

Understanding Sudan

A Teaching and Learning Resource



How to use the Darfur crisis module for teaching about Darfur

Most instructors will be using Darfur as an example to illustrate a particular theme in their course. We suggest in particular the following:

Darfur as an illustration of:

1. the problem of identifying the “causes” of civil conflict
2. the phenomenon of ecological conflict, or climate change conflict
3. the limits and dilemmas of robust humanitarian intervention (the responsibility to protect)
4. the evolving international legal order to prosecute the most serious crimes and to limit impunity
5. the political-economy of mobilization of activist movements
6. an international crisis where countries have different interests and abilities to influence outcomes (i.e. a Model U.N. type example)

For each of these possible approaches, we suggest devoting at least two sessions (ranging from a single class to several weeks) to Darfur.

In the first session, students read background material on the nature of the conflict. If only one class session can be devoted to this, we suggest Alex de Waal’s “Counterinsurgency on the Cheap” London Review of Books, 2004 (www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n15/waal01.html). If multiple class sessions are available, then selections from Alex de Waal and Julie Flint, A Long History of a Short War, would be appropriate. To pursue a deeper historical perspective, students might begin with works by R.S. O’Fahey (e.g. *The Darfur Sultanate: a history*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008 and his web site: <http://www.smi.uib.no/darfur/>.) For classroom lecture, the Powerpoint Understanding Darfur (ppt) is useful, as are some of the background papers on the website. If there is more time, the Powerpoint materials giving the background to Sudan more generally would be useful Post-Independence History of Sudan (ppt). Students might also be assigned the 15 minute Google video by Michael Kevane “Explaining the conflict in Darfur for activists”, making clear to students that the situation on the ground has changed since the video was made.

In the second session, the specific approach to Darfur relevant to the course would be covered. Below we list suggested readings, appropriate Understanding Sudan materials, and classroom objectives for each of the approaches listed above.

1. Identifying the “causes” of civil conflict
 - a. What is the war in Darfur about? The ICC Prosecutor argued that the war was really a genocide against the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit groups, perpetrated by the Sudanese state. Others argue that the war is a local-level resource conflict. Finally, others argue that the conflict is political, either internal to Sudan or international in scope (Cold War and War on Terror). A class on this issue would present students with arguments and facts consistent and contradictory with each of these three very different characterizations of the conflict. Three readings should be assigned.

- i. The genocide argument is made most forcefully by the ICC Prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo (and students might read the original application for arrest) or by Eric Reeves, countering the arguments of Alex de Waal and Julie Flint (*Pursuing Peace and Justice in Darfur: The Role of the ICC*)
<http://www.sudanreeves.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=218>)
- ii. The resource war argument is made by Stephen Faris in *The Atlantic* monthly (<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200704/darfur-climate/2>).
- iii. The political argument is made by John Ryle *Disaster in Darfur - The New York Review of Books* (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article_id=17326), and more polemically by Mahmood Mamdani (<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n05/print/mamd01.html>)

2. *Ecological conflict, or climate change conflict*

- a. Students should read a short article by Thomas Homer-Dixon on ecological crises or resource wars (e.g. <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/pcs/evidence/evid1.htm>; or <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/pcs/eps/method/methods1.htm>). The paper [Darfur: Rainfall and Conflict](#) by Leslie Gray and Michael Kevane should form the basis for a discussion of the facts of environmental change (what can be measured- only rainfall?) and the causal logic of linking a broad, decades long process to a specific event such as outbreak of conflict.

3. Limits and dilemmas of robust humanitarian intervention (the responsibility to protect)

- a. A House of Commons, U.K. report *Darfur, Sudan: The responsibility to protect* (<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.com/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmintdev/67/67i.pdf>) offers extensive discussion of the concept and application. The expulsion of aid agencies in 2009 following the ICC arrest warrant provides the perfect context for a nuanced discussion of the ethical dilemmas of the pursuit of both peace and justice.

4. *Evolving international legal order to prosecute the most serious crimes and to limit impunity*

- a. The arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court against president al-Bashir was the first such indictment of a sitting head of state. The action of the ICC raises all sorts of interesting legal questions about the ICC. Students should read the discussions in the *Understanding Sudan* background paper, *The ICC and Darfur*, and the original (redacted) report of the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber on the situation in Darfur that justified the arrest warrant (<http://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc639096.pdf>). The Powerpoint from *Understanding Sudan* entitled *ICC and Darfur* can be used in class (<http://understandingsudan.org/Darfur/DarfurResources/Darfur-ICCArrestWarrant.ppt>).

5. *Political-economy of mobilization of activist movements*

- a. Mahmood Mamdani's book, [Saviors and Survivors](#), has been much discussed as a forceful critique of the Save Darfur movement. Several chapters from the book deal with Save Darfur, and students could read those as well as examine the website and documents on the

Save Darfur website. The objective of the class would be to help students understand the complexity of how activist social movements affect local outcomes, in the context of global-scale agendas of powerful countries.

6. International crisis where countries have different interests and abilities to influence outcomes (i.e. a Model U.N. type example)
 - a. The Understanding Sudan website has a [short exercise](#) by Carl Levan simulating a potential Darfur crisis that might be used in an IR class.