

## State Failures in Conflict Resolution: Case Study of the Crisis in the Sudan (1956-2011)

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### **Abstract**

*Conflict is ubiquitous in nature. Its history is as old as recorded human history, causing some writers to posit it as part of the human experience. The frequency of conflict situations in the world today has caused great concern to many. And the ways that states handle conflicts in their domains have tended to exacerbate conflicts, rather than resolve them. States tend to take advantage of their monopoly of force to dominate and suppress conflict situations, rather than engage in meaningful dialogue. In this paper, it is argued that states should explore other avenues to resolve conflicts and only use force as a last resort if other strategies fail to yield meaningful result.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Darfur, Domination, Suppression, Avoidance, Confrontation, Transformation.

### **Introduction**

Conflict occurs when there is sharp disagreement between divergent ideas, interests, people, and nations. Conflict is a universal phenomenon, yet its manifestation differs from one culture to another. Conflict is a visible sign of human energy and often the result of competitive striving for the same goals, rights and resources. We tend to assume or take for granted that we share a single reality with others – that is to say, that other people believe the same things we do; or that may be they have the same values as us. But this is not always the case. Conflict in essence is the construction of a special type of reality. In other words, two people or a group of people may not see the same thing in the same way.

Conflict may be viewed as occurring along cognitive (perception), emotional (feeling), and behavioural (action) dimensions. Conflicts that take place within society may be the result of several factors and scholars call these types of conflicts social conflicts. Just like it is difficult to point to a single factor as being responsible for order within society, it is as difficult to point to a single explanation for the emergence, escalation, or protraction of conflict whether violent or otherwise. At times, and particularly in the cases where conflict has degenerated to the point of crisis, it may be common that those involved will find it difficult to remember what led to the initial agreement (Faleti, 2006).

For the most part, conflict is depicted as if it is totally negative, which is not always the case. Depending on how it is handled, conflict can either be constructive (positive), or destructive (negative). Conflict used positively and constructively can help to explore different solutions to a problem and also to stimulate creativity. It can also be used as a way of bringing emotive and non-rational arguments (arguments not based on observation, measurement, and reasoning) into the open while at the same time, helping to reduce long-standing tensions. Negative conflicts are viewed as naturally destructive and used mainly to inflict injuries on, neutralize or subvert the aspirations of opponents. In situations where conflict is destructive, it can hinder the progress of society, and encourage individuals to resort to unfriendly behaviours. Negative conflict can also encourage

attitudes where winning becomes a do-or-die affair; where emotions take the place of reasoning. Negative conflict can lead to the disintegration of groups and can hinder the advancement of society.

### Perceptions of Conflict

Generally, the way a person perceives conflict will influence the approach he/she employs to solving the conflict. A good approach to how conflict is perceived may increase the probability of it being resolved in a good way. The following are some of the helpful and unhealthy way of perceiving conflict:

Unhealthy Approach	Helpful Approach
Conflict is perceived as always being a disruption of order, a negative experience.	Conflict is perceived as an outgrowth of diversity, which may hold possibilities for improving relationships.
A battle between incompatible self-interests, desires, power or goals.	One part of a relationship, a part which may involve needs, interests, value perceptions, power, feelings etc. not just desires.
An isolated event that is allowed to define the entire relationship.	Occurrences which punctuate a relationship and which can help clarify the relationship.
Always a struggle between right and wrong, or good versus evil.	Confrontations between differences in certain aspects of a relationship but other aspects are there to build on.

*Source: International Civilian Peace-keeping and Peace-Building Training Programme, Austria, 1977.*

Conflicts that are of a personal, group, national or international nature do not just erupt, they pass through stages. These stages include the emerging stage, the escalating stage, the most severe stage, and the rebuilding and reconciliation stage.

### Emerging Stage

According to Oyeshola, (2005) at this early stage, all manners of signs and signals are being given regarding the on-set of the conflict. For example, closeness between two friends gradually gives way to aloofness and disinterestedness. Frequent visitations are reduced considerably. Coldness and some sort of indifference slowly replace emotional expressions of warmth and familiarity. It is worth noting that at the emerging stage, there are often more options or 'doors' open for various types of effective intervention. And there is also a better chance for non-violent intervention. According to Oyeshola, (2005), non-governmental intervention is more possible now than later and in the case of communal conflict, more likely to occur than is governmental intervention because governmental intervention requires a more complex and time-consuming process.

### Escalating Stage

Escalation is the second stage in the stages of conflict. The timeframe whereby conflict escalates can be very short from the emerging stage. But then again, it depends on the type of conflict. At this point, all the parties in the conflict become aware that something is fundamentally wrong in the relationship. And if nothing is done to check the situation, a 'point of no-return' can be reached leading to the third stage, the severe stage.

### Severe Stage

The third stage of conflict is the severe stage, where nothing is sacred again. It is a 'no holds barred' situation that is often characterized by violence. This is the stage where reasoning takes a back seat to insanity. Schools, hospitals, churches, mosques, and community property are destroyed. Any

human person could be attacked and killed including those who are not part of the conflict. When the conflicting parties are now tired or exhausted from the orgy of violence, or there is an external intervention, the fourth stage of the conflict begins to surface. This stage may lead to rebuilding and reconciliation. But it may take a long time for the scars that had been inflicted (physical and emotional) to be forgotten long after the wounds had healed. This may have impact on the reconciliation and rebuilding process.

### **Reconciliation and Rebuilding Stage**

This is the last stage of conflict. It is concerned with ‘repairing’ relationships, institutions, and social networks and putting in place schemes that can help the disputing parties to be united again. In short, the reconciliation and rebuilding stage will serve to mend the ravages or effects of violence. Without these steps being taken, there could be a relapse to destructive conflict in the society again. In *An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros Boutros Ghali, former UN Secretary-General defines post-conflict peace-building as ‘action to identify and support structures that will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. What this means is that, all actions that support political, economic, social and military measures must be taken to promote long-lasting peace. Also, structures that allow for the redress of the causes of conflict must be established to consolidate peace.

Rebuilding and reconciliation imply demilitarization, rehabilitation, the control of small arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform, social and economic development (Oyeshola, 2005).

### **The Components of Conflict Analysis**

Most conflict situations have a number of contexts and properties. It is the duty of the conflict analyst or third party mediator to examine these components and bring them out for a proper understanding of the conflict situation. These components include the context of the conflict, stages of the conflict, and timeliness (Best, 2005:64).

### **Background and Context of the conflict**

According to Best (2005:64), it is better to commence conflict analysis by creating and describing the background to the conflict. This is based on the assumption that every conflict has a specific context, history, and background. The parties and the issues must have emerged from somewhere, and from given historical, cultural, political and social contexts. The understanding of this background it is believed is critical to the understanding of the conflict itself.

Most African countries for instance, have histories, which predate colonialism. These histories may be rooted in patterns of migration, settlement, citizenship, nationalism and communal sentiments etc. People get a sense of identity (who they are or how they see themselves) based on history as well as shared culture and values. Sometimes, these histories themselves, and the culture and values emanating from them come into sharp conflict with those of others and create the basis for conflict.

### **Stages of Conflict (2)**

Based on what we have seen so far in this course, conflicts have their dynamics, characterized by different stages and phases of change and transformation. Scholars tend to use different terminologies and characterization to describe the stages in conflict. Simon Fisher et al (2000) identifies five stages of conflict as follows:

1. The first stage is the **pre-conflict stage**; a period when goals between parties become incompatible, which if not addressed could lead to open conflict. At this stage, the conflict

is not well known because parties try to hide it from public view. However, communication between the parties concerned is clearly being hindered.

2. **Confrontation** is the second stage at which point, the conflict becomes open and begins to manifest. This stage is characterized by occasional fighting, low levels of violence, strained relations and polarization. There may be efforts to mobilize resources and search for allies by the parties concerned.
3. The third stage is the **stage of crisis**, which represents the peak of the conflict. In violent conflict, this is the stage of war and intense fighting which may lead to killings, injuries, large-scale population displacements, and the use of small arms and light weapons etc.
4. The fourth stage is believed to be the **outcome stage**. There is a general belief that all conflicts will pass through this stage one-way or the other. Either one side wins and the other loses, or a ceasefire may be declared. A party in the conflict may surrender (which does not always happen), or a third party stronger than the warring parties may intervene to impose a solution and stop the fighting. The important thing at this stage is that the violence be reduced so that there would be room for discussions to commence, or alternative means of settling the conflict.
5. The fifth stage is the **post-conflict stage**. At this stage, conflict has either ended or is significantly reduced, and the parties have gone past the crisis stage. This is the stage to address the underlying causes of the conflict, those incompatible goals that created the conflict in the first place. If these issues are addressed at this stage, the conflict may resurface, with consequent eruption of violence.

**Timeliness** – the stages of conflict can also be analysed along a timeline. A timeline serves to present a chronology of a conflict situation, tracing events back to their roots or most distant significant past, and including major events along the time continuum that may have affected the conflict. These should include efforts put in place to address the conflict that might not have succeeded. Placing the conflict situation within a context or timeliness enhances an understanding of the conflict within appropriate historical and social contexts.

### Methods of Conflict Resolution

**Conflict resolution:** These are a variety of approaches aimed at bringing an end to conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, and it is different from conflict management or conflict transformation (Miller, 2003:8). With conflict resolution, it is expected that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behaviour is no longer violent, nor attitude hostile, while the structure of the conflict has been changed (Miall et al (2001:21).

Mitchell and Banks (1996) use conflict resolution to refer to:

1. An outcome in which the issues in existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties;
2. The resolution of the conflict has to be self-sustaining and should produce a new, positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile or antagonistic to each other.

In essence, conflict resolution connotes a sense of finality, where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense. It may be necessary to provide basic needs to parties where the provision of needs was the 'bone of contention' and so on.

**Conflict Management:** This is the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures, which involves working with, and through the parties

involved in the conflict. Conflict management covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively at different stages, including efforts made to prevent conflicts from happening in the first place – that is being proactive. Another way of looking at conflict management is to see it as positive measures taken and aimed at conflict containment so that a conflict situation does not degenerate to a state of violence or crisis that would bring about loss of lives and properties. According to Best (2006:95), “conflict management” is perhaps an admission of the reality that conflict is inevitable, but that not all conflicts can always be resolved; therefore what peace advocates do is to manage and regulate them.

**Conflict transformation:** John Paul Lederach (1995), introduced this term. Conflict transformation goes beyond conflict resolution to build longer standing relationships through a process of change in perceptions and attitudes of the parties. In essence, the aim of conflict transformation is to change the parties, their relationships and the conditions that created the conflict (Miall et al, 2001). Conditions that have been created by the conflict will also need to be changed. Conflict transformation entails the coming being of new situations involving perceptions, relationships and communication patterns among previously antagonistic groups.

**Conflict suppression:** Conflict suppression is used to portray the unwillingness of more powerful parties, or stronger interveners who have the ability to transform or successfully manage a conflict situation. Instead, they use the instruments of power or force to push the issues under the carpet. Governments and repressive regimes are usually guilty of this situation by declining to take appropriate decisions as and when due or trying to lord it over others. The state can suppress conflicts but unless the underlying issues are addressed, conflicts will not go away.

### **Conflict Handling Styles**

Human beings when dealing with their social and natural environments usually employ two typical forms of responses (Ojiji, 2006:120). These are cooperation and assertiveness. People cooperate when they behave in a manner or style designed to satisfy their desires or needs as well as those of the other people they relate with. In the context of conflicts, cooperation manifests as accommodation, avoidance, collaboration and compromise.

On the other hand, assertiveness is the attempt to satisfy one’s needs and desires at the expense of the other persons we relate with. It involves the defending of one’s right in a given situation and pushing a position favourable to one’s self or one’s group. In the context of conflict, assertiveness manifests as domination and confrontation/fighting. We will now examine the above-mentioned conflict handling styles one after the other:

#### **1. Domination**

This conflict handling style is derived from the disposition of people to assert themselves in situations. Here, there is little or no interest in the well-being or interest of the other person or party. It is all about one’s self and one’s self-alone. In a conflict situation then, one party that is assertive tries to totally ‘eclipse’ the other party. The primary motive in domination is the desire to win, and therefore, make the party to lose. It is a win-lose approach. Thus the assertive party behaves in a manner to suppress the views of the other party by using strong arguments or emphasizing its rank or economic position. This approach can hardly lead to a lasting resolution of conflict. Even if the assertive person ‘succeeds’ in ‘winning’ the case, there is a tendency that the ‘resolution’ will leave behind grudges in the other party. Accordingly, whenever the opportunity arises, that party would express discontent, which could possibly lead to the ‘reopening of old wounds.’

**2. Avoidance**

Conflict avoidance occurs when one party in a potential conflict ignores the conflicting issues or denies the significance of the issues to all the parties concerned. It is a way of not addressing issues in the conflict, or a tactical way of postponing the conflict to a better time, if at all such a time will come. Avoidance amounts to postponing the 'evil day.' And we know that ignoring a problem does not make it to go away. In an avoidance situation, the person is unassertive and uncooperative. It means that the stronger party has no intention of pursuing its own needs or those of the other party. Conflict is not resolved by ignoring the issues. In other words, conflict avoidance is a dangerous way of responding to a conflict even if it guarantees immediate sanity. In the long run, if the issues in the conflict are not addressed, the relationship between the parties could worsen, leading to overt violence.

**3. Accommodation**

This style of dealing with conflicts comes from a cooperative disposition. In accommodation, there is a conscious attempt to neglect one's needs and focus on satisfying the needs of the other party. The underlying value here is that of self-sacrifice. It may be a reflection of the desire to ensure personal and social harmony, and to preserve a relationship at one's cost. Like the case of avoidance, it has short-term benefit in the form of social stability. In the long run however, the assertive party may assume greater power that can be detrimental to the other persons.

**4. Collaborating**

In this style of handling conflict, the parties do not avoid the conflict. They work with each other to find a solution that is satisfactory to all concerned. It is about dialogue in which the parties listen actively and gain insight into each other's position. That understanding enables them to develop a solution that satisfies the concerns of both parties. It is a win-win situation. The aims of most negotiations are of this nature even though getting to the final solution can be quite tedious.

**5. Compromising**

Compromising involves finding an expedient and mutually acceptable solution, which partly satisfies both parties. In other words, parties split their differences and make concessions in order to resolve the conflict. With compromise, a party is partially assertive and partially cooperative. Compromise becomes necessary in situations where the positions of the parties are so incompatible that the two cannot be reconciled without one of them losing something in the process. This is different from collaboration where the parties can be reconciled without any of them losing anything. In compromising, the needs of the two parties may not be completely satisfied, but they all would win something from the situation. In this way, compromise may succeed in reducing the intensity of the conflict but not in totally resolving the conflict. It can be a way of buying time necessary to work out a more acceptable solution to a conflict.

**6. Confrontation/Fighting**

Confrontation occurs when the parties in a conflict physically or emotionally 'attack' each other. They could do this by threatening each other, insulting or generally engaging in acts of war. There is a considerable degree of lack of understanding of each other's position as each one tries to hold onto their point of view and therefore, disagrees with the other person's

point of view. Confrontation as a conflict handling style is characterized by violence and creates an outcome where both parties lose.

#### **7. Problem Solving**

This approach involves parties constructively listening to each other with the intention to understand the underlying elements in the conflict, and to deal with the issues. In using this style, parties care very little about who is right or wrong; but consider conflict as an opportunity to improve on the relationship between them. It is an approach, which usually leads to a win-win situation.

#### **State Failure in Conflict Resolution**

The increasing numbers of conflict situations all over the world seem to indicate that nation-states and other third-party mediators are not doing well in terms of conflict resolution. This part of the paper will examine the underlying causes of state failure in conflict resolution. Factors responsible for this state of affairs will then be used in an in-depth examination of the case studies of State-failure in conflict resolution.

The success of otherwise of states in properly resolving conflicts will depend among other things on how they handle conflicts in their various stages. It is important to note at this stage that conflicts do not just happen. There would be signs and signals along the way particularly at the emerging stage. There would be strained relationships for instance, characterized by occasional acts of aggression/attack among communities that had co-existed peacefully for centuries. Or, a rebel movement would emerge with demands and interests. A major mistake that states make at the emerging stages of conflict is to ignore the warning signs or to pretend that the signs are not significant. As we have seen in the conflict handling styles, avoidance is a kind of assertiveness, which does not bode well for conflict resolution. This is because conflicts swept under the carpet do not go away. They fester, waiting to erupt at an appropriate time.

Moreover, states particularly in Africa do not know how to properly manage conflict so as to minimize damages. Particularly at the severe or crisis stage, most authoritarian regimes would just use brute force to dominate or suppress conflicts. Conflict domination or suppression may help to provide political stability for a time, but the underlying tensions are by no means dissipated. What is needed at this time is dialogue, compromise or collaboration to address the underlying causes of the conflict. It must be said at this stage that terrorist regimes or other insurgents do not fall into this category because the global best practice is not to compromise or collaborate with terrorists or others who wish to overthrow democratic systems.

At the rebuilding or reconciliation stage where agreements are reached and accords signed, most states would implement such agreements haphazardly without due regards to the rights of the other parties. It is obvious that agreements that are implemented from a selfish position tend to leave behind grudges and ill feelings. This tends to make future eruptions of conflict very likely.

Conflict handling styles has also contributed to state failure in conflict resolution. In many conflict areas in the world today, it will be seen that the stronger party (the state) has used domination and suppression to douse the tension of conflict. Domination always produces a win-lose situation. It is an attempt by the stronger party to deny the rights of others. This approach to handling conflicts has been used a lot by States in Africa for purely selfish reasons, and can hardly lead to a lasting resolution of conflicts.

States also tend to use confrontation/fighting to deal with conflict situations in their domain. When this happens, it shows a lack of understanding of the position of the other party, and unwillingness to compromise or shift position. When States particularly weak states use

confrontation as a conflict handling style, it tends to create a lose-lose outcome because in a situation of violence, everybody loses.

### **Case Study of the Sudan Crises**

#### **Background of the conflict**

Sudan was under British-Egyptian control between 1899 and 1956 until it gained independence in 1956. Darfur joined the protectorate in **1916**. Their Anglo-Egyptian rulers kept the North and South separate until 1946. During this period a large percentage of development was focused in the North, while the South and other peripheral regions, including Darfur, were both politically and economically marginalized.

#### **North-South Civil War**

When North and South Sudan were merged in 1946, the majority of political and administrative power was allocated to the North, leaving many in the South resentful. In the lead up to independence in 1956, the South initiated a rebellion motivated by fears of further marginalization. This conflict was ended by a peace agreement made in 1972. Yet violations of the peace agreement, division of the regions, and the nationwide imposition of Sharia Law soon ruptured this fragile peace. This led to the outbreak of open hostilities in 1983. The Sudanese conflict has lasted 22 years and it is estimated to have killed about 2 million people, and rendered a further 4 million homeless. In 2005, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP) in Khartoum, bringing an official end to the conflict, signed the Naivasha Agreement or the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

#### **The Crisis in Darfur**

Darfur, which is about the size of Togo and Benin Republic combined, is made up of both desert and lush grasslands. Most Darfurians are Muslim and appear indistinguishable to outsiders. However, the people of Darfur divide themselves into two basic identity groups, "Arabs" and "Africans." The Arab groups tend to be nomads while the Africans are usually farmers. Arabs and Africans have always competed over water and land, but tribal councils have traditionally been able to resolve these disputes. This changed in the 1980s when the government replaced the tribal councils with government agencies. Because Arabs dominated the government, it soon became clear how any dispute between Arabs and Africans would be decided. At the same time, Darfur was hit by a severe drought. Disputes over resources increased and there was no legitimate system for resolving them. Skirmishes between the two groups became violent. The tribes grew more polarized. The breaking point came when a minority group of African farmers calling themselves the Sudan Liberation Army rebelled. Tired of the government's pro-Arab prejudice, the SLA attacked the airport, destroying fighter planes and killing around 100 soldiers. Trying to save face, President Omar al-Bashir suppressed the rebels. However, rather than using the army, al-Bashir sent in the Janjaweed. Instead of subduing the fighting, the Janjaweed escalated it out of control. Sudanese general Ibrahim Suleiman explained, "When the problems with the rebels started in Darfur, we in the government of Sudan had a number of options. We chose the wrong one. We chose the very worst one."

Although Sudan was a dictatorship, it failed as a police state because its army is too small to control the country, which is the size of Western Europe with few roads, bridges, or other infrastructure. The government relied on militias to supplement Sudan's professional army. One of those militias, called the Janjaweed, was made up of mostly of Arab nomads. The Janjaweed are by no means representative of all Arabs in Darfur. In fact, the Janjaweed have attacked some Arab tribes as well. However, because of the ethnic conflict in Darfur, this group is already prejudiced against the farmers. When President al-Bashir armed the Janjaweed, the conflict spiralled out of control.



### **Conflict handling approach of the Sudanese Government**

Edward Azar (1990), in his theory of *Protracted Social Conflict* (PSC) had argued that in many parts of the world, countries suffer from a colonial legacy which artificially imposed European ideals of territorial statehood onto a multitude of communal groups on the principle of 'divide and rule.' As a result, in many post-colonial multi-communal societies, the state machinery comes to be dominated by a single communal group or coalition of a few communal groups that are unresponsive to the needs of other groups in the society. This situation can strain the social fabric of society and eventually can breed fragmentation and protracted social conflict. This has been the situation in the Sudan.

The long standing discrimination against the people of Southern Sudan, the denial of representation in the political system, and the concentration of the country's wealth and infrastructure in the North – these were the principal causes of conflict in the Sudan. However, the 'divide and rule' tactic of colonialism had already sowed the seeds of discord in the country. The fear that they would continue to suffer discrimination in the hands of the Arab North prompted Southern Sudan to initiate a rebellion at about the time of Sudan's independence in 1956. The Sudanese government failed to address the root causes of the rebellion by taking measures to allay the fears of the South. Rather, it chose to use its strong political and economic clout to dominate the conflict and generally to suppress it. This exacerbated the conflict causing it to spiral out of control.

In terms of conflict management, the Sudanese Government has generally not been able to reduce the negative effects of the conflict. By the time South Sudan got its independence on 9 July 2011, through a UN backed and sponsored referendum, this conflict had lasted 22 years and is estimated to have killed 2 million people and rendered another 4 million homeless. A peace agreement was made in 1972. Violations of the peace agreement, division of the regions, and the nationwide imposition of Sharia law leading to the outbreak of open conflict in 1983 however, soon ruptured the fragile peace. Sudan was essentially a secular society. By the imposition of Sharia law, the Sudanese displayed a lack of insensitivity to the rights of the other parties, and continued with its policy of domination and suppression, which as we have seen, can hardly lead to a resolution of the conflict.

In the Darfur region, there have been disputes between Arab nomads and African farmers over grazing rights, land and water, but tribal councils have traditionally been able to resolve these disputes. This changed in the 1980s when the government replaced the tribal councils with government programs. Because Arabs dominated the government, it soon became clear how any dispute between Arabs and Africans would be decided.

The breaking point came when a minority group of African farmers calling themselves the Sudan Liberation Army rebelled. Tired of the government's pro-Arab prejudice, the SLA attacked the airport, destroying fighter planes and killing around 100 soldiers. Trying to save face, President Omar al-Bashir suppressed the rebels. However, rather than using the army, al-Bashir sent in the Janjaweed. The Janjaweed is a criminal gang Arab militia that is bereft of military ethics and discipline. The Janjaweed has used scorched earth tactics in the region that includes the widespread rape, killing and abduction of both rebels and civilians. It thinks nothing about killing old men, women, children and livestock. Instead of subduing the fighting, the Janjaweed escalated it out of control.

### **Reconciliation and Rebuilding**

On 9 July 2011 Sudan was split in two creating the world's newest nation – the Republic of South Sudan. South Sudan's independence was the final stage of a 6 year peace agreement ending decades of civil war. In 2005, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP) in Khartoum, bringing an official end to the Conflict, signed the Naivasha Agreement,

or Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). However, peace is not yet guaranteed. As the South gains statehood, crucial issues such as border demarcation remain unresolved and fighting in South Kordofan threatens the stability of the peace.

The CPA also included provisions for determining the future of Abyei, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, collectively known as the “Three Areas”. Abyei is an oil-producing region claimed by both the North and South. South Kordofan and Blue Nile were the front line during the civil war, being Muslim majority Border States with many who fought alongside the Southern SPLM but lie on the Northern side of the 1956 border. Just weeks before South became independent, under the pretext of self defense after SPLA attacked a convoy of SAF troops; the North seized Abyei by force and expelled the SPLM-aligned administration. Negotiations have led to an agreement to demilitarize the region, and the deployment of 4,200 Ethiopian peacekeepers – the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). In 2009 the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for President Omar Bashir, citing his government’s links with the Janjaweed militia.

Rebuilding and Reconciliation involves the ‘repairing’ of relationships, institutions, and social networks that have been damaged by the conflict, and putting in place schemes that can help the disputing parties to be united again. However, this stage of conflict resolution has to be entered into not with selfish motives, but with a sincere wish to repair damage relationships. The seizing of Abyei by the Sudanese government in the transition period to South Sudan’s independence seems to indicate that long-lasting peace in the Sudan is tenuous unless parties in the conflict refrain from provocative acts that are capable of reigniting violence, and causing a return to the pre-conflict stage.

### **States in Africa and the crisis of relevance**

The failure of states in conflict resolution is derived from the fact that as parties to conflict, states tend to enter into conflict resolution with purely selfish motives, which can hardly guarantee lasting peace. This situation has led to speculations that the State itself has lost relevance in Africa. It should be pointed out that state failure in conflict resolution seems more intractable in weak or failed states than they do in strong states. And the reason may be that weak states are beset on all sides with problems and may be lacking in resources, structures, and political will to properly deal with conflict situations. The alternative would be a retreat to prehistoric days of anarchy, which would be infinitely worse than the present state of affairs.

Those who argue about the apparent irrelevance of the state in Africa particularly as it pertains to conflict resolution seem to ignore important facts of history and of modern realities. The world has become a ‘global village.’ Conflicts in one country or region now have spill over effects in adjoining countries and regions. This has necessitated interventions by powerful third-party mediators whether it is the United Nations, the AU or the EU. Regional bodies like ECOWAS also do intervene to prevent conflicts from spreading. At the end of the day, we find that even weak states are helped by this arrangement, as they will continue to discharge their duties to their citizenry.

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