that which exhibits the extent of the persons or groups desiring it, the intensity being the proportion of a group who feels it and the degree is the intensity with which it is felt. He further adds that the upsetting of expectation provokes the sense or feeling of relative deprivation, which provides the impetus for drastic opposition for change.

Runciman further distinguishes between egoistic relative deprivation (caused by unfavourable social position when compared to other, better off members of a specific group which A is a member of) and fraternalistic relative deprivation (caused by unfavourable comparison to other, better off group). Egoistic relative deprivation can be seen in the example of a worker who believes he should have been promoted faster and may lead to that person taking actions designed to improve his position within the group; those actions are however unlikely to affect many people. Also according to him, Fraternalistic relative deprivation can be seen in the example of racial discrimination, and is much more likely to result in the creation and growth of large social movement, like the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Another example of fraternalistic relative deprivation is the envy teenagers feel towards the wealthy characters who are portrayed in movies and television as being "middle class" or "normal" despite wearing expensive clothes, driving expensive cars and living in mansions.

Another great scholar who did an excellent job in the theory of Relative Deprivation is Gurr (1976) in his book why men Rebel. He propounds that "violence which leads to enormous

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destruction of lives in any political system is inspired by institutions and policies of rulers".

He defines Relative Deprivation, as

"a discrepancy between men's value expectation and what seem attainable. People believe that there are certain good and conditions of life to which they are rightfully entitled and the denial of this opportunity will lead to aggression thereby making violence inevitable.

Gurr came out with variables that affect the intensity of emotional response to the perception of Relative Deprivation. The first variable according to him is that the greater the extent of discrepancy that men see between what they seek and what seem attainable, the greater their anger and consequent disposition. The second variable, is that the greater the intensity of men's expectations, the greater their anger when they meet unexpected or increased distance from what they desire.The above variables imply that once expectations are cut off, discontent and aggression become the natural consequences.

In his own opinion, Obasi (2005:10) asserts that Relative Deprivation is a condition of injustice which one usually becomes aware of when he compares his present situation with the opposite. To him, "people are deprived and, subsequently alienated, only when they compare themselves and other members of the society, and the consciousness therefore develops about an existing difference or imbalance".

The choice of the Relative Deprivation theory to this paper is quite apt to our tacit examination of the present protracted crisis in Darfur regions of Sudan.

The people of Darfur region have had a long history of neglect culminating in the denial of political and economic privileges from the government in Khartoum; they have equally been humiliated and discriminated against for being black Africans who do not deserve to be in the

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territory where they are presently. With the discovery of oil in the area and the subsequent increase in revenue to the Sudanese government, the people had expected that the government will now incorporate them in the scheme of things but that was not to be.

The last straw that broke the camel's back was the exclusion of the people of Darfur from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in which a number of concessions were granted the SPLM, ranging from adequate representation in the government, a fair share of economic resources especially the revenue from oil to the option for self determination which they are to vote in a referendum. This informs our choice of the theory of Relative Deprivation in this study. The taking of arms against the Sudanese government by the people of Darfur clearly shows the inherent compatibility of the theory to our present study thereby justifying our acceptance of the central thesis of the theory which says that relative deprivation breeds frustration, with the multiplier effect being aggression, while violence becomes the end product.

The various accounts as to the events that led to the Darfur crisis or the commencement of military action notwithstanding, there exist an avalanche of factors that the present intractable conflict in Darfur region of Sudan has been attributed to (though not mainly rooted in). These included structural inequality between the centre of the country around the Nile, and the peripheral areas, such as Darfur. These factors amongst others include:

(a)   Political marginalization

(b)   Economic Deprivation

(c)   Islamization and Arabism

(d)   Mobilization of Armed militias

(e)   North-south civil war

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(f)   Political polarization within Darfur

These factors are to be discussed one after another.

Political marginalization

The political marginalization of the people of Darfur dates back to the colonial days of Sudan. Darfur was an independent state before the British imperialist colonized Sudan in 1916 and by 1917 Darfur was annexed to the Sudan after the defeat of sultan Ali Dinar (Adwok, 2007:135)

Prior to the colonization of Sudan, the Turco-Egyptian rule in Darfur had taken most of the citizens of Darfur into slavery in Egypt. It was the colonialzation of Egypt by the British government that gave Black Africans of Darfur who were slaves in Egypt freedom. However, despite what the British imperial masters did to the black Africans of Darfur who were slaves in Egypt, the freed Sudanese slaves were later to join the mutiny of the Egyptian Army based in Khartoum thereby leading to a change of policy of the British government against the blacks in Sudan. Nyaba (2007:137) sums up the whole scenario thus:

> *The events in 1924 leading to the mutiny of the Egyptian Army (comprising freed Sudanese slaves) based in Khartoum caused a change in the British policy towards the Blacks in the Sudan. The participation of the Black officers in the mutiny promoted the British policy for social and political empowerment of the revered Arab elite who had to this point in time been loyal servants of the British administration; leading to the emergence of institutions of modern state in Sudan. The British colonial authorities set up such institutions like the consultative council, town councils, etc in northern Sudan while at the same time sealing off the African areas from the outside world.*

The above chronicled the origin of the political marginalization of the people of Darfur and subsequent policies of the colonial government were all to the detriment of the Darfurians.

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For instance, the colonial government deliberately adopted a divide and rule policy in Sudan where all development were concentrated in the north while a minimal attention was paid to the south (Johnson, 2004:46)

The introduction of the policy of indirect rule in Sudan by the colonial government further exacerbated the frustration of the people of Darfur politically. In the operation of the system, local appointees to take charge of the system were not only incompetent but were illiterates and very corrupt but they however ruled like tyrants because they enjoyed the support of the colonial government. Prunier (2007:29) lends credence when he states that:

> *Darfur under the condominium (colonial) rule was a prime example of indirect rule which was roughly delimited and handed over to a variety of nazir, Sheikh, maqdum, mandub and Umla depending on the tribe and administrative level, to exercise rule. In theory, it could be a good idea, but those appointed to take charge were often incompetent, illiterate and corrupt. Since they know they have benefited from both a "traditional" legitimacy (real or imagined) and from the upper support of the condominium administration, they tended to behave like pretty tyrants. They were equally incapable of implementing any form of technical or administrative progress or dealing with problems of education. This suited the local British administrators, who believed that education and technical change would only "spoil" their charges.*

The impact of this system on the people of Darfur was even much in the education sector. The colonial education policy was not favourable to the people of Darfur. There is no gainsaying the fact that education is most fundamental to the political and overall development of a people as it has an over bearing influence on those who become future political leaders. The education sector as captured by Daly (1986) needs to be elaborately quoted for a better appreciation of the situation:

> *By 1935 there were only four government primary schools in the whole of Darfur, with a combined annual budget of 1,200. A request by the Darfur Director of Education for an extra budget of $55 to introduce some kind of education" in north Darfur was rejected by Khartoum on financial grounds. The administration relied heavily on the native system of*

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"khalwa" schools, which were almost a joke. When H.C Jackson, the Governor of Dongola Province, made a tour of the local Khalwa in 1928, he found to his dismay that most of the teachers could not locate Mecca on a map, that they did not know the name of the Governor-General of Sudan (one of them mentioned Wad Nejumi, a long-dead Mahdist amir), could not list the provinces of Sudan and thought that "Gordon was the man who built Gordon College" and Dongola province was in the "favoured" Nile valley. Most of the Khalwa teachers in Darfur were reputed not to be able to write their names. Among the 510 students in 1929 at Gordon College, the only establishment of higher learning in the condominium, there was not a single student from Darfur while 311 were from Khartoum or the Blue Nile Province.

The policy of the British colonial administration to keep Darfur at an educationally disadvantaged position was boastfully re-iterated by Philip Ingleson who was the Governor of Darfur in 1935-44 when he stated thus:

We have been able to limit education to the sons of Chiefs and native administration personnel and we can confidently look forward to keeping the ruling classes at the top of the educational tree for many years to come.

The denial of education opportunities to the people of Darfur had a lot of implications for the political development of the area and people. Ibrahim (2004:30) states that "Darfur was ruled by commissioners who neglected the basic needs of the people of Darfur and merely fulfilled the interest of the central government".

When Sudan finally secured her independence from Britain in 1956, the carefully planned divide and rule policy and the deprivation of education and other development projects to Darfur paid off for the people of northern Sudan while Darfur continued to remain in misery. Bechtold (1976:197-8) captured the frustration of the people despite working to see to the electoral victory of the national party in the first post independence election thus:

Independence was achieved on 1 January 1956 and for Darfur it did not mark any sort of watershed. The first post-independence elections, held in 1958, were won by the Umma. Darfur, which then had twenty-two constituencies saw nineteen of them go to the Mahdist

and only three to the unionists. Still playing such a key role in the national victory of their party nevertheless gave the Darfurians no political clout in the capital.

A further political problem to the people of Darfur was the Phenomenon of exported members", this in essence means that most of the parliamentarians that represented Darfur were not from the area and to that extent, had little or no concern for the people of the Darfur region. For instance, of the eleven Dafurian seats in the first parliament there were eight tribal leaders, one merchant and two government officials (1992:97)

The fact that, even with the absence of the colonial masters in the political state, the people of Darfur still suffered the same fate (political marginalization), clearly shows that their political exclusion will take a long time for it to be addressed, and to that extent, it can be said that the present conflict in the region owes much to the political marginalization of the people of Darfur region.

Economic Deprivation and stagnated Development

The economic deprivation of the Darfur region is another area which the present conflict has been attributed to. Historically, Darfur was seen as the economic hub of Sudan having engaged in trade since the 13th century along the Mediterranean (Fahey, 1980:26). However, with the colonization of Sudan in 1916 and the subsequent annexation of the independent state of Darfur by the British colonialists in 1917, Darfur could not remain the same again economically.

As a sure way of ensuring that the Darfurians were economically deprived, the colonial administration in Sudan adopted a deliberate policy of enhancing the business interest of the influential families from the central Nile valley through the preferential allocation of productive assets (mostly land), business contracts and bank loans to pay them for their loyalty to the

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colonial administration and equally to minimize the risk of resistance to the colonial regimes (Abdel and Elbandaw, 2002; 78)

These lopsided economic policies and developmental strides of the British colonial administration in Sudan were disadvantageous to Darfur. For instance, Darfur was noted for agriculture as they were mostly farmers and pastoralists. With this kind of development, it was expected that the colonial government would locate industries that would tap the available raw materials in Darfur, but that was not to be.

Niblock (1987:33) seems to agree with the above position when he states thus:

Absolutely no industrialization had taken place in Darfur even in the sectors where it could have been feasible such as food processing, skin and hide treatment, and simple textile. By the end of the condominium period 56% of all investment was concentrated in Khartoum, Kassala and the Northern Province as against 17% in both Darfur and Kordofan. Since Kordofan was the more developed of the two, one can estimate that only 5-6% of the investment of the whole of Sudan had reached Darfur. This has to been seen in the light of the fact that the "high benefit" part of the country had 2.3million people while the west had 3million.

Also commenting along the same line, Prunier (2007:33) remarks that:

A 1955 economic report on Darfur province (the first in thirty-nine years) wrote that Darfur must "strive for self suffiecny", and export-substitution-industries were recommended. Coffee and sugarcane were vaguely mentioned. Local spinning and weaving industries should be encouraged. The last point had been mentioned in administrator's reports as far back as the 1930, but nothing had ever been done.

In addition, the economic neglect of the people of Darfur was also evident in the limited developments occurring in the region. The only two development projects financed by international organizations in Darfur, including the Western Savannah Development Project and the Jebel Marra Rural Development Project came to a complete halt when their administration was transferred to State government rather than the Central government (Ateem, 1999:84)

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The result of the economic deprivation of the people of Darfur was that it increased the poverty which the impoverished people of the region were experiencing and in the words of Mohammed (1998) "of all the regions in Sudan, Darfur was the worst hit as the poverty increased from 44.5% in 1967/68 to 57% in 1982/83. The further underdevelopment of the region of Darfur was even made clearer by Ombada (2004:18) when he stated that "out of a total fund of US $13,414million for development projects extended to Sudan by the international community from 1958-2003, Darfur had only 10 projects which constituted a paltry share of 2%"

Anon (2004:83) futher adds that the "Black Book" described in very clear terms the marginalization and oppression of the people of Darfur. For instance, the book described the disparity in education service thus:

> *Pupils in the marginalized areas have been grounded at the primary level (of education): in the state of west Darfur, primary schools remained closed for two years for lack of books and staff pays"*

The black book as earlier stated was prepared by activists who were not comfortable with the marginalization of the people of Darfur. It can therefore be stated that some of the activists involved in the preparation of the black book were the people that later took up arms against the government in what is today known as the Darfur conflict.

Drought and Famine

The twin factors of drought and famine in Darfur equally contributed to the present conflict in the region. In addition to the economic stagnation occasioned by the neglect of the region by the Sudanese government, the people's woes were further exacerbated by drought and famine. These made the phenomenon of food insecurity to be an integral part of Darfurian livelihood (UNDP, 2002).

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It should be noted that drought and famine in Darfur are not a recent development. A review of the major causes of famine since the 19th century indicates that though drought has played a major role yet its effects have also been worsened by localized conflicts.

Table showing historical Account of Drought and Famine in Darfur from 1873-2001.

In 1873/74- There was a major famine called Karo Fata (white bone). The years that followed coincided with a succession of famine caused by drought conditions, poor harvests, and frontier conflicts between Darfur and Waddai resulting from Pillaging and trading (De Waal 1989).

The famine of 1888-92 was possibly the worst ever the major cause of which was fighting between large numbers of the Mahdist forces under the governor of Darfur and a religiously inspired rebel army. This was the time of the Khalifa forced migration to Omduman. These years resulted in impoverishment and destruction.

The third region-wide "famine that killed" and the only one whose major cause was a drought, occurred in 1913/14. Famine was exacerbated in the south eastern Darfur by fighting between the Rizeigat and the forces of Ali Dinar in which the Nazir of Rizeigat lamented over the war that "there is not a single house that is not burned down by the fur armies. This famine contributed to instability; breakdown of local governments, raiding for food, and enormous farming migrations (the Zayadiia left for Kordofan, many Berti moved southwards, Zaghawa came down as far as southern Sudan)

In 1973, the rainfall in Darfur was the lowest on record, but only those living in Dar Masalit and in the north east considered it to be a "Mild Famine" Animals did not die, but the result was that herds were restructured particularly in the north and north east favouring more drought resistant species.

The more severe regional famine of 1983/84 came with significant north-south population movements, losses of large numbers of livestock and depletion of assets, and increasing cultivation by herders further north.

The droughts of 1987-88, 1990-91, 1994 and 2000-2001 resulting in the loss of livestock and deaths occasioned by conflict. However the scale of the 1984/86 famine was unprecedented and resulted in an estimated death of 176,900 persons.

Source: Alex De Waal: Famine that kills, 1989.

Judging from the realities that most severe famines in Darfur are usually consequent upon the drought in the region and are usually associated with war, the present conflict in the area can also be said to have some elements of drought induced

problem. Ban Ki-Moon, (2007) and Dayo (2008) each agree with the position that the present conflict in Darfur region of Sudan was as a consequence of drought. For Ban Ki-Moon "the reduction in rainfall has forced pastoralists to move south to graze their pastures". This act brought the pastoralists into conflict with the farmers who would not standby and watch their crops being destroyed by animals. Equally concurring with this position Dayo (2008:3) asserted that the increased desertification which led to the lack of arid land caused the pastoralists to lead their animals to farmlands owned by African agriculturists' thereby breeding crisis between them. The antagonism between the Black African farmers and their Arab brother pastoralists became worsened when most of the pastoralists joined the janjaweed militias and fought against their brother Darfurians in western Sudan, having been deceived by government that it was a religious war (Mahmond, 1987:28).

Bearing in mind the obvious fact that problems naturally erupt among the African farmers and their Arab pastoralists in Darfur whenever there was drought and judging from the fact that the pastoralist must always look for previously untapped lands to graze their herds while the farmers complained of the destruction of their crops in the process, there is no doubt the drought of 2000-2001 that led to the loss of both men and animals as a result of conflict between the two must have precipitated the current intractable conflict in the Darfur region. So the combination of decades of drought, desertification and famine are among the causes of the Darfur conflict. It is reasoned that the Baggara nomads searching for water had to take their livestock further south, to land mainly occupied by non-Arabs farming communities and hence occasioning the conflict between the two. (http://www.alertnet.Org/db/blog, June 2007).

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Islamization and Arabism

Despite the fact that Darfur is made up of the black Africans and Arabs, the central and only recognized religion is Islam. Thus, all Darfurians are Muslims. Surprisingly though, the practice of the same religion did not however remove the overbearing ethnic rivalry between the two. The northern Sudanese believe and claim Arab ancestry and to that extent they see themselves as parts and parcel of the Arab nationhood. Thus, they at every point in time are inspired by the philosophy of the Middle East and across the Red sea and have found and formed solidarity with the Arab world. The southern Sudanese (of which Darfur situates) believe that they are of the Black African stock and always look south wards to East Africa and other parts of the black world for support and solidarity.

These claims are legitimate and there should be no misgivings about them. The problems however arose from the Arab dominated northern political elite definitions and characterization of the Sudan as part of the Arab world and that of the Sudanese nationality being a transition to integration into the Arab nation-hood. Identity therefore is one of the underlying causes of the conflict in the Sudan. Being a Muslim, the knowledge of Arabic language makes one an Arab in the Sudan even though one was jet black. This identity crisis underpins the present crisis in Darfur (Adwork, 2007:138)

Dunstan (1981) sees the problem arising from Islamization and Arabization as a clear case of African-Arab confrontation along the Nile valley and he captured it thus:

> *The African-Arab confrontation along the Nile Valley is a case in point. In essence, it is a conflict of nationalizing, one rooted in Africanism and the other in Arabism. It is not a mere case of ethnicity. The northern Sudanese view themselves as Arabs and whether their Arabness is more by acquisitions than*

heredity is of less importance, whereas the southern Sudanese feel themselves to be authentically Negroid Africans in every way. We see here two identities with differing perspectives on the universe.

It is an indubitable reality that the African-Arab schism is one of the fundamental problems that beset Sudan and a strong factor in the present conflict in the Darfur region. The depth of the African-Arab problem is succinctly portrayed by Aggrey (1965:4):

The Sudan falls sharply into two distinct areas, both in geographical areas, ethnic group, and cultural systems. The northern Sudan is occupied by hybrid Arab races that are united by their common language common culture and common religion; and they look to the Arab world for their cultural and political inspiration. The people of the Southern Sudan, on the other hand, belong to the African ethnic group of East Africa. They do not only differ from the hybrid Arab race in origin, arrangement and basic systems, but in all conceivable purposes………. There is nothing in common between the various sections of the community; no shared beliefs, no identity of interests, no local signs of unity and above all, the Sudan has failed to compose a single community.

Although Aggrey's description of the differences between the peoples of the North and the south is somewhat not absolute in formulation, it does set out how much each region identifies itself as unique. The historical development of the region and its African-Arab cleavage is described better by Legum (1965:34):

The Sudan is a classic example of a divided nation. It is divided by religion, by ethnic kingship, by region, by history like most African countries; the modern Sudan was created artificially by a colonial power. But, though ruled for a century by a single power as a single country, its two main societies were deliberately encouraged to grow apart, the North developing its largely Islamic traditions and Arab culture, the south emerging as a Christian-based, English

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speaking region. The result of this policy was to consolidate and intensify factors making for divisiveness. The great gulf of language, religion, and separate administrative units are easily maintained because of the great distances separating the important centres of the north from the peasant societies of the south, and by poorly developed communications-transport, press and radio.

The African-Arab cleavages in the Sudan were further reinforced by the treatment of the southern-Sudanese as a minority group in the post independent Sudan because of their racial and cultural characteristics and because of their self-conception as Africans. The Arab Sudanese government singled them out for differential and unequal treatment and excluded them from full participation in the political life of the country. They were debarred from the country's social and economic opportunities, and denied equal access to educational opportunities which further restricted the possibilities for their occupational and professional advancement. Furthermore, the Northerners subjected the southerners to contempt, hatred, ridicule, and violence (Dunstan, 1981:25)

This sharp derogatory treatment of the south by the North who controls the government has led to series of armed conflicts of which the present conflict in Darfur region is one.

Mobilization of Armed Militias

The notable armed militia groups in Sudan who are currently in the fore front of the present conflict in Darfur region are the "Janjaweed. "The label Janjaweed" has more often been given to a lot of meanings in line with differences in tribal affiliations and political view-points. Among the popular media and sectors of the international community, the Janjaweed are seen and described as "armed militias mobilized by

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government to address counter-insurgency". They possess an infamous style in the violations of human rights.

However, to pro-government groups, the Janjaweed militias are banditry gangs whose activities are frowned upon and considered as criminals and outlaws and not under the authority or control of any tribe (Morton, 2004:29)

Be that as it may, there had been a long history of the mobilization of tribes to support the activities of the central government that dates back to the Mahdist era of the 19th century. More recent use of the armed militias to back the cause of government is chronicled in the table below:-

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1980	President Numayri mobilized the Muraheleem militias who were the armed Baggara Rizeigat from Southern Darfur and the Misseriya from southern Kordofan to fight southern Sudanese rebels.
1986	Sadig el Mahdi used the Arab Militias to fight the southern rebels and the militant even at this period extended their atrocities to central Darfur. Mahmond and Baldo (1987) reported that in 1986, these militias massacred more than 1,000 Dinka displaced persons by the war and none of them was prosecuted by government. The silence of government gave the Arabs an air of impunity that reflected wider failures in the police and judicial system.
1989	The national Islamic Front (NIF, renamed the National Congress) ruling party incorporated many of the Murahaleem militias into the Popular Defense Forces, showing government's link and sponsorship of the militias (Human Rights Watch 2004)
1999	President Bashir mobilized the Fursan militias (Southern Rizeigat, Beni Halba, Fellata, and Taiaisha) to fight the 1991 Daud Bolad incursion into Darfur by the SPLA.
2003	President Bashir mobilized the Janjaweed militias to fight the rebel groups in Western Darfur region. Government mobilized these militias by appealing to all tribal leaders in Darfur to mobilize men to join additional armed forces.

Source: Alex De Waal: Counter Insurgency on the Cheap, 2004.

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The mobilization of armed militias as can be seen is not a recent phenomenon in Sudan. Governments over the years have been using them in countering the ever present resentment over their policies.

The use of the Janjaweed militias against the rebel groups fighting to ensure Darfur had its own fair share of government positions and revenue has been unprecedented in the history of the mobilization of armed militias in Sudan. The atrocities of mass murder of civilians, refugees in the internal displaced persons camp, rape of innocent women and the burning of houses and villages and the policy of driving people from their homes and forcing them to run to refugee camps committed by the Janjaweed militias, cannot only be said to be a major factor in the present conflict in Darfur, but that their continued use had gone a long way in enhancing the continued escalation of the war, thereby making all efforts by the African Union and other international bodies aimed at a peaceful resolution of the conflict abortive.

Political Polarization within Darfur

The region of Darfur is made up of the black Africans who occupy the western part of the region and the Arabs who settle in the Southern part. During the Mahdist movement era, Darfur was fortunate to have strong connections with the Umma party which the Darfur Arab sought to exploit to gain advantage over the Fur. This era, as noted by Morton (2004:72), created a very good avenue where "various prominent Arab leaders from Darfur were given good positions in national ministries under the leadership of Sadig el Mahdi.

The political marriage of convenience between the Arabs and the Fur people could not stand the test of time as political bickering accusations and counter accusation became the order

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of the day. The climax of this state of relationship between the two was an Arab gathering in 1986.

The gathering was that of notable elites of Arab extraction in Darfur. In the meeting the Arab group claimed that though they represented the majority tribe in Darfur but yet that they were highly marginalized as Arabs. Thereafter, they wrote a letter to the central authorities to address their problem (Harir, 1993:43).

But the silence of the government over the Darfur Arabs letter was seen by them as an implicit endorsement.

The Fur, Zaghawa and Masaht people were not comfortable with the development. They believed that the development was purely hatched to undermine their leadership role in the region and create an ethnic division that was very unnecessary. De Waal (2005:26) assessed the relationship of the Arabs and Fur this way:

> *At one level, the Alliance was simply a political coalition that aimed to protect the interests of a disadvantaged group in Western Sudan, but it also became a vehicle for a new racist ideology.*

The resultant effect of this ugly state of relations between the Fur and the Arabs led to the eruption of a dangerous conflict which dominated Darfur up to 1989. Harir, (1992:144-185) opines that.

> *The conflict led to losses on both sides that were substantial; the Fur lost 2500 people, 40, 000 herds of livestock, with 400 villages containing "10,000 residents burned down. The Arab groups saw some 500 dead, 3,000 herds of cattle lost and about 700 tents and residences destroyed, Mosques, schools and dispensaries were burnt down.*

The political polarization with Darfur in the late 1980s was captured by Fehey (1980) and UNDP (2002) thus:

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The Fur argued that the aim of the Arabs was to eradicate them totally from their land. On the other hand, the Arabs claimed the current problem started in the late 1970s, when the Fur started to talk about "Darfur being for the Fur" and the Arabs were foreigners who should leave. As a result of fierce fighting, hundreds of Fur had fled their villages in Wadi Salil area, which were soon occupied by soldiers coming over the border from Chad.

The political polarization, which led to disunity in Darfur, equally presents a major factor in the present conflict in the area. This can be seen from the point of view of the fact that most Darfur Arabs were either conscripted or induced by the government of Sudan to join the Janjaweed militias in the name of additional armed forces and have wrecked havoc in Western Sudan till date. The situation would not have presented this ugly scenario if the entire Darfur were united in the demand for a fair share in government.

The African Union conflict resolution strategies in Darfur

The international political system gives the state the right of control over her citizens. This in essence means that the state was vested with the capacity to control while the citizens are restrained from embarking on unapproved actions even when the state is not keeping its own part of the social contract. As a consequence of this, the state has more often than not chosen her pattern of relationship with the citizens which may be either peaceful or through coercion. Kelechi (2007:1) agrees with the above position when he states inter-alia that:

The state and its government, being vested with the capacity to protect while simultaneously constraining citizens right to unapproved actions, have reigned supreme over it's territory - sometimes with coercion and other times through peaceful institutionalized procedures. That relationship between the state and the citizens has made it possible for different governments to claim sovereign authority over her territory including the sovereign right to relate to their citizens peacefully or with coercive force. The latter has frequently resulted in gross violations of individual human rights across the globe. In the case of African states, (in the DRC, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia,

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Apartheid South Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, to name just a few) these violations were intensified following political independence and the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states under moribund organization of African Unity.

The absence of good government among states in Africa coupled with the twin problems of economy and ethnic sentiments have brought about numerous intra-state conflicts in the African continent. The various problems associated with these conflicts ranging from violence, disease, and increased refugees and, in most cases, the seeming incapability of the state to carry out its basic and obvious function of maintaining law and order and the protection of human rights, have made most of the states in Africa unsafe for human habitation.

It should be noted that the Rwandan genocide as a case in point re-awakened the African Leaders' consciousness to the need to recognize the sanctity of the human life and the need for the regional body to make legislations that would warrant intervention in member states, where the population is suffering serious harm as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure.

This is inspite of the fact that the United Nation's Collective Security Principles insist on invitation from crisis ridden states before intervention in a nation's internal crisis even when the major aim is purely to protect entrapped citizens facing exterminations as was the case in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. Thus the flaws inherent in these principles have led to the formation of the international commission on intervention and state sovereignty in 2001 (ICISS.2001)

In the commission's report, that invariably provides a new theoretical basis for the responsibility to protect, the commission states thus:

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a.   That the responsibility to protect argument is based on the core principles that "state sovereignty implies responsibility" and that the primary responsibility of a state is the protection of people within its territory.

b.   That in a situation where a population is suffering serious harms, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression and state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principles of non-intervention yields to the international reasonability to protect.

c.   That the prevention of large scale loss of life be made a priority and with as little coercive measure as possible; and that whatever the motive for intervention, it should aim to avert human suffering.

d.   That the five permanent members of the UN Security Council should agree not to use their veto powers to obstruct the passage of resolutions authorizing the use of military force when their interests are not involved.

e.   That the Security Council should take into account, in all its deliberation, that if it fails to discharge its responsibility to protect in conscience-shocking situations crying out for action, concerned states may not rule out other means to meet the gravity and urgency of that situation and that the stature and credibility of the United Nations may suffer thereby.

The African Union in line with these United Nations Principles entrenched in her Constitutive Act 2002, specifically article 4(h) which states that:

> *"the right of the Union to intervene in a member state   pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crime against humanity must not and cannot be impeded by excuses of sovereignty which has*

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been used to avoid responsibility and action in past instances where such intervention would have saved millions of lives.

It may rightly be stated, therefore, that the Darfur conflict which started in 2003 barely a year after the transformation of the former Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) was among one of the early test cases to the African Union in its application of article 4 (h) of its Constitutive Act.

It was consequent upon the fact that the African Union was interested to bring about peace in Darfur that she decided to immediately implement one of the frameworks of the N'Djamena agreement by deploying the African Union Mission in Sudan AMIS in July, 2004.

It was originally constituted in 2004 and had initial force strength of 150 troops (Dayo, 2008:7). Its mandate at inception was to monitor the AU brokered N' Djamena ceasefire agreement between the initial two rebel faction and the government of Sudan. They also had the mandate to prioritize civilian protection and facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian aid (Sally and Morgenstern, 2005:7).

The mission statement of AMIS was very clear and the force when deployed in 2004 was carrying out this mandate religiously. However, the presence of AMIS had little or no impact on the situation on the ground as the Darfur region continued to witness violence and more ruinous crimes against humanity. These happenings paved the way for a change in the mandate of the mission from a ceasefire monitoring team to a peace keeping force (Lugman, 2008:147). This change in mandate of the force due principally to continued violent attacks on civilians equally necessitated the change in the troops level from the initial 150 troops for AMIS I to 3, 320 troops for AMIS II and subsequently to 7,731 for AMIS II-Ehanced (Ogaba 2008, Lugman 2008, Kelechi, 2007)

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These major transformations which AMIS underwent were purely giant efforts by the African Union to address the worsening security situation in the region and to help in bringing the warring parties back to the peace table. But that was not to be as parties to the conflict continued to violate the ceasefire agreement and even in most instances, launched attacks on the peace keepers. The result was the killing of at least 12 peacekeepers on September, 30, 2007 when rebels overran an AMIS base (Dayo, 2008:8).

It should be noted here that the ever increasing violence in Darfur, even with the increase in the troops level of AMIS, and its inability to bring the situation in the region under control, glaringly showed that there existed obvious handicaps to the African Union Mission in Sudan. Ogaba (2008:6) recognized the helplessness of AMIS when he stated thus:

> *The inability of AMIS to carry out its mission mandate stemmed from various problems confronting the African Union and its peacekeeping mission in Darfur. Prominent among such problems was the issue of inadequate funds available to the African Union and its mission in Darfur. Aside from funding problems, the African Union and its mission lacked the expertise and personnel needed for a mission the like of the one mounted in Darfur. AMIS also faced the problem of inadequate logistics and essential equipment for it to carry out its mandate. More worrisome from a political angle was the sense among parties to the conflict and civilian that AMIS was siding with the government of Sudan and SLM/A Minnawi faction.*

The role of Sudanese Government

One of the most prominent and primary responsibilities of any government is the protection of the lives and properties of her citizens, and if at any point in time government reneges on this responsibility, then the citizenry would be left in a state of despair, which may lead to a number of options including rebellion against constituted authority. This seems to be the case in Darfur.

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The Darfur crisis which started in February, 2003 pitched the rebel factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equity Movement (JEM) against the government of Sudan. The rebels, who accused the government in Khartoum of political and economic exclusion, started their rebellion with an attack on government targets. One of such attacks was the al-Fashur raid on a sleeping army garrison, where the rebels destroyed four Antonov bombers and a helicopter gunship, killing 75 soldiers, pilots and technicians, while 32 of them were captured, including the commander of the air base, major General Ibrahim Bushara Ismail. (Prunier 2005:24, Julle and Waal 2007:99).

Government's response to the rebels attack was unprecedented. She used the Military Intelligence, the air force and the janjaweed militias to unleash terror on the people, against the advice of some top Generals in the Army. Government was of the belief that the armed forces had been publicly humiliated in an unprecedented way by the successful raid on the army at al-Fashur. According to Julie Flint and Alex De Waal (2005) in the book "Darfur: The Short Story of a Long War"

> The government war effort has three dimensions:
>
> *main elements, janjaweed, air force and military intelligence. General Suleman advised against using the janjaweed, convinced that a racially based mobilization would have terrible repercussions on inter-tribal relations for the next several decades. His solution would have been political and developmental; international intervention to eradicate the illiteracy of six million people; Health projects; hundreds of schools, settle the nomads (and give them) water and well trained police.*

But the unleashing of the janjaweed on her citizens showed how insensitive the government was in trying to quell insurrection in the country as a result the people's complaint over marginalization.

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It is on records that despite persistent accusation about the Khartoum government being

behind the operations of the janjaweed, the government has continued to deny it. The janjaweed

were upgraded to a full paramilitary fighting force, with communication equipment as well as

plentiful new arms, some artillery, and military advisors, lending credence to US claims that

Musa Hilal returned to Darfur as government appointed coordinator of janjaweed activities (Julie

and De Waal 2007:103)

Also arguing along the line of government sponsorship of the janjaweed against the

rebels Oluyemi (2008:3-4) states that:

> *Darfur has become increasingly violent, chaotic, complicated and ethnicized since the*
> *beginning of the conflict in 2003. Not long after the SPLMA and JEM started attacks, the*
> *janjaweed counter offensive began. The janjaweed offensive, added to the major*
> *government offensive in early 2004, turned the table against the rebels. With this also*
> *came genocide, (the government denounces this) with the government and the janjaweed*
> *massively displacing, killing, torturing, raping and cutting ethnic African civilians off*
> *from aid. The coordinated attacks by the government and the jajaweed characterize the*
> *conflict in Darfur. It is also an "unbalanced" war because the government has a*
> *preponderance of the use of force.*

Government's intention of dealing with ethnic

Straus (2005:126) in an article "Darfur and the Genocide Debate" agrees with

government targeting of ethnic Africans in Darfur as he states thus:

> *That Khartoum instructed the militias to eliminate the rebellion as Sudan's President*
> *Omar al-Bashir acknowledged in a December 2003 speech…(And that) Armed forces*
> *and the militia often attacked together, as janjaweed leaders admit…and in some cases,*
> *government aircraft bomb areas before the militia attack, razing settlements and*
> *destroying villages, clearly establishes the connection between the government decision*
> *to eliminate a segment of its population by virtue of who they perceive to be black African*
> *farmers.*

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Another area which has raised doubts about the sincerity of the government in Khartoum in stopping the crisis in Darfur region is in giving free access to humanitarians to provide food aid to displaced people in Darfur, though the government claimed that humanitarian aid workers had been given unimpeded access. The position of government was in contrast with the views of Tom Vraalsen, the UN special Envoy who states that:

> *The Government of Sudan presenting of the situation as steadily improving contrasts sharply with first hand reports. Delivery of humanitarian assistance is hampered by systematically denied access. Khartoum authorities claim there is unimpeded access but they greatly restrict access to the areas under their control while imposing blanket denial to all rebel held areas. As a consequence of growing insecurity and denied access, the humanitarian crisis has reached unprecedented proportions, with millions now war-affected. (Associated press, 9 December 2003)*

The government of Sudan denial of access to aid workers was even more pronounced when the United States offered its mediation for at least facilitating humanitarian deliveries and the offer got a brutal sophistry reply from Najib al-Kheir, the Sudanese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when he said that 'they have a right to propose and we have a right to decide. The US proposal does not confirm to our vision, which considers that the conflict is a matter regarding only the sons of Darfur (Al-Anbaa,4 March,2004). This same reaction was equally re-echoed by the Sudanese Minister for Humanitarian Affairs who in responding to a complaint by the Head of the Red Cross stated that "the government is under no obligation to cooperate with ICRC because it never signed the annexes to the Geneva convention which would oblige it to cooperate with NGOs in case of conflict" (Al-Anbaa 4, March, 2004)

Though the Sudanese president has consistently claimed that the situation in Darfur was steadily improving but this runs counter to what is happening on the ground as the janjaweed has consistently attacked the people killing and raping the women (Punch 2004).

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Another area which clearly shows that the government in Khartoum was not much interested in seeing to the early resolution of the crisis in Darfur was the government initial refusal to allow AU/UN peace keeping force in Dafur. The increasing crisis situation in Darfur prompted the African Union on July 6, 2004 to send 132 observers to Western Sudan, with 300 troops, whose mandate would be restricted to protecting the observers. But in a swift reaction, the Sudan minister of Interior Abder-Rahim Mohamed Hussein retorted that "we will not tolerate the presence of any foreign troops, whatever their nationality" (Prunier 2007:145)

Despite this position, the Khartoum government retraced their earlier stand and stated that they were ready to accept troops who would be all African and their mandate limited to watching the tragedy unfold. This is a double limitation; no western troops, since the death in action, of any could spark serious international trouble, and no peace making mandate (peace keeping alone being acceptable)

The presence of the African Union Peace Keeping troops in Darfur notwithstanding, the crisis was even taking a more dangerous dimension prompting renewed calls on the United Nations to intervene through the deployment of a more robust peace keeping force. It was in heeding to this call that the United Nations Security Council on August, 31, 2006 approved Resolution 1706 which called for a new 20,600 UN Peacekeeping force called UNAMID to supplant a poorly funded and ill-equipped 7,000 African Union peace keeping force in Sudan (Kuwait News Agency September 21,2006).

The activities of the government in Khartoum are a good example of a government that is showing unwillingness to quell uprising in her domain. The array of false information that the government is feeding the international community over the real situation in Darfur, the government insistence that the UN should not send a hybrid peace keeping force to Darfur and

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the painting of Sudanese military planes in UN colours, as a clever way of continuing military build-up in the Darfur region are all clear indications that the government is not interested in stopping the crisis in Darfur. Though the government might argue that the various agreements it signed with rebel groups are enough proofs of her intention to bring about peace, yet those agreements are fraught with inconsistencies and, the government's continued attacks on the rebels and civilian targets, show the government's insincerity and desire to continue with the conflict in Darfur.

Conclusion

The conflict in Darfur is a dangerous addition to the numerous conflicts in the African continent. However, be that as it may, the courage which the AU put up by the deployment of troops to Darfur and which eventually led to de-escalation of the conflict despite the obvious lack of fund and military hardware is a step in the right direction.

As a way out of this, it is recommended that:

- The Sudanese government should summon enough political will to address the grey areas especially the exclusion of the people of Darfur from the political and economic spheres of the country.

- The government should show sincereity and determination to resolve the conflict rather escalating it.

- The African Union should provide enough fund and equipment for her standby force in the continent.

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- There should be more commitment by African leaders in the area of de-escalating of conflict in troubled parts of the continent.

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