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Title: The Darfur Conflict: Geography or Institutions?



This paper is an interdisciplinary endeavor into the political economy of the Darfur conflict. It sets out to build recursively that the Darfur crisis emanated from poor governance (institutions), locally and nationally, and the resulting mismanagement of transition from a traditional society to a modern (market) society (economy) that triggered a series of interactions of socioeconomic institutional failures and geography. An estimated 301 villages were totally destroyed and 76 partially destroyed between March 2003 and June 2004. By 2006 the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reached over 1.75 million. Host communities and IDP camps are threatened on a daily basis by low-level violence at the perimeter of towns and camps, especially women and children going out for necessary errands. Simple tabulations and descriptive statistics based on survey data (2007-2008), focus groups, personal interviews, and building on other developing countries' experiences were followed. In spite of the continuing negotiations inside Darfur through the Darfur-Darfur Dialog and Consultation (DDDC), the Ahl El-Sudan Initiative (ASI), the Doha Initiative (DI), and the Council of Wise Africans (CWA), the peace process in Darfur seems to be moving in a vicious circle. There is no good solution for the two main impediments in the way of returning IDPs to their villages or substitute permanent residence. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and its substitute, the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), are too weak to have any control over security. Also, disarming the rebels and the Janjaweed, most of whom are from Arabized groups such as the Mahameed, is almost impossible. The only good solution is to resolve the problems of both sides. In addition, some IDPs are acting as rent seekers, more than as responsible citizens. Some people are renting their homes and staying in camps, and some work for the government and stay in campus. A long-term solution for the Darfur conflict requires robust governance reform that is based on careful democratic institutional reform. Any credible resolution to the crisis needs an interim neutral government formed of technocrats who are true believers in democratic governance and are not themselves seeking office.