Sub Humans: An Expendable Specie

It is the first genocide of the 21st century. Currently in Darfur there exists an ever accelerating, state sponsored campaign, calling for the extermination of all Africans. Although the bulk of responsibility for this genocide can be accredited to the Sudanese Government, it would be wrong to ignore the role international apathy and capitalistic appetite have played in the current crisis. World powers have sat idly by knowing full well as to the extent of the atrocities taking place. So why have they continued to do nothing? How can countries and organizations as powerful and influential as the UN turn a blind eye? The reality is that globalization has led international super powers to adopt a position of moral relativism when faced with conflict or crisis, rendering some groups an expendable specie.

It has reluctantly been described as the first genocide of the 21st century. Currently in Darfur there exists an ever accelerating, state sponsored campaign, calling for the extermination of all Africans, with a particular emphasis on those who claim membership to the Fur or Massalit tribes. Like any major conflict that has etched its mark in history, the ongoing genocide in Darfur has emerged as the climactic event of a very long history; one that has been fuelled by racial, religious and economic anxieties. The bulk of responsibility for the ongoing atrocities can largely be accredited to the Sudanese government. Nevertheless, one should not ignore how the international community has significantly contributed to the persistence and acceleration of the world’s most recent genocide. Globalization has played a pivotal role on every conceivable level, in the unfolding crisis: from the introduction of Islamic religion and Arab people into the country of Sudan too the international self interests that have deafened the ears of the world’s most powerful, yielding any altruistic impulse obsolete. Consequently, globalization has led international super powers to adopt a position of moral relativism when
faced with conflict or crisis, rendering some groups an expendable specie.

It is apparent that since the concept of globalization can be so broadly applied, condensing its fundamental essence has proven challenging for many scholars. Incidentally, this has lead to discrepancies in how it has come to be described. Thus, “globalization”, for the purpose of this paper, will be defined as: “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Anthony Giddens, 1990: 64). The latter explanation provides us with a definitional framework from which we can begin to understand the political complexities involved in the current crisis.

To begin, the existing status in Darfur is broadly the product of two conflicts that had occurred simultaneously. The first was the civil war between the Islamist, Khartoum-based Sudanese Government and two insurgent militias, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (S.P.L.A.) and the Darfur Liberation Front (D.L.F.). The second, was a severe drought that plagued northern Sudan (Collins, 2006). These two factors were devastating for the country and precipitated what has now been regarded as the first genocide of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

Sudan is a nation that presents an interesting paradox. Aesthetically, everyone’s skin pigmentation is the same, “black”. However, there are dangerously strong sentiments associated with the distinguishing between who is “African” or black and who is “Arab” (Prunier, 2005). They are by many, especially “Arabs”, perceived to be mutually exclusive concepts. In other words, one cannot be both an African and an “Arab”. Much like the concept of the sacred and profane, Sudanese Arabs perceive themselves superior on the basis of their Islamic status. To them, Islamization in Sudan is understood to be more than just an ethnic or religious distinction. Rather it is perceived as the difference between: slave and master, African and Arab, superior and inferior; an ideological impulse that’s preservation is dependent upon the “subversive recasting and re-interpretation” of a history in moral terms (Malkki, 1995: 54).

However, the probability that an “ethnically pure” group exists within
Sudan is not feasible. Historically, Sudanese people are the products of centuries of interbreeding between Arabs and Africans. Nevertheless, the assertion of “ethnic purity” by “Arabs” remains fearsomely strong. As Anthony Smith (1997) commented, “the paradox of ethnicity is its mutability in persistence, and its persistence through change” (p.27). The latter statement is most evident in the case of Sudanese “Arabs”; for they have proven that: so long as there is a collective desire strong enough to maintain claims of Arabian-ism, than there will exist a definition fluid or “mutable” enough to accommodate such an assertion. Despite the obvious “racial” and ethnic tensions between Sudanese “Africans” and Sudanese “Arabs”, this does not adequately explain what has prompted the current genocide. If one is to sufficiently understand the motivations behind the current crisis than a re-visitation of Sudan’s socio-political history is imperative.

Darfur is a state, roughly the size of France, located in western Sudan (Collins, 2006). Tribally, it is a very diverse region. However, it can broadly be dichotomized into the categories of “Africans”, who are the majority population in that state, and “Arabs”. Tensions between the two racial and ethnic classifications can be traced back as far as the 1500’s (when Arabs first began to migrate to Sudan). Thus, it is important to pick a historical starting point from which to trace how the Darfurian crisis evolved.

“In 1916 British expeditionary” colonized the country of Sudan (Collins, 2006: 4). However, the British soon learnt that Darfur had little to offer them, which promoted British colonialists to, for the most part, desert the state of Darfur leaving only a few British officers to oversee Darfurian affairs (Collins, 2006). Darfur is a state that is severely underdeveloped and is both deficient in its agriculture and overall infrastructure. It “has no exploitable resources, only subsistence cultivators and impoverished herdsman” (Collins, 2006: 5). For that reason, the British directed their attention elsewhere, with a particular interest the area of Khartoum, a highly Aribatized location of Sudan.

The people of Khartoum, mainly “Arabs”, “benefited” from this in ways not afforded to Darfurians. The Arabs of Khartoum were taught how to read and write, eventually priding themselves on being a “literate” elite (Collins, 2006:
5). The latter, coupled with their allegiance to Allah and perceived blood ties to the prophet Mohammed, produced a strongly affirmed sense of superiority over non-Arabs. However, no one at that time could have anticipated the magnitude of fear that those sentiments would eventually produce.

Thus, when the British departed from Sudan they left behind the Sudanese Defense Force (S.D.F.). They were a “disciplined, professional, mobile army” who, on several occasions intervened during Sudanese independence and eventually seized “power from incompetent self-serving political leaders who had been democratically elected” (Collins, 2006: 7). Thus, for a brief time during their independence African Darfurians felt as though they had a reason for hope. However, the successors of the original Sudanese Defense Force were not as disciplined as their predecessors and routinely abused their authority over Sudanese civilians (Collins, 2006). Not willing to take the abuse any longer, southern Sudanese insurgents fought back which eventually lead to the demise of the S.D.F.

With no real power to stop them now, Islamic extremists would eventually coerce their way into power and become the new government of Sudan. They called themselves the National Islamic Front and once in power, they quickly developed a military regime to enforce their agenda; thus, the People’s Defense Force was born. However, despite bearing a similar name as their predecessor’s, their very existence was premised on employing a polarized vision. In contrast to the corrupt, but democratically elected government before them, the National Islamic Front sought to impose the Islamization of Sudan and revive their “mythico-history” (Malkki, 1995: 52). This imposition came in spite of the fact that “Arabs” only account for less than 1/2 of the Sudanese culture and another 1/3 are non-Muslims (Collins, 2006). The Arab extremists that now took office embraced their distorted mythico-historical narratives “that contained prescriptions for conduct”, and were now “concerned with the restructuring of the moral order” of Sudan (Malkki, 1995: 54).

“The Arabo-centric enthusiasm” expressed by the Khartoum based Islamic government “reopened old and deep wounds” within the Sudanese society (Collins, 2006: 9). Consequently, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation
Army (S.P.L.A.) was created in an attempt to combat the “Islamized vision” of Sudan. Although the S.P.L.A. was relatively small in comparison to the Sudanese Government army, they were feared. Not only were they feared by the Khartoum government on the basis that they had become, what Arjun Appaduri (2006) has called, “cellular”, and were now mobilizing throughout the whole of Sudan; but also were feared because their very existence was perceived as being the difference between a majority Islamic Sudan and the complete Islamization of Sudan (Appadurai, 2006). For this reason the Peoples Defense Force (P.D.F.) was devised. Their purpose was to eliminate the S.P.L.A.

As previously mentioned, there is a second factor that had bolstered the arousal of the Darfurian crisis. During the same time that the civil war was transpiring, an extremely devastating drought plagued Darfur, particularly the northern and central regions (regions mostly occupied by Arabs) (Collins, 2006). Consequently, many of the Arabs living in those areas were forced to leave and migrate to the more southern parts of Sudan, as a means of survival. Consequently, Sudanese Africans and Arabs, who previously had little contact with one another, were now finding themselves living within dangerously close proximity to one another. Inevitably, this lead to “increasing tensions over water and grazing areas” (Collins, 2006: 6). Thus, with such a limited source of basic natural resources (i.e. short water supply, few areas for agriculture to be produced, etc), survival was no longer perceived as an absolute; and so began the first phase of “predatory identity” development between Africans and “Arabs” (Appadurai, 2006). No more did they perceive one another as minor “inconveniences”. It was soon to evolve into a belief that one’s existence was dependent upon the other’s demise. However, unlike in the past, when disagreements would be discussed, this new phase in Sudanese history came equipped with automatic weapons, supplied by the Khartoum government to its Arab civilians (Collins, 2006).

In response to both the latter and the proposed agenda of an Islamized Sudan, the Darfur Liberation Front (D.L.F.) was created. It, like S.P.L.A., defended the belief that the military and government should exist as separate entities (Collins, 2006). The only significant difference between the two was
that the D.L.F. represented Darfur and the S.P.L.A. represented the whole of Sudan. Although consisting of a relatively small militia, approximately 300 insurgents, the D.L.F. had experienced some significant victories. This came despite the fact that the Sudanese government had initially underestimated them and gave them little consideration.

In February of 2003, the D.L.F. released a “Political Declaration” to the press. It partially stated that the fundamental objectives of the D.L.F. are to secure:

a united democratic Sudan…predicated on full acknowledgement of Sudan’s ethnic, cultural, social and political diversity. Viable unity therefore must be ultimately based on the right to self-determination …Religion and politics…..must be kept in their respective domains, with religion belonging to the personal domain and the state in the public domain….. (Collins, 2006: 9).

The D.L.F.’s application of “substantive dissent” had now caught the attention of the Sudanese government and had aroused a considerable degree of fear; as the objectives of the D.L.F. were now being heard by a much wider audience (Appaduri, 2006: 63). In an attempt to significantly weaken its opposition, the Government of Sudan rethought its strategy and “began exploiting ethnic divisions, branding the insurgency as an African attempt to rid Darfur of the Arab race”(Collins, 2006: 11). This strategical counter attack made all the difference; and effectively gave credence for the government to “legitimately” rid Darfur of any police protection, claiming that they were endorsing treason (Collins, 2006). However, the situation only intensified with the birthing of the “Janjaweed”.

With their campaign transforming from one calling for the Islamization of Sudan to one now calling for the extermination of all Darfurian “Africans”, the Sudanese government made an unprecedented move when it introduced the “Janjaweed”. Essentially, this name is applied as an “umbrella” and refers to any state sponsored militia created to inflict terror on the Africans of Darfur. The Sudanese government had granted the Janjaweed authority to act with total impunity (Prunier, 2005). For that reason Africans in Darfur have been
both the targets and victims of: countless rapes, mutilations, and tortured deaths. They have witnessed the burning of villages and have had their entire means of subsistence ripped from them (i.e. their livestock is stolen or killed). Nevertheless, the atrocities do not stop there. In October of 2007 a CBC documentary, produced by Neil Docherty (2007), contented that many of the irrigation works within Darfur, a largely “African” populated region, had been deliberately and severely compromised (i.e. poisoning wells). It was a malicious attempt to expedite their demise and consequently has rendered millions of African lives at the mercy of foreign aid.

However throughout history, Africa has remained a continent crippled by burden (i.e. colonization, corruption, economic debt, drought, famine, disease, civil wars, etc.). And although major International Powers have often had a hand in this continent’s slow demise, they have not been as forthcoming to help remedy the situation; and have instead assumed a position of benign neglect. Yet, in order to truly appreciate the International Community’s failure to intervene one must first go beyond the aesthetic pretentiousness the United Nations (U.N.) presents.

In April 2004, the UN Secretary General had employed the “High-Level Mission” team “to assess the humanitarian situation” in Darfur “and make appropriate recommendations” (Hugo, 2004: 818). The report submitted had confirmed that the rights of citizens were being grossly violated and immediate humanitarian intervention was required. It was not until late May of 2004 that the Sudanese government began issuing visas to international humanitarian workers however, stalling any “logistical work” that was requested (Hugo, 2004). What was even more problematic was that the funding to support such an undertaking was cruelly scarce. So, in June of 2004, the UN held an international donors conference (Hugo, 2004); a seemingly tokenistic “effort” to alleviate the irrefutable funding deficiencies afforded to aid initiatives in Darfur. Prior to the conference Oxfam took liberties to emphasize the disproportionate international funding afforded to Iraq in comparison to that of Sudan. “In the first three months of 2003 the appeal for Iraq had received” $2 billion U.S.” (Hugo, 2004: 818). However, as of 2004 “Sudan had received
only US $200 million” out of an appeal for $639 million” (Hugo, 2004: 818). Nevertheless, the goal of the Geneva conference was to raise $ 236 million dollars U.S. in order to aid the 2.2 million people affected by the crisis. However, despite making this goal clear to the international community, the conference was only “successful” in raising $126 million dollars U.S. in pledges (Hugo, 2004).

In April 2006, the U.N., after a five year debate, passed “Bill R2P” which declared that: “the responsibility of a sovereign nation to protect its citizens was paramount” adding to it one key clause, which stated: it “was an obligation on the international community to intervene when a state failed, through lack of willingness or capacity, to protect its own people” (Grono 2006: 623). The implications of passing a bill such as this are misleading. Presumably, one would have thought that had Bill R2P existed during the genocides of Rwanda and of the former Yugoslavia many lives could have been spared. However, evidence of its current application would indicate otherwise. The crisis in Darfur had undeniably reached international attention as early as 2003 and was declared genocide by 2004. In spite of this there has been relatively no major international intervention, other than that of humanitarian aid from non-governmental organizations.

Reasons for the U.N.’s general absence and disinterest in the Darfurian crisis are multiple. Many of the nations that comprise the U.N. either have no interests within Sudan or, they have too much interest within the country of Sudan, making them resistant to any intervention. What is even more disconcerting about this is that those who continue to have vested interests within Sudan are both indirectly and directly aiding in the acceleration of this genocide.

To best illustrate what warrants a statement as ethically damaging as the latter, one must turn their attention to the “arms embargo” debate. Currently there exist two kinds of Arms embargoes: “voluntary and mandatory”. The UN describes a voluntary arms embargo as a recommendation, made by a Security Council, that an end to “supply of arms, ammunition, military material and related services” is the best course of action; and asks that States adhere to
their recommendation (Vines, 2007: 2). However, mandatory arms embargos are called upon “when a Security Council resolution decides that all states shall prohibit the sale or supply of arms, ammunition, military equipment and related services to the target state” (Vines, 2007: 3). Unlike voluntary, mandatory arms embargoes legally require that the UN take appropriate actions to ensure compliance (Vines, 2007). Thus, when state members of the UN proposed that mandatory arms embargoes be applied to eighteen countries and/or regions in 2005, only one region was refuted, that region was Darfur (Vines, 2007). This is significant on several levels, the number one being the process in which a proposed arms embargo has to go through in order to be approved.

Thus, in order for any proposed mandatory arms embargo to be sanctioned it must first be approved by the UNSecurity Council. Inconveniently for the Africans of Darfur, out of the five countries that comprise the Security Council at least two, China and Russia, have documented investments with Sudan. Despite the fact that some UN state members supported the notion of a mandatory arms embargo, there exists a “consensus rule” that requires that all members of the Security Council unanimously agree on a decision in order for it to be sanctioned. UN “Comtrade data” has revealed that China has transferred at least $1 million worth of “military weapons” and small firearms in 2002 and by 2005 Comtrade reported that this number had surged up to $23 million (Vines, 2007: 6). A report in 2004 determined that China is one of the leading country suppliers of military weapons, fighter planes and helicopters to the Sudanese government; weapons that are notoriously used in many of the attacks on Darfur’s African population (Wang, 2005). Russia however, despite their success in evading much international criticism regarding their role in this crisis, has reportedly exported aircraft and “extra’s” valued at an estimated $21 million to the Sudanese government (Grono, 2006).

However, economic interests persist in other realms as well. China is actively the largest importer of Sudanese oil in the world. In 2005 China accounted “for 12.1 percent of the world’s oil consumption”, however today that number is expected to have significantly increased, placing them only second behind the United States (Wang, 2005: 2). Currently, China has over 3
billion dollars invested within Sudanese Oil interests (Wang, 2005). One report by the, United States (U.S.) financed, Civilian Protection Monitoring Team found the Chinese even encouraged the Government of Sudan to appropriate the land in a fashion that is conducive to the exploration of oil (Wang, 2005). These kinds of requests have lead to the violent, often fatal removal and displacement of many Sudanese Africans (Wang, 2005).

The assurance of continued Chinese investment within Sudan is made possible by their current position as a member of the Security Council. Through this position China has persistently been able to undermine any UN attempts, whether sincere or contrived, to resolve the current crisis by threatening to exercise their veto (Wang, 2005). As this quote so disturbingly states: “The sad reality is that Darfur simply does not matter enough, and Sudan matters too much, for the international community to do more to stop the atrocities” (Grono, 2006: 8).

In 1994 General Romeo Dellaire became the commanding General of a UN Peace Keeping mission in Rwanda. After witnessing the atrocities and blatant disregard for the value of human life that transpired there, he arrived at several significant conclusions: Firstly, “that the Rwandan genocide was the ultimate responsibility of those Rwandans who planned, ordered, supervised and eventually conducted it” (Dellaire, 2003: 515). Secondly, he has suggested that the International community, with emphasis on the UN, had essentially chosen to ignore the cries from the people of Rwanda (Dellaire, 2003). Lastly, Dellaire (2003) has suggested that the UN’s general inaction towards the atrocities of Rwanda is a testament that the International community has come to regard Africans as a “sub human” category.

The implications of the latter contention are significant. Although such a statement is impossible to substantiate through any approach other than a theoretical one, Samantha Power’s work would support Dellaire’s assertion. Power, a teacher of human rights and U.S. foreign policy at Harvard’s J.F.K. School of government, found that within the U.S. state department African specialists have the “least clout of all regional specialists and the smallest chance of affecting policy outcomes” (Power, 2003: 365). Although her statement was
specifically referring to the U.S. administration, one could presume that this fact could be broadly applied to most International Administrations; for no nation has significantly attempted to intervene in either the past Rwandan or current Darfurian genocides. However, this is not to suggest that international neglect is distinct to Africans, as Bennett’s article demonstrates moral relativism is universalistic.

In all three cases, the Rwandan, Yugoslavian (Bosnian) and Darfurian genocides, there was sufficient warning to the International Community that “predatory” outbreaks were soon to emerge. Nevertheless, in all instances there was a failure to act. Bennett (1997) contends that “the International response to the Yugoslav war....illustrates, above all, how ethical considerations play no part in the foreign policies of the great powers” (p.121). However, unlike in the Former Yugoslavia, where an arms embargo was successfully enforced, Darfur has not been so “fortunate”. That is not in any way meant to trivialize or minimize the events that transpired in the Yugoslav genocide. Rather, it is intended to illustrate the “value of life” hierarchy that exists within the collective conscience of the international community; and demonstrate how ‘some humans are seen as more human’ (Dellaire, 2003).

Although there are multiple ways in which the handlings of the Yugoslav, Darfurian and Rwandan crisis parallel each other, there still exist some significant discrepancies. In his chapter, Bennett (1997) discusses how the “saturation” of “television images” had forced the international community, though reluctantly and evidently too late, to step up to their ethical obligations. Yet, neither the Rwandan genocide nor the ongoing Darfurian genocide had or has received a great deal of media attention (Melvern, 2006). Many Westerners are not even aware of the ongoing genocide in Darfur. Those parties that are most culpable evidently are faced with little rebuke from the international community; as was evident with the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing China.

China is a nation known not only for its total disregard for human rights in neighboring countries, such as Sudan, but also for the violation of human rights within its own country. In 2008 a surge of western media attention was focused on the Chinese government; revealing that the practice of:
torture, kidnappings, arbitrary detention, unlawful imprisonment and media
censorship continue to persist within China. Yet despite this, Beijing China
had been selected to host the 2008 Olympic games; adopting a slogan that read
“one world one dream”. The pretentious persona that the Chinese government
was attempting to project to the international community had gone largely
uncontested by many of the world’s “super powers”; rendering significant
international implications and revealing the insidious effects of international
apathy. Both the Sudanese and Chinese governments have demonstrated
that: so long as a country, which violates human rights, is allowed to proceed
without reprimand they will continue to do so.

It would no longer seem that the question at hand is as simplistic as:
what is the value of human life? Rather, as Romeo Dellaire has suggested, it
is much more specific than that, and is now a question of: What is the value
of an African life? For centuries the world has been relentlessly interested in
Africa; but it is not so much the people that inhabit it that prompt International
interest. Rather, it is the seemingly endless natural resources that reside there.
Globalization has made the exploitation of both African resources and African
peoples much more feasible. One has to look no further than China to see
how the latter statement is best epitomized. Both China and Russia have been
instrumental in equipping and helping to finance the technological strategies
currently being employed by the Sudanese government. Nevertheless, that is
not to excuse or minimize the culpability of those who fundamentally devised
and executed the extermination of the people of Darfur. Rather, it is intended
to illustrate the scope of responsibility. There can be little contention that the
core responsibility of the extermination of Africans in Darfur lays in the hands
of the Sudanese government. They were instrumental in the birthing and
fostering of the Janjaweed militia’s who have committed some of the most
unspeakable atrocities. And although the current crisis does not overtly affect
many of those that live outside of Darfur the moral implications are significant.

So, at what point does it become the responsibility of the international
community to respond? Clearly, the severing of babies penises, the burning
of villages, the multiple rapings women have to endure, the poisoning of
wells, and the general disregard for human life is not enough to warrant an intervention by the world’s most powerful. So what is? Change cannot exist in a world where there is a presence of threat but an absence of consequence.

When the UN was created it was fundamentally rooted in a foundation that contended: state sovereignty must be paramount; a seemingly appropriate response to the events that transpired during the Second World War (Grono, 2006). Essentially what this meant was that: under no circumstances was the UN authorized to intervene in the affairs of existing nation states. However, the recognition of its severe deficiency was soon realized but would not be rectified until 2006. With the introduction of a key clause to UN policy it remained the ultimate responsibility of a government to protect its citizens. However, in the event that a government fails to do so it is now the obligation of the international community to intervene (Grono, 2006). Despite the implementation of this new clause into UN policy, Darfur has yet to witness its application.

Globalization has been instrumental on every conceivable level of the Darfurian crisis. It is the catalyst that made the notion of an Islamized Sudan even conceivable; it is what has prompted idol UN members to even make the Darfurian crisis a matter of debate; and finally, it is what has fuelled the greed and moral disturbances of some of the world’s most powerful. To say that those Africans that suffer at the hands of corrupt dictators are the only people to have been abandoned by the international community would be greatly misleading, as there is typically little intervention where there is no self-interest. However, a critical analysis of history would suggest that there exists a definite racial and ethnic hierarchy, rendering some humans more expendable than others. For this reason we have to “re-emphasize the principle of justice for all, so that no one for even a moment will make the ethical and moral mistake of ranking some humans as more human than others, a mistake that the international community” continually endorses through its indifference (Dellaire, 2003: 513).
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