Genocide in Sudan as colonial ecology

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Three Colonialisms, the ‘Developmental’ State, and the Global-Systemic Constitution of Genocide in Sudan

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Abstract

This article offers a novel account of the genesis and constitution of genocide in Sudan. To do so, it brings developments in critical genocide studies, including the colonial and international ‘turns’, into dialogue with theoretical areas of thought emerging in international relations and other disciplines around processual and relational ontologies, including work that draws conceptual inspiration from complexity theory and assemblage thinking. The approach provides a conceptual vocabulary with which to rethink the ‘phenomenon’ of genocide in Sudan as a process-based, systemic, and emergent entity, rather than as a discrete outcome or temporally and geographically bounded event. It also helps us see seemingly separate episodes of genocide in the country as part of an interconnected whole, an evolving historical ‘pan-Sudanese’ pattern. A key analytical move the article makes is to foreground this pattern; doing so brings into focus the deep and complex coloniality of a genocidal system that is seldom recognised in these terms, unsettling dominant liberal framings and common sense ideas about agency and causality which occlude these colonial entanglements. More specifically, genocide in Sudan is argued to be constituted by, or homologous with, three intersecting colonial logics: ‘post’-colonial, internal colonial, and neo-colonial. Tracing these logics and their shifting dynamics and articulations over time, the historical unfolding of genocide in Sudan appears not as an aberrant ‘breakdown’, crisis, violent outburst, or top-down ideological ‘master plan’. Neither is it a single, linearly unfolding process. Rather, it is emergent from a complex systemic context – a ‘colonial ecology’ – its logic and potentiality imbricated with and incipient within a temporally and geographically expansive web of actors, processes, structures, relations, discourses, norms, practices, and global forces

Introduction

Alarm about unfolding genocide in Sudan emerged as a high-profile issue of international concern and public activism around 2004, as reports of horrific attacks on villages in the vast western region of Darfur began to appear in the media.¹ Simplistic representations of the situation, however, frequently reduced this complex conflict — pronounced as the first genocide of the 21st century — to issues of identity, ethnicity, tribalism and ‘race’. In the popular imagination, Darfur became a region ‘peopled by defenceless primitive Black African tribal villagers who were being massacred by hordes of marauding Arab “fanatics” on horseback. It was a case of Tarzan’s Africa meeting Lawrence of Arabia’s lawless Arabs in the twenty-first century’.² Some, indeed, suggested the labelling of Darfur as a ‘genocide’ had more to do with post-9/11 discourses around the ‘war on terror’ and the demonisation of ‘Arabs’ than with the complex context, history and politics of the situation on the ground.³ Others saw the readiness of so many to make a genocide determination as a reflection of associations with the memory of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, rather than the actual character of Darfur’s conflict.⁴ Whilst much of this may be true and important to recognise, particularly in relation to how the idea of ‘genocide’ functions at the level of political rhetoric, this article argues that multiple situations in Sudan do indeed constitute genocide. In doing so, however, it seeks to complicate, deepen, and reorient our sense of what it means to make such a claim.

The field of genocide studies has expanded rapidly since the 1990s, with scholarship becoming increasingly theoretically, historically and methodologically rich and diverse. Branching off from the larger and more established field of Holocaust studies, a significant advance has been the inclusion, beyond the conventional ‘canon’, of a greater number and diversity of cases considered through the lens of genocide, including many colonial cases.⁵ Moreover, sustained debate about the definition of ‘genocide’ has led increasing numbers of scholars to adopt more nuanced and sophisticated approaches to the concept, drawing more recently on the original historical and sociological work of the Polish jurist, Raphael Lemkin,

¹ See Hamilton, R., *Fighting for Darfur: Public Action and the Struggle to Stop Genocide* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

² Bassil, N. R., *The Post-Colonial State and Civil War in Sudan: The Origins of Conflict in Darfur*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 17.

³ Notably, Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror*, (London: Verso, 2009).

⁴ Brunk, D., ‘Dissecting Darfur: Anatomy of a Genocide Debate,’ in *International Relations*, 22 (1), 2008, pp. 25-6.

⁵ See, for example, Rene Lemarchand, *Forgotten Genocides*.

who coined the term in the 1940s, but whose scholarship was for decades strangely absent from the field. In contrast to conventional understandings of genocide as systematic, planned and ideologically-driven mass killing, Lemkin saw it as a complex, multifaceted process which incorporated broad-based cultural and social destruction as an integral aspect, and did not necessarily involve mass killings.⁶ Nevertheless, often — understandably — taking place in highly contentious and politically charged contexts, the study of genocide has long suffered from what Dirk Moses describes as ‘conceptual blockages’.⁷ A number of dominant theoretical and methodological approaches, implicit socio-ontological assumptions and explanatory tropes (not to mention politicised research agendas) have structured research and thinking about genocide in problematic ways.⁸ These tropes and assumptions have been in evidence in much thinking about Sudan.

For example, a pervasive Holocaust-centrism has led to restrictive interpretations of the meaning and scope of genocide, with the labelling of situations as ‘genocide’ being reserved for a few big or ‘spectacular’ cases of (one-sided) mass killing which are largely ‘successful’ and resemble or fit the Holocaust model.⁹ The codification of genocide as a crime under international law, and the neglect of Lemkin’s original historical and sociological work, have similarly engendered a narrow focus on mass killing as the sharp empirically identifiable end of destruction.¹⁰ In Sudan, scholars and commentaries have frequently focussed above all on body counts, and the occurrence and intensity of mass killings to the neglect of other, perhaps more attritional or socio-cultural, forms of group destruction such as forced displacement, destruction of livelihoods, mass rape and enforced starvation.

⁶ See Moses, D. ‘Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide’; Curthoys A., and Docker J., ‘Defining Genocide’.

⁷ Moses, D., ‘Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the “racial century”: genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust,’ in *Patterns and Prejudice*, 36(4) 2002, pp. 7-36.

⁸ For critical discussion of the concept and field of genocide studies, Shaw, M., *What is Genocide?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), ‘From Comparative to International Genocide Studies: the International Production of Genocide in Twentieth-Century Europe,’ in *European Journal of International Relations*, 18 (4), December 2012, pp. 645-668; Levene, M., *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State, vol. 1: The Meaning of Genocide*, (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Powell, C., *Barbaric Civilisation: A Critical Sociology of Genocide*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), ‘What do Genocides Kill? A relational conception of genocide,’ in *Journal of Genocide Research*, 9(4), December 2007, pp. 527-547; Moses, D., ‘Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the “racial century”: genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust,’ in *Patterns and Prejudice*, 36(4) 2002, pp. 7-36, ‘Toward a Theory of Critical Genocide Studies,’ *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, April 2008.

⁹ This, of course, is itself a contested interpretation. See Gotz Aly, Christopher Browning, Dan Stone.

¹⁰ See especially Shaw, M. *What is Genocide?*, pp. 37-47; Moshman, ‘Conceptual Constraints on Thinking about Genocide’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 3, No. 3 (2001), pp. 431-450.

Legalistic paradigms and their influence outside legal realms have also led to a tendency to focus first and foremost on the subjectivity and intentions of perpetrators — accountability and blame must be located in individuals. In doing so, however, genocide's causal genesis is usually implicitly reduced to ideology. Explanatory reliance on the intentions and moral quality of the accused may reinforce the emotionally satisfying (and perhaps intuitive) assumption that only 'mad or bad' leaders or governments commit genocide. However, simplistic understandings of intent assume an 'uncomplicated nexus between perpetrator intentions and outcomes'¹¹, and as such are insufficient for the purposes of historical and sociological explanation. Nevertheless, the unambiguous identification of perpetrators' calculated intent, the uncovering of a 'blueprint' for genocide, has often been cast as the pivotal factor in determining the character of violence in Sudan.¹² Such assumptions underpin an historically shallow actor-centric analytic reduction, along with a linear, top-down 'grand-plan' cause-effect model of genocide's origins and unfolding, associated with similarly simplistic assumptions about agency and causation in complex social contexts. This conventional model, a narrow excision of the genocidal 'event', distracts from the processes by which genocidal actors (and their ideologies) evolve and emerge over time, and how they are embedded within and constituted by systemic contexts.

Similarly problematic is a general tendency to represent genocide as an 'outcome' or temporally and geographically bounded event. Such truncated framings likewise obscure its emergence over time, as well as the possibility of more complex long-term patterns, roots and dynamics, including the potentially constitutive role of more diffuse historical forces, processes, and webs of culpability and implication which extend beyond the boundaries of the state in question. Which leads to the state-centrism and implicit domestic bias inherent in wider understandings of genocide. Indeed, Martin Shaw has argued that most research on genocide is 'predicated on assumptions — influenced by perceptions of both historical perpetrator-regimes and by the contemporary politics of genocide — that narrow the framework of research and mitigate against an appropriately broad international

¹¹ Shaw, *What is Genocide?* pp. 93-4.

¹² It was on the basis of this factor that the UN determined genocide was not underway in Darfur: United Nations, *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General*, Geneva, 25 January 2005), pp. 4-5. For convincing critiques of the report's reasoning, see Eric Reeves, 'Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur: A critical analysis' (Parts 1 and 2), 11 February 2005, Available at: <http://sudanreeves.org/2005/02/11/report-of-the-international-commission-of-inquiry-on-darfur-a-critical-analysis-part-i-february-2-2005/>; Martin Shaw, 'Sudan the ICC and genocide: a fateful decision,' *openDemocracy*, 11 March 2009, Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/sudan-the-icc-and-genocide-a-fateful-decision>.

understanding'¹³. This is what he calls the 'domestic fallacy', namely, the assumption that 'Insofar as genocides belong to structural contexts, they are those of particular states'¹⁴. Domestic characterisations 'reveal a mind-set in which genocide is regarded as a simple pattern of violence by a single "perpetrator" -state or -regime against a single "victim" population group'.¹⁵ Rarely has the question of genocide in Sudan been systematically considered through a more global lens. As Harir notes, explanations of conflict and genocide in Sudan tend to reduce it to 'internal' issues of 'race', ethnicity, religious antagonisms, and the self-seeking behaviours of local elites.¹⁶ More generally, narratives of the 'domestic' origins of genocide take for granted an atomistic social ontology, and problematically reify the state as a unified entity 'with interests and capabilities analytically separate from the totality of global social relations within which states inhere.' These assumptions inhibit recognition of the global-historical production of political violence and genocide.¹⁷

What would an account of genocide in Sudan that moves beyond these 'conceptual blockages' look like? This is the challenge this article seeks to engage with. It explores the explanatory possibilities of an alternative approach to conceptualising genocide, and offers a new interpretation ~~and theoretical account~~ of genocide in Sudan based on a rethinking of the type of 'phenomenon' or 'event' that it constitutes. Through this reconceptualisation, it uncovers the deep and complex coloniality of a genocide that is seldom explicitly framed through colonial coordinates. To do so, it draws the recent colonial and international 'turns' in genocide studies into dialogue with theoretical areas of thought emerging in international relations, sociology, geography and other disciplines around processual and relational ontologies, including work that draws conceptual inspiration from two bodies of thought which have much in common, namely, complexity theory and assemblage thinking.¹⁸ The former strands of scholarship 'draw attention to the (post)colonial, imperial and global

¹³ Martin Shaw, 'From Comparative to International Genocide Studies: the International Production of Genocide in Twentieth-Century Europe,' *European Journal of International Relations*, 18(4), 2012, 646.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 647.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 647.

¹⁶ Cited in Ayers, A., 'Sudan's uncivil war: the global-historical constitution of political violence,' in *Review of African Political Economy*, 37 (124), 2010. p. 156.

¹⁷ Ayers, A., 'Sudan's uncivil war:', pp. 153-5.

¹⁸ Dittmer argues that complexity theory, in a human geography context, may have faded away if it were not for the 'boost' provided by the rise of assemblage theory in the latter 2000s. See Dittmer, J. 'Geopolitical assemblages and complexity', p. 391, (2014). For useful discussions, see also: Anderson et al. 'On Assemblages and Geography', 2012; Bousquet & Curtis, 'Beyond Models and Metaphors: Complexity Theory, Systems Thinking and International Relations,' in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2011, 24:1, pp. 43-62; Saskia Sassen (2014 and 2006); Acuto and Curtis, *Reassembling International Theory*.

contexts in which genocidal violence is embedded'¹⁹; the latter, not well known in genocide studies, provide conceptual tools with which to understand genocide as an emergent, ~~globally constituted~~, processual, relational and systemic entity. Rather than a single theory to be comprehensively adopted, these tools provide a guiding 'ontological stance'²⁰ and sensitizing 'interpretive resources'²¹ which function in this study to guide a distinctive reading and reconstruction of the historical literature.²²

Following DeLanda, complex systems can also be characterised as assemblages.²³ The latter have been variously described as 'emergent wholes defined by their properties, tendencies, and capacities',²⁴ as 'compound[s] of artefacts and people', and as a 'cofunctioning of heterogeneous parts within a provisional whole'²⁵. Crucially, both complex systems and assemblages are characterised by the property of amounting to more than the sum of their various parts – they are wholes not reducible to their constituent components. According to Thrift, the primary concern of complexity theory is with understanding 'holistic *emergent* order'²⁶. Such emergent order arises from the interactions and co-evolution of an assemblage's heterogeneous parts. Cautioning against analytical or actor-centric reductions, the method of analysis prompted by this conceptual lens is sensitive to systemic properties, and adopts a 'relational and process-oriented style of thinking, stressing organisation patterns, networked relationships and historical context'.²⁷ Rather than a focus on disaggregated events or specific outcomes, thinking systemically requires attention to *patterns* that emerge over time.²⁸

¹⁹ L. Heerten and A. Dirk Moses, 'The Nigeria-Biafra war: Postcolonial conflict and the question of genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2014, 16 (2-3), pp. 169-203, p. 170.

²⁰ Michele Acuto and Simon Curtis, 'Assemblage thinking and international relations' in *Reassembling International Theory*, p. 3.

²¹ Dittmer, J., 'Geopolitical Assemblages', p. 396. Christian Brueger, 'Thinking Assemblages', in Michele Acuto and Simon Curtis (eds.), *Reassembling International Theory*, 2014, p. 65.

²² See also Hendrick, D., 'Complexity Theory,' p. 19; Sylvia Walby, 'Complexity Theory, Globalisation and Diversity,' Paper presented to conference of the British Sociological Association, University of York, April 2003, p. 458.

²³ Assemblage thinking originated with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (1987). It was subsequently systematised influentially by DeLanda, Manuel, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (Continuum, 2006).

²⁴ Dittmer, 'Geopolitical Assemblages,' p. 392.

²⁵ Law (1999), and Anderson (2011) respectively, as paraphrased by Michele Acuto and Simon Curtis, 'Assemblage thinking and international relations', *Reassembling International Theory*, p.3.

²⁶ Cited in Dittmer 'Geopolitical Assemblages', p. 392.

²⁷ Bousquet & Curtis, 'Beyond Models and Metaphors: Complexity Theory, Systems Thinking and International Relations,' in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2011, 24:1, pp. 43-62, p. 45.

²⁸ Hendrick paraphrasing Lederach, in 'Complexity Theory', p. 31. Emphasis added.

This study draws on these tools in a distinctive way by experimenting in particular with the explanatory possibilities of using pattern as a thinking tool. It is suggested attunement to observable pattern shifts our encounter with, and apprehension of, the empirical and ontological (and indeed epistemological) ‘object’ of genocide in productive ways. Doing so can provide a window into more complex, less immediately perceptible, formations, and a starting point for empirical investigation. More specifically, a key analytical move the article makes is to foreground what is described as a *pan-Sudanese pattern of genocide* - and as a corollary the processes generating, shaping and sustaining this pattern over time - as an orienting focal point which guides the empirical exploration. To this end, the article begins by problematising conventional accounts of genocide in Sudan which usually focus narrowly on the region of Darfur during the period 2003-4. Instead, casting a more temporally and geographically expansive explanatory net, the importance of situating Darfur within a broader historical Sudanese framing is emphasised. The discussion then goes on to argue that this pan-Sudanese pattern can be productively understood in terms of a homology between genocide and what is characterised as an ‘ecology’ of intersecting colonial logics; genocide and Sudan’s ‘colonial ecology’ map onto each other in terms of their form, function and effects. More specifically, as will be shown, three colonial distinct trajectories underpin the historical continuity of genocide in the country: ‘post’colonial, internal colonial, and neocolonial.

Thinking historically with the tools of complexity and the idea of assemblage provides a powerful lens with which understand how these three colonial trajectories have coalesced diachronically into a composite contingent emergent entity - constantly in process - productive of certain effects, i.e. genocide (understood, as will be discussed, through the framework developed by Raphael Lemkin), with a considerable degree of *consistency* over several decades. This conceptual apparatus helps us grasp a large scale and historically expansive ‘event’ in its becoming. It also helps us unpack the question of what it means to claim that genocide is colonial. The genocidal consistency exhibited in Sudan represents a form of emergent order, a pattern whose design cannot be reduced to or localised in a single element or unified purposive human subjectivity. Rather, it has emerged in the absence of ~~formal governance, or~~ a single directing ‘central head’²⁹ – what in the complexity lexicon amounts to a form of ‘self-organising’ order. Applying the conceptual synthesis outlined here to the case of genocide in Sudan, the article aims to contribute to theoretical and

²⁹ Bennett, 2010, p. 24.

methodological debates about what it means to think with and through these tools, and to show how they might accompany the development of deep historical explanations grounded in and shaped by this undergirding ontological vision.

Sudan's pattern of genocide, conceptualised as an emergent whole, cannot be reduced to any one of the colonial logics delineated, or indeed to any other element or actor comprising its broader formation. Moreover, based on an expanded understanding of the concept of agency, Sudan's colonial ecology is seen as possessing an agential capacity that encompasses and exceeds, and thus decentres, the 'rational' and 'consciously intending' human subject or groups of subjects.³⁰ Pitched at a certain (macro) spatio-temporal scale, the approach thus seeks to complicate the very idea of an actor or perpetrator, and the simplistic ideas of intent that frequently accompany such notions. Thinking instead with a distributed and decentralised sense of agency, we can begin to grasp an effectivity that is not 'conscious' or 'intending' in accordance with our common sense understanding, but nevertheless tends towards certain consistent effects and outcomes over time. The approach thus also problematizes the possibility of clear-cut distinctions between structure and agency, context and actor. There is an 'effectivity proper to the grouping as such: an agency *of* the assemblage'.³¹ Stepping away from a focus on unitary and decontextualized perpetrator-actors, the concern here with tracing the landscape of heterogeneous trajectories, agencies, processes, and contexts that make up Sudan's ecology of genocide aims to contribute to an understanding of how genocidal agency and intent itself takes shape, emerges, and is constituted.

The aim of this study is not to chart an exact and detailed chronological plot, and much historical detail has unavoidably been left out. Instead, in disaggregating the colonial logics at play, the concern is to draw into focus the broad and heterogeneous landscape that has generated and sustained patterns of genocide across Sudan over time. The focus on historical process and mapping how recurrent patterns of genocide have been 'formed and made to endure'³² over time is both anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist. The idea of assemblage also helps move past 'reified generalities' of such conceptual aggregates which can obscure more than they reveal, such as 'the state', 'the economy', 'the perpetrator', 'colonialism', or indeed 'genocide' itself.³³ As noted, this analysis necessitates a framing that extends beyond the

³⁰ Bennett 2010, p. 3; Cudworth and Hobden, 2013, p. 438-9, p. 443.

³¹ Bennett, 2010, p. 24.

³² Michele Acuto and Simon Curtis (eds.), *Reassembling International Theory: Assemblage Thinking and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), p. 7.

³³ DeLanda, *Ibid*, p. 20.

boundaries of the Sudanese state, illuminating the globally and historically constituted character of genocide in the country. It is concerned with providing what could be described as a ‘systemic history’; an historically grounded delineation of how systems, actors (functioning at various spatial scales), discourses, practices and institutions that are implicated in the production of genocide have evolved over time³⁴. The account put forward of the colonial constitution of genocide in Sudan provides an example of the pitfalls of a lack of engagement with international history, in particular imperial and colonial history, and reveals the limits of dominant domestic genocide framings.

A Pan-Sudanese Pattern of Genocide

Mention of ‘genocide’ in the Sudanese context today remains virtually synonymous with reference to Darfur in the period 2003-4.³⁵ However, despite the unprecedented public awareness and outcry³⁶ about Darfur around 2004, rarely acknowledged was the fact that the violence experienced in the region was ‘emblematic’ of patterns of destruction in the country that stretch back decades, notably in the south and the Nuba Mountains region. Indeed, as Alex De Waal writes, ‘if scholars of genocide, lawyers, and policymakers are resolved that [Darfur] is indeed genocide’, then ‘numerous other instances warrant the same consideration’³⁷. However, limited recognition and analysis of the historical continuity of genocide in Sudan has led to scholarly neglect of the potential systemic patterns and processes that underpin and connect different episodes across the country. The analytical segregation of genocide in Darfur as a discrete, temporally bounded ‘event’ — the relevance and applicability of the concept neatly delimited in space and time — has precluded such questions, and stymied the possibility of more complex interpretations of the relevance and

³⁴ Bousquet and Curtis, ‘Beyond models and metaphors’, p. 51.

³⁵ More recently, genocide has been frequently mentioned in relation to the new state of South Sudan, following its secession in 2011. However, discussion of South Sudan in the post-2011 period is beyond the scope of this article.

³⁶ See, for example, Rebecca Hamilton, *Fighting for Darfur: Public Action and the Struggle to Stop Genocide*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

³⁷ Alex de Waal, ‘Genocidal Warfare in North-East Africa,’ in Donald Bloxham and Dirk Moses (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 529-549, p. 548. See also: Wendy James, *War and Survival in Sudan’s Frontierlands: Voices from the Blue Nile*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p. vii; Noah Bassil, *The Post-Colonial State and Civil War in Sudan: The Origins of Conflict in Darfur*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 8; Laura Beny and Sondra Hale, ‘Sudan’s Killing Fields: Political Violence and Fragmentation: Introduction,’ *Public Law and Legal Theory Research Paper Series*, University of Michigan Law School, Paper no. 336, July 2013, p. 9.

explanatory potential of the conceptual lens of genocide in the country. Whilst more sophisticated historical analyses of Sudan do indeed recognise the occurrence of previous comparable episodes echoing Darfur, notably absent is an effort to more fully integrate these ‘echoes’ into a synthesising theoretical framework that conceptually centres genocide.

It is important here to clarify how the term ‘genocide’ is being understood and applied. Conventional interpretations, both in the scholarly literature as well as popular and political discourse, tend to remain centred on the view that genocide denotes a unique form of mass killing that is state-directed, ethnically motivated, systematic and premeditated. This mass killing, moreover, is deemed genocidal only if it is accompanied and driven by a particularly ‘evil’ mind set, namely, the perpetrators’ intent to physically destroy the targeted group. Indeed, reliance on the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide has meant that, for many scholars, and of course lawyers and policymakers, ‘intent’ is the defining feature of genocide.³⁸ Sudan is a case in point; debates about the presence or absence of a specific genocidal intent have been central to broader interpretations of the situation, and the possibility of an official genocide determination.³⁹

However, whilst some adhere to the UN Convention as a useful practical guide, most scholars regard it as fundamentally flawed conceptually, and inadequate as an analytical tool for historical or sociological understanding. Many, moreover, note that far from being a ‘neutral’ document, the Convention was the product of a highly contentious and politicised drafting process⁴⁰. In recent years, increasing numbers of scholars have sought to uncover the concept’s neglected foundations in the original historical and conceptual work of Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term in the 1940s.⁴¹ Significantly, in contrast to the physical skew of the UN Convention (not to mention the popular misconception that genocide is synonymous

³⁸ The full text of the 1948 Convention is available here: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2078/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf>.

³⁹ Such a determination was for this reason rejected by a UN commission of inquiry on the situation on Darfur in 2005. See, United Nations, *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General*, Geneva, 25 January 2005), available online at: http://www.un.org/news/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf.

⁴⁰ For an excellent overview of definitional debates and the history of the concept more generally, as well as an original thesis about the conceptualisation of genocide, see Shaw, M., *What is Genocide?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Schabas.. Andreopoulos; Curthoys and Docker, ‘Defining Genocide,’ in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of Genocide*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 9-41.

⁴¹ For example, Shaw, M., *What is Genocide?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 17-36; Dirk Moses, ‘Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, Bloxham, D. and Moses, D. (eds), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 19-41.

with mass murder), Lemkin emphasised the fundamentally social and cultural character of genocidal destruction:⁴²

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.⁴³

For Lemkin, techniques of genocidal destruction could be: political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious, and moral.⁴⁴ He was concerned primarily with what he described as the ‘crippling’ of a group, rather than its total physical elimination. Moses aptly captures Lemkin’s formulation of genocide as a ‘total social practice,’ affecting all aspects of group life.⁴⁵ Situating itself within a strand of scholarship that seeks to recover the lost insights of the term’s originator, this article takes Lemkin’s broad, multidimensional approach as a guiding framework for identifying genocide in Sudan.⁴⁶

Understood within a Lemkinian framing, genocide against Sudan’s non-Arab, and largely rural, traditional, populations has unfolded across the country’s peripheries over several decades, revealing an historical pattern that has cut across multiple leaders and regimes in the context of a shifting social, political, economic, and international landscape. Genocide has emerged and subsided, escalated and plateaued in abeyance, erupted in peaks of extreme violence, and unfolded at a slow-burning, attritional pace. In southern Sudan, the

⁴² See Lemkin, R., *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944). Especially chapter IX.

⁴³ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, pp. 82-90.

⁴⁵ Moses, D., ‘Empire, Colony, Genocide: Keywords and the Philosophy of History,’ in Moses D., (ed), *Empire, Colony, Genocide*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Elsewhere I have argued that the importance of the concept of genocide lies in its ability to help us grasp a distinctive form of harm, and that a compelling way of understanding this harm is through Claudia Card’s concept of ‘social death’. This understanding of genocide as social death is broadly complementary with Raphael Lemkin’s framework. See Wise, L., ‘Social death and the loss of a ‘world’: an anatomy of genocidal harm in Sudan’, *International Journal of Human Rights* (2017).

Nilotic-speaking peoples, including the Dinka, Nuer, Atuot and Shilluk were targeted, particularly from the late 1970s; in the Nuba Mountains region, especially in the early 1990s, it was the ethnically diverse Nuba peoples, targeted again from 2011; and in Darfur, the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit tribes were attacked, with violence preceding but peaking from 2003. Similar patterns have also unfolded in the east of the country. The destruction experienced by these peoples has displayed similar methods and practices of violence, including: the co-option of tribal militia and joint militia-army attacks; man made famine, often enacted through militia looting and the obstruction of humanitarian aid; mass sexual violence, including enforced pregnancy; destruction of livelihoods, farmland, poisoning of wells; the targeting and execution of social, cultural, and political leadership; mass displacement; massacres, and ‘scorched earth’ tactics, including the burning and complete destruction of hundreds of villages and cultural symbols. All of these groups have also suffered the racist ideology of the northern Arab elite, and various intensities of enforced cultural assimilation and destruction in the form of, sometimes violently enforced, Arabisation and Islamisation. The most extreme and violent example of enforced cultural assimilation was in the context of the concentration camps (the so-called ‘peace camps’) constructed during the genocidal *jihad* in the Nuba Mountains in the early 1990s.⁴⁷

The claim is not that these unfolding practices of genocide in different regions of Sudan at different points in the country’s history are identical in origins or character. Each has highly complex and unique features and dynamics, detailed discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, as will be argued, certain continuities relating to the colonial dynamics underpinning each of these contexts are compelling. The aim in the first instance, however, is to highlight the pattern, the recurrence of genocidal dynamics that exhibit continuity across multiple regimes and leaders of varying form and ideological disposition. We must see Darfur 2003-4 as situated within this larger pattern, and avoid analytical atomisation of different ‘episodes’. Doing so intimates towards the existence of a deeper set of processes and drivers that have transcended particular leaders and administrations.

In the absence of a single *genocidaire* group as such, acknowledging this historical pan-Sudanese pattern of genocide presents something of a puzzle for conventional models of genocide. The latter, according to Dirk Moses, are shaped by an implicit ‘liberal theory’ which embodies a set of assumptions about the meaning of genocide ‘exemplified’ by an

⁴⁷ See Alex de Waal, ‘Not forgetting the Nuba War’; Rahhal, S. M., *The Right to be Nuba*.

emphasis on ‘premeditation as the key element of the crime’, and the ‘agency of the state as the *intending* genocidal subject.’⁴⁸ Liberal theories of genocide tend to analytically privilege the nation-state, and emphasise extreme totalitarian ideologies and illiberal elites.⁴⁹ Influenced by legalistic paradigms, the actor-centric analytical reduction of the liberal approach, which Moses also notes is often pervaded by an implicit rational choice theory, seeks typically to locate genocide’s origins in simplistic and decontextualised understandings of agency and intent. It provides an atomistic account of genocidal intentions that is ‘radically voluntarist’, and able only to ““explain” why they develop with circular logic by referring to the intentions of the perpetrator’, the latter seen as residing in ideology⁵⁰. Liberal categorisations come to the ‘solipsistic conclusion’ that perpetrators commit genocides ‘because they want to’⁵¹. Limited to the intentionality and moral quality of atomised human or state actors, liberal models effectively reduce genocide to a set of mental states.

Yet genocide in Sudan exhibits an historical continuity which cannot comfortably be grasped by this model. Indeed, here I argue it presents us with a case of what Coleman *et al.*, drawing on the concepts of complexity theory, describe as a ‘paradox of stability amid change’⁵². Wheatley, putting a similar point slightly differently, writes of ‘things that maintain form over time yet have no rigidity of structure.’⁵³ In other words, we may consider Sudan’s historical pattern of genocide as indicative of an emergent, self-organising form of order. As noted in the introduction, self-organisation is a property of complex systems, and captures the process by which components or agents within such a system interact in the apparent absence of a clearly definable central locus of control, and in the process produce ‘order’. Self-organisation is responsible for the emergences of ‘new structures and patterns of relationship between components’.⁵⁴ That such extreme episodes of genocidal destruction have subsided and then re-emerged in different periods and geographical contexts suggests, perhaps, that its potential was ever-present, latent or incipient under the surface. What has maintained these dynamics over time? What are the processes or forces underpinning this pan-Sudanese

⁴⁸ Dirk Moses, ‘Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the “racial century”: genocide of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 2002, Vol. 36(4), pp. 7 - 36, pp. 19-1. Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Dirk Moses, ‘Toward a Theory of Critical Genocide Studies’, (2008), *Sciences Po Encyclopaedia des violences de masse*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Moses, ‘Conceptual blockages’, p. 21.

⁵¹ Moses, ‘Conceptual blockages’, p. 21.

⁵² Coleman, P. et al. ‘Intractable conflict as an attractor,’ p. 1455.

⁵³ Cited in Hendrick, D., p. 31.

⁵⁴ Blaikie, 2007, p. 209.

pattern of genocide? How and why have different leaders and regimes, and their related coalitions of actors and networks, exhibited *genocide consistency*?

Genocidal Formation as Colonial Ecology

Foregrounding this pattern facilitates recognition of a deeper pattern, namely, the intersecting colonial logics underpinning the historical continuity of genocide in Sudan. Modern Sudan, as De Waal writes, is a 'hybrid imperial creation [...] an amalgam of African and European colonialisms'⁵⁵. Collins likewise notes that the invasions of the Turks and the British before and after the Mahdist revolution (1881-98) 'resulted in the creation of an artificial state controlled by new forms of governance', and 'In their own way, each of these invaders has left behind additional layers of alien institutions' upon the country.⁵⁶ Many Sudan scholars note the importance of the legacies of the British colonial period (1898-1956) for understanding the country's post-independence turmoil and violence. However, when it comes to the question of genocide, the role of this colonial history – and the import of the concept of 'colonialism' more generally – is usually cast simply as an indirect, distal causal or contextual factor. Rarely is sufficient attention given to how deeply interwoven the colonial past is with the present, and the implications of this for how we make sense of genocide in the country. Neither is there sufficient recognition of the novel colonial dynamics of the more recent past. As such, there has likewise been little exploration of the ways in which genocide and colonialism in the country may be more intimately related, intersected, or interwoven.

The literature on Sudan, then, has yet to draw insights from the rich and growing body of work in the field of genocide studies that explores the various ways in which colonialism and genocide are deeply interconnected, even constitutive.⁵⁷ At the heart of this work, as Moses

⁵⁵ De Waal, 'Genocidal Warfare,' p. 529.

⁵⁶ Robert O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), p. 1.

⁵⁷ Some key works include: Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and denial in the Americas 1492 to the present*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997); Tony Barta, 'Relations of Genocide: Land and Lives in the Colonisation of Australia,' in Walliman and Dobkowski (eds.), *Genocide and the Modern Age*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 237–252; John Docker, 'Raphael Lemkin's History of Genocide and Colonialism,' paper presented at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Centre for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Washington DC, 26 February 2004; Jurgen Zimmerer, 'Colonialism and the Holocaust: Towards an Archaeology of Genocide,' in Dirk Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), pp. 49–76; Michael McDonnell and Dirk Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin as historian of genocide in the Americas,'

observes, is the uncovering of the 'original but ignored insight' of the term's originator, Raphael Lemkin, that genocides are *intrinsically colonial*.⁵⁸ Through an exploration of the neglected relationship between genocide and colonialism in Sudan, this article aims to build on and make a novel conceptual and empirical contribution to this productive and growing research agenda. It makes the case that genocide in Sudan is fundamentally colonially constituted; a claim that few, if any, scholars have made to date or explored in any depth.

Little known until quite recently, Lemkin was not only a jurist, but also an historian who was working on a (never to be completed) world history of genocide which was to include analysis of many instances of colonial genocide.⁵⁹ Indeed, study of his unpublished manuscripts has shown that he understood the concept of genocide itself as fundamentally colonial in nature because it inherently involved occupation and settlement.⁶⁰ As we see in this important passage, Lemkin saw genocide as a two-fold process, which had an explicitly colonial logic at its heart:

Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization of the area by the oppressor's own nationals.⁶¹

Thus, as Docker writes, Lemkin's concept of genocide 'links settler-colonies and genocide in a constitutive and inherent relationship'⁶². Total physical extermination is not the sole or even primary goal, but rather the destruction of a group's 'national pattern', or the 'removal of the population' from a particular territory (which of course may precipitate the former). As noted previously, Lemkin also frequently described genocide in terms of the 'crippling' of a group, rather than its total physical elimination. He developed these themes in *Axis Rule* with an analysis of the Nazi empire and its organised system of colonisation in western Poland. His

Journal of Genocide Research, 7(4), December 2005, pp. 501-529; Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2006, 8(4), pp. 387-409; Dirk Moses, and Dan Stone, (eds.), *Colonialism and Genocide*, (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁵⁸ Dirk Moses, (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), p. ix.

⁵⁹ See, for example, McDonnell and Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin as historian of genocide in the Americas'; Schaller, Dominik, 'Raphael Lemkin's view of European colonial rule in Africa: between condemnation and admiration,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2005, 7(4), pp. 531-538; Docker, Raphael Lemkin's History.'

⁶⁰ Michael McDonnell and Dirk Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin as historian of genocide in the Americas,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, 7(4), December 2005, pp. 501-2.

⁶¹ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, p. 79.

⁶² Docker, 'Raphael Lemkin's History,' p. 3.

approach to the analysis of the Nazi Holocaust, including how he defined genocide in this context, ‘explicitly links Nazi colonising practices’ with the ‘history of colonialism’. There is then in Lemkin’s original conceptualisation, Docker observes, a ‘continuum there linking all parts of the world and justifying [...] interest in international perspectives’⁶³. Indeed, according to Moses, Lemkin saw his work on genocide and his analysis of the Nazi empire as part of the Las Casas-inspired ‘tradition of criticising brutal conquests’. For Lemkin, genocide was a ‘special form of foreign conquest and occupation. It was necessarily imperial and colonial in nature. In particular, genocide aimed to permanently tip the demographic balance in favour of the occupier’.⁶⁴ These insights have been lost from the majority of contemporary discourse about genocide, and are notably absent from discussions on Sudan.

A number of scholars have more recently sought to recover these intellectual losses. Indeed, a body of rich historical scholarship has emerged uncovering the roots of the Nazi Holocaust in European imperialism and colonialism.⁶⁵ Significantly, before this, the connection between colonialism and the Holocaust was intuited by anti-colonial thinkers such as Césaire and Fanon.⁶⁶ The latter described Nazism as a ‘colonial system in the very heart of Europe’.⁶⁷ Moreover, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt contended that the era of European imperialism can be seen as a ‘preparatory stage for coming catastrophe’ back home.⁶⁸ Beyond the Holocaust, much recent scholarship in this area has tended to focus primarily on the settler-colonial dynamic in the Australian and North American contexts. However, the potential relevance of other manifestations of ‘colonial’ relations, and the question of how different colonial ‘forms’ might interact in complex ways that are implicated in the production of genocide, have been neglected. Indeed, as will be further explained, the situation in Sudan is not straightforwardly a case of settler colonialism, or of ‘colonial

⁶³ John Docker, ‘Genocide and Colonialism’, in conversation with Lorenzo Veracini, Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Australian Humanities Review*, 2012, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Dirk Moses, ‘Empire, Colony, Genocide: Keywords and the Philosophy of History’, in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. Dirk Moses (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 9-10.

⁶⁵ For example: Jürgen Zimmerer, ‘The birth of the *Ostland* out of the spirit of colonialism’, in ed. Dirk Moses and Dan Stone, *Colonialism and Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 101-123; Zimmerer, J., ‘Colonialism and the Holocaust: Towards an Archaeology of Genocide,’ in Moses, D. (ed), *Genocide and Settler Society*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), pp. 49–76; Carroll P. Kakel, *The Holocaust as Colonial Genocide: Hitler’s ‘Indian Wars’ in the ‘Wild East’*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. vii; M. Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin, 2009).

⁶⁶ Aimé Césaire, *Discourses on Colonialism*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (London: Pluto Press, 1967).

⁶⁷ Fanon, 1967: p. 33.

⁶⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979).

genocide' *per se*, for it is primarily the post-independence period that concerns us. Furthermore, all key actors, including those deemed the primary perpetrators, would be regarded as 'indigenous' to the country. Nevertheless, the conceptual vocabulary of colonialism is argued here to be vital to a fuller understanding of the specific character and genesis of genocide in Sudan in a way that has not previously been recognised, and with significant implications for how we think about the meaning of 'genocide prevention'.

In short, the historical pattern of genocide across Sudan - what in the previous section we described as a pan-Sudanese pattern of genocide, or a 'paradox of stability amid change' - compels us to confront not only the coloniality of the recent past and present - something, as noted, itself often glossed over - but also how distinct colonial dynamics intertwine and evolve over time. It is argued that three colonial logics - 'post'colonial, internal colonial, and neocolonial - each composed of a number of heterogeneous elements and 'convoked together', have generated and sustained over time an emergent genocide-producing formation⁶⁹. The lexicon of complexity helps us grasp how this genocide-producing formation, or assemblage, has come in to being and evolved over time. The approach seeks to grasp multiple temporalities — to capture 'multiple layers of the past resonat[ing] with things unfolding in the current situation.'⁷⁰

The claim, then, is not simply that Sudan should be conceptualised as a 'colonial genocide'. Rather, using the organising analytic category of a colonial 'form' or 'logic', the sense in which the colonial is implicated in genocide in the country is more complex. Delineated in the following sections, the three colonial forms, in their coalescence, are argued to be constitutively interwoven with the logic and possibility of genocide in Sudan — in their conjunction, they 'interpellate' it. Tracing these colonialisms and their shifting dynamics and articulations over time, the historically unfolding pattern of genocide in Sudan appears not as an outcome, aberrant crisis or top-down ideological master plan. Neither is it a single, linear process, or a 'breakdown' of order. Rather, it is emergent from a complex systemic context – a 'colonial ecology' – its potentiality imbricated with and incipient within a temporally and geographically expansive web of actors, agencies, processes, relations, structures, discourses, ideas, practices, and global patterns.

⁶⁹ Christian Bueger, 'Thinking Assemblages Methodologically: Some Rule of Thumb', in Michele Acuto and Simon Curtis (eds.), *Reassembling International Theory*, 2014, p. 60.

⁷⁰ William Connolly, 2010, p. 69. Quoted in Dittmer, 'Geopolitical assemblages and complexity,' *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol 38(3) 2014, p. 391.

Legacies: Identity, Class, and Uneven Development in Colonial Sudan

Explanations of genocide in Sudan have tended to fall back on ethnic primordialist tropes, and essentialised, dichotomous representations of 'Arabs' versus 'Africans'. Although it may be the case that conflict in the country has been 'perceived, experienced and executed, in large part, along "racial," ethnic and religious lines', these group identities have been produced and reproduced over time through various processes. The privileging of 'identity politics' (which tends to relatedly privilege the 'internal' or 'domestic' level of analysis) thus 'naturalises these socio-historical constructs, abstracting questions of identity from power and history'⁷¹. Identity in Sudan is complex and fluid. Antagonistic ethnic and cultural identities, and indeed deep racism, predate the British colonial period, particularly in the context of the centuries-long practice of slave raiding of the south by the north during Turco-Egyptian rule. Indeed, Arab and Turkish conquerors have for centuries carried out violent depopulations of large areas inhabited by 'indigenous African'⁷² populations.⁷³ Nevertheless, the deep social, economic, and political transformation experienced under the British reinforced and polarised existing local status hierarchies and identities along a number of fault lines in an unprecedented way. Building on representations of difference and 'racial' inferiority embedded over centuries, during British colonial rule, practices of governance, patterns of capitalist accumulation, racist ideologies of European superiority and meta-narratives of 'progress', 'development' and 'civilisation', sharpened inter-ethnic identities, and catalysed the emergence of pronounced class divisions. These legacies have been central to the way genocide has unfolded in Sudan.

From 1821-85, a period known as the *Turkiyah*, Sudan was under Ottoman Egyptian control (although from 1867 Egypt functioned as an autonomous tributary state of the Ottoman Empire, increasingly subject to British influence which extended into Sudan). Following a popular uprising, a short period of Islamist rule (1885-98) under the Mahdist

⁷¹ Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war,' p. 157, p. 159; see also Bassil, *The Post-Colonial State*, p. 17.

⁷² The use of the term 'indigenous' here and throughout is to designate the fact that the referred to populations are those 'who lived on their lands before settlers came from elsewhere.' They are: '...descendants — according to one definition — of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived, the new arrivals later becoming dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.' Despite the encroachment or domination of other groups onto their ancestral lands, indigenous peoples 'have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics which are clearly distinct from those of the other segments of the national populations.' United Nations, OHCHR, *The Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN Fact Sheet No. 9*, p. 1.

⁷³ See, for example, Stephanie Beswick, *Sudan's Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity and Slavery in South Sudan* (University Rochester Press, 2004).

state (a period known as the *Mahdiyya*) was superseded by over fifty years of joint Anglo-Egyptian control (1899-1956), during which Sudan was in practice administered as a British possession. 'Native administration' or 'indirect rule,' a common form of administration imposed across colonial Africa, was implemented across Sudan in the 1920s. This practice of governance saw administrative and judicial functions 'extended to traditional tribal authorities.'⁷⁴ It was predicated on the idea that rural areas should be administered through customary authority and law, and that ethnicity in itself generated 'locally legitimate forms of authority which the state could use and subordinate.'⁷⁵ However, this reconstitution of 'tribal' authority was often 'an anomalous attempt to "tribalise" people who had no memory of tribal authority or desire to recall it.'⁷⁶ The policy represented the 'creation of a new hierarchy of tribal administrators.'⁷⁷ In ostensibly seeking to preserve the 'innate' qualities of native cultures, the policy divided, essentialised, ethnicised and 'tribalised' identities.⁷⁸

Religious and cultural cleavages between the north and south became further polarised and politicised during the colonial period. Indeed, the British 'consciously sharpened' such differences 'for their own purposes.'⁷⁹ From the mid-1920s, official British policy sought to separate the south from the north through the 'Closed Districts Ordinance,' which banned the use of Arabic, Arab-influenced education and dress, and Islamic religious practice in the south.⁸⁰ The potential for Islam, dominant in the north, to act as a unifying force for popular nationalist sentiment in the south motivated this attempt to remove all traces of Islamic and Arabic identification in the region. A key aim of indirect rule was to isolate the south from 'dangerous and unpredictable' nationalist currents then emerging in the north.⁸¹ The multiple and varied 'African' traditions of the south, including hundreds of unwritten languages and a diverse range of unrelated cultural and social forms, were to be preserved.

⁷⁴ Peter Holt and Martin Daly, *A History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 5th ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 92.

⁷⁵ Douglas Johnson, 'British policy in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan,' *LSE Blog*, 2012; Justin Willis, 'Tribal gatherings: colonial spectacle, native administration and local government in Condominium Sudan,' *Past and Present*, 211(1), 2011, pp. 243-268, p. 252.

⁷⁶ Mark Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898-1934*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 367; see also Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, p. 96.

⁷⁷ Alex de Waal, 'Who are the Darfurians? Arab and African identities, violence and external engagement,' *African Affairs*, 104(415), 2005, pp. 181-205, p. 192.

⁷⁸ Mahmoud Mamdani, *Saviours and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009); Kamal Osman Salih, 'British Policy and the Accentuation of Inter-Ethnic Divisions,' *African Affairs*, 89(356), July 1990, pp. 417-436; Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war,' pp. 157-8.

⁷⁹ Richard Cockett, *Sudan: Darfur, Islamism, and the World: The Failure of an African State*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 39.

⁸⁰ Fluehr-Lobban, 'Islamization in Sudan,' pp. 77-8.

⁸¹ Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, p. 130.

The British also saw the south as a bulwark against the spread of Islam beyond Sudan.⁸² Using missionaries, particularly for education, a policy of Christianisation was implemented, the adoption of which coexisted with traditional animist religious belief systems. English became the language of education and administration.

In privileging and co-opting a small northern elite, and in association with new external economic incentives around cotton production introduced by the British, the period of Anglo-Egyptian colonialism aided the emergence of a new bourgeoisie class based on novel forms of commodity production dependent on wage labour.⁸³ A 'narrow elite' from the country's northern riverain Islamic community was favoured, and their Islamic and Arab traditions were encouraged and treated with deference. The wealth and power of the *Jellaba*, wealthy merchants, traders and officials whose origins can be traced to the Nile Valley, continued to grow. They were perceived, in the words of Lord Kitchener, as the 'better class of native' who were to be co-opted, and through whom the colonists sought to influence the rest of the population.⁸⁴ As Khalid writes, this 'inevitably, set the ground for postcolonial class formation and the rise of the northern bourgeoisie that has since dominated Sudanese politics.'⁸⁵ Moreover, as Heather Sharkey notes, when the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium overthrew the Mahdist state in 1898, there was 'no such thing as a self-identified "Sudanese Arab" among the riverine region's Muslim elites.' Colonial education policy was significant here. It favoured high-status 'Arab' males who would go on to secure administrative positions, thereby undermining potential resistance, and cultivating a group with the 'know-how' to develop and articulate nationalist ideologies. This co-opted elite subsequently developed a 'conception of a self-consciously Sudanese Arabic national identity.'⁸⁶

Inequality and uneven development became deeply entrenched under Anglo-Egyptian rule. As the country was incorporated into the world (primarily British) capitalist system, new forms of modern economic and political order were imposed, and 'spatial patterns and relations progressively transformed to serve that system.' The period saw the establishment of

⁸² Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, 'Islamization in Sudan: A Critical Assessment,' *Middle East Journal*, 44(4), Autumn 1990, pp. 610-23, p. 78.

⁸³ Mohamed Ali, *Industry and Peripheral Capitalism in the Sudan: A Geographical Analysis*, (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1989), p. 44; John Burton, 'Development and Cultural Genocide in the Sudan,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29(3), September 1991, pp. 511-520, p. 512.

⁸⁴ Cited in Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war,' p. 157.

⁸⁵ Khalid, M., *The government they deserve: the role of the elite in Sudan's political evolution* (London: Kegan Paul, 1990), p. 73.

⁸⁶ Heather Sharkey, 'Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race,' *African Affairs*, 107(426), 2008, pp. 21-43, pp. 29-30, p. 21.

an exploitative core-periphery dynamic, with investment in infrastructure and social services concentrated in northern and central regions, areas dominated by the *Jellaba*.⁸⁷ In contrast, and associated with the policy of indirect rule described above, in the country's vast southern, western, and eastern regions, investment and socio-economic development was virtually non-existent. As Burton describes, the south of the country remained 'an unwanted but necessary resource to ensure British control of the Nile.'⁸⁸ Significantly, much greater disparities existed across the country than at the end of the *Mahdiyya* period. In Darfur, incorporated into colonial Sudan in 1916, similar patterns unfolded. Formerly a 'powerful historic centre', under the British it became marginalised, reduced to a 'subordinate status on the periphery of Sudan'.⁸⁹ The British were afraid even a minimal amount of education would provoke dissent from a 'discontented class of semi-literate trouble-makers.'⁹⁰ As Collins writes, 'When the British departed from Sudan at independence in 1956 they left behind in Darfur a record of conspicuous lack of interest and studied indifference.'⁹¹ The layers and dynamics of the situation in Darfur are perhaps more complex than in other regions. For example, the population is primarily Muslim, and the armed resistance that later emerged there was led by an urban and aspirational ruling elite which had previously identified as Arab, and struggled for incorporation into the national elite. It was only in the context of escalating conflict that ethnic categories became increasingly polarised and mobilised (Khartoum invoking 'Arab solidarity' to recruit allies to the *janjawid* militia), and that non-Arab populations began to refer to themselves as 'indigenous' or 'African', ossifying identities that had long been negotiable and fluid.⁹² Nevertheless, despite localised specificities (which cannot be sufficiently developed here), the aim of this study is to draw into focus how such specificities have played out against a common backdrop of broad systemic factors, and in particular how the latter have been implicated in generating crises.

Cotton production, based around large-scale irrigation-based mechanised schemes, was at the centre of British 'development' policy in Sudan. Geared towards international markets, farming schemes and agricultural production were significantly expanded. These projects, notably the vast Gezira and Gedaref schemes, increasingly encroached upon the land

⁸⁷ Mohamed Ali, *Industry and Peripheral Capitalism*, p. 1; Guma Kunda Komey, 'Global Actors and Re-Spacing of Post-Conflict Situation in Africa: The Sudan Case,' Lecture presented at the AEGIS, 3rd European Conference on African Studies (ECAS): Re-spacing Africa, June 2009, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Burton, 'Development and Cultural Genocide,' p. 512.

⁸⁹ Jerome Tubiana, 'The War in the West', in John Ryle et al. (Eds.), *The Sudan Handbook*, pp. 135.

⁹⁰ Cockett, *Sudan*, pp. 32-3.

⁹¹ Cited in Cockett, *Sudan*, p. 32

⁹² Jerome Tubiana, 'The War in the West', in John Ryle et al. (Eds.), *The Sudan Handbook*, pp. 134-5.

of smallholder farmers and pastoralists.⁹³ Local ecologies were damaged, and rural economies and agro-pastoral production disrupted. The schemes introduced mechanisation and casual waged labour, while strengthening local merchant (or circulation) capital.⁹⁴ Profits from cotton growing were unevenly distributed, flowing to individuals and families connected to the state and 'part of the developing social and political culture of the riverain northern heartland.'⁹⁵ Although profitable, the vast cotton schemes also promoted the emerging Sudanese economy's dependence on a single crop. Indeed, as Cockett recently commented, 'It is arguable that all Sudan has done over the last decade is swap an over-reliance on one commodity, cotton, for another, oil.'⁹⁶

In short, Anglo-Egyptian rule left a legacy of divided and fractured identities, and a deeply unequal country. These legacies resonated long after independence in 1956. As Ayers succinctly puts it:

[C]olonial rule and its attendant processes of capitalist accumulation spawned the profound inequalities of wealth, nascent class formation, factional conflict, sectarianism and "retribalisation" of state and society, uneven development, problems of regional integrity and disunity of the "nation," that characterise modern Sudan.⁹⁷

As the following sections describe, Sudan's colonial past has transmuted into a deeply colonial present. The coloniality of Sudan's present is seldom explicitly acknowledged, particularly in relation to the country's experience of genocide. Following Sanjay Seth, therefore, the 'post' in the designation 'postcolonial', is not intended as a periodisation marking an era in which colonialism belongs to the past. Rather, it 'signifies the claim that conquest, colonialism and empire are not a footnote or episode in a larger story', but are in fact a 'central part of that story and are constitutive of it'. The 'post' in this sense does not

⁹³ See Salih (1989), p. 106; Guma Kunda Komey, 'The denied land rights of the indigenous peoples and their endangered livelihood and survival: the case of the Nuba of Sudan,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(5), 2008, pp. 991-1008, p. 1001, p. 1006.

⁹⁴ Clemens Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development: primitive accumulation and geopolitics in the two Sudans,' in Allan, J. A., Keulertz, M., Sojamo, S., Warner, J. (eds.), *Handbook of Land and Water Grabs in Africa: Foreign direct investment and food and water security*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 57 – 70.

⁹⁵ Willis, 'Tribal gatherings,' p. 59.

⁹⁶ Cockett, *Sudan*, p. 23.

⁹⁷ Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war', p. 157.

simply designate 'the period after the colonial era', but the 'effect of the era in shaping the world that is ours'⁹⁸.

Imperial Afterlives: Internal Colonialism and a Perverse Conception of 'Development'

Sudan's transition to independence in the mid-1950s was dominated by northern politicians. Within the context of the hostility, racism and especially slave-raiding that preceded British colonial rule, southerners were deeply apprehensive of a future dominated by the north. Excluded from the political process, a sense of fear and isolation developed in the south. The post-independence constitution committee rejected southern requests for federation, calling instead for a 'united Sudan.' This resulted in further resentment and isolation.⁹⁹ Violence and instability plagued the new state from its very first days of independence. Stoked by southerners' deep anxieties about northern rule, violence in the south broke out before official independence, leading to the outbreak of the first civil war (1955-1972).

The postcolonial government in Sudan reproduced coercive colonial practices of control. As Deng writes, successive governments in Khartoum employed the 'tools of control that they had observed applied by the British,' including 'ruthless suppression and repression of local resistance,' and the 'attempted assertion of law and order by crude military and police forces.' Moreover, alluding to the transmission of a more general colonial mentality, Deng further observes that the British:

[S]aw the South as a *wild frontier* where only might ruled and government meant forcing the natives to submit to law and order. This legacy became a living code in the northern outlook on the South.¹⁰⁰

At independence, many inhabiting Sudan's marginalised peripheries feared a new form of colonialism. Indeed, several historians have described the governance that followed the departure of the British as a form of 'internal colonialism', whereby the ruling elite in the north (cultivated and emboldened under the British) politically, economically, and culturally

⁹⁸ Sanjay Seth, 'Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations', *Millennium* 40(1), pp. 167-183, p. 174.

⁹⁹ Fluehr-Lobban, 'Islamization in Sudan', p. 79.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 135-6. Emphasis added.

dominated, plundered and exploited the peripheries. In Johnson's words, the process of independence 'looked less like national liberation and more like re-colonization.'¹⁰¹ Deng likewise writes:

The relationship between the North and the South, historians have argued, has essentially been one of internal colonialism, in which northern culture and religion were forcibly imposed on the southerners. Southerners did not regard any government in Khartoum as having legitimacy over them. In their view, northern rule was a transfer of colonial control from the British to the South's traditional enemies in the North.¹⁰²

Whilst there has been growing attention to the relationship between settler-colonialism and genocide, the phenomenon of internal colonialism has received little consideration in the genocide literature. However, in a passing comment that has yet to be seriously pursued by genocide scholars, Adam Jones has suggested that the link between genocide and colonialism in the contemporary world is strongest in relation to the internal colonial form, and that its greatest relevance relates to genocides against 'indigenous' peoples. 'Native peoples', Jones writes, occupy socially and territorially 'marginal positions', and their ancestral lands are often 'coveted by an expanding frontier of state control and settlement from the centre'. With profits flowing from the periphery to the core, and the environment 'ravaged', whole societies are destroyed through massacres, forced displacement, targeted killings and coerced labour. Communities fragment as ways of life, including the means of survival, collapse, and demoralisation, disease and alcoholism take hold.¹⁰³ This general pattern, as will be further explained, resonates clearly with Sudan.

According to Peter Calvert, the term 'internal colonialism' rejects the view that colonies can only exist overseas. Rather, it designates the process by which, 'on the pretext of "development", large parts of many Southern states are still in effect being colonised by their own ruling elite'. It is a process, he further writes, that in all important respects 'parallels' external colonialism, and 'is in essence the same process, differentiated only by its geographical location'¹⁰⁴. The 'analogue' of the colonial power is not a country, but an elite which, after decolonisation, has a strong incentive to make use of its political control to

¹⁰¹ Douglas Johnson, 'Twentieth-Century Civil Wars,' in Ryle, J., Willis, J., Baldo, S., Jok, M. J., (eds), *The Sudan Handbook*, (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2011, p. 123.

¹⁰² Deng, *War of Visions*, p. 135.

¹⁰³ Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Peter Calvert, 'Internal Colonialism, Development, and Environment,' *Third World Quarterly*, 22(1), 2001, p. 51.

exploit the less-developed parts of its national territory.¹⁰⁵ Following Calvert, the use of the term ‘internal colonialism’ here is not merely a metaphorical usage. Rather,

[I]t is a colonial experience, though in a new (or revived) guise, and it is such a useful term that its value deserves to be much more widely recognised. The fact is that no other phrase so accurately captures the full nature of the complex interactions involved¹⁰⁶.

Building on these ideas, particularly Calvert’s observation about internal colonialism being driven by a pretext of ‘development’, the work of anthropologist John Burton is pertinent. Burton has argued that ideological legacies of the British help explain the continuities of exploitative core-periphery dynamics in the ‘post’colonial context. The age of European imperialism was, of course, fuelled by racism, pseudo-scientific depictions of primitive peoples, and propelled by convictions about the superior moral authority, reason, and intellect of the ‘West.’ During the colonial period, according to Burton, the Sudanese Arab elite, cultivated and coopted by the British, inherited a hybrid western/Islamic notion of ‘development’ - in his view a ‘perverse’ notion - and sense of their cultural and moral superiority.¹⁰⁷ By the time of independence, some Arab northerners believed they had acquired not just political independence, but also an internal colony, which they ought to ‘develop.’ Indeed, cultural historians have viewed internal colonialism as representing a “‘civilising project” advanced by the centre and its dominant ethnicity over other peoples in remote areas.¹⁰⁸ In Burton’s view, for the Sudanese government under al-Bashir, developing the Nilotic peoples was synonymous with culturally ‘exterminating’ them. Whilst his analysis is addressed to southern Sudan, it is also strikingly relevant to the Nuba Mountains and Darfur, as well as the east of Sudan, in terms of the way traditional peoples and cultures there have been violently displaced by the state’s ‘modernisation’ projects and wider cultural policy of ‘re-creating’ Sudan as a fundamentalist Islamic/Arab state¹⁰⁹. Such considerations can help us understand how the policy of the central government evolved as a transformation of the preceding colonial power - the way ‘an older order of governance and policy have been transformed and recast in new forms since independence’.¹¹⁰ Postcolonial Sudanese regimes

¹⁰⁵ Calvert, ‘Internal Colonialism,’ pp. 52-4.

¹⁰⁶ Calvert, ‘Internal Colonialism,’ pp. 52-4.

¹⁰⁷ Burton, ‘Development and Cultural Genocide.’ 1991, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29(3), pp. 511-520.

¹⁰⁸ Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁹ Burton, p. 511

¹¹⁰ Burton, p. 511.

adopted and adapted these discursive patterns and intellectual currents, finding in them rationalization (perhaps imperative) for violence and oppression.

El-Tom has discussed how the period of British colonialism in Sudan rested on what he describes as a 'monopoly of modernity.' This was a monopoly that:

[U]nderpinned the philosophy of all modern European Empires. Through this monopoly, colonial staff portrayed themselves as of superior standing in terms of rationality, science, order, discipline, etc. Flip the coin and you get the attributes which were associated with the natives. They were to accept their positions as superstitious, chaotic, unruly, tribalistic, irrational and barbaric.¹¹¹

This 'monopoly of modernity' was an inherent part of the 'colonial machinery of legitimacy', and at independence was 'opportunistically appropriated' by the Arab-Islamic northern Sudanese elite; they 'simply slotted themselves into the social relations vacuum left by their colonial masters.' As the colonial heirs, this elite saw themselves as the 'vanguards of modernity' in Sudan, including its 'colonial attributes.' These ideological constructions served as a 'discourse through which the entire Sudan [was] managed and ordered' and are central to understanding the colonial continuities of the 'post'colonial Sudanese state.¹¹²

A further important aspect of these discourses around 'civilization,' 'development,' and 'modernity' relates to the way they became intertwined, during the British colonial period, with a project of nation-building constructed around an ideology of 'Arabisation.' According to Mamdani, the British colonial authority attributed the 'civilized' characteristics of the riverain tribes of the north to the historical migrations of Muslim Arabs to Sudan and their subsequent intermarriage with the indigenous African population; this had created, in Churchill's words, a superior 'mongrel' race.¹¹³ Although there was a deep legacy of racism preceding the British period, as Mamdani has described, in coming together under the banner of 'Arabisation,' Sudan's political elite reproduced the 'specious narrative of the colonial intelligentsia' that 'civilisation in Sudan had been mainly an exogenous affair, narrowly a product of "Arab" immigration and intermarriage and broadly an outcome of "Arabisation" of the indigenous population of Sudan.' Successive regimes thereby 'sought to define Sudanese national identity along Arab-Islamic lines, equating national identity with cultural

¹¹¹ El-Tom, A. O., 'Darfur People: Too Black for the Arab-Islamic Project of Sudan, Part I,' *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, 9(1), 2006, p. 8.

¹¹² El-Tom, A. O., 'Darfur People,' pp. 8-9.

¹¹³ Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviours or Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*, (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 79.

particularity.¹¹⁴ Playing into the internal colonial dynamics described above, therefore, was a dichotomizing, ‘settler/Indigenous ideology inherited from the British,’ and a ‘manufactured’ settler elite to whom they bequeathed power.¹¹⁵

A Neocolonial Logic: the Commodification of Land and the Acceleration of Accumulation by Dispossession¹¹⁶

As we have seen, independent Sudan was characterised by the perpetuation of practices and deep legacies that had their roots in the colonial era. Post-independence rule built on and maintained coercive and exploitative patterns established during British rule. However, in many ways, the ‘new colonial masters’ implemented a more extreme version of these colonial practices, and ruled more aggressively than the British. Violent dynamics became further entrenched after independence, and ‘post’colonial Sudanese territory, as social, economic, political, and cultural space became further polarised into core and periphery.¹¹⁷ Around 15 years after the British left, the emergence of a neocolonial dynamic compounded and intensified this fractious context of internal colonialism. It is at this historical moment, with the confluence of these three colonial logics in the 1970s, that the composite and porous colonial entity -- the assemblage which is the overarching focus of this study -- emerges. In particular, from this period we see the rapid expansion of an extractive (racialised) capitalist logic first set in motion under the British, and a concomitant ~~accelerated momentum~~ amplified pressure and trajectory towards genocide. This neo-colonial dynamic can also be described in terms of Sassen’s concept of a ‘predatory formation.’ That is, it amounts to a complex local-global assemblage, a symbiotic amalgam of institutions, technical capacities, norms and networks, legal and accounting instruments and practices, and owners and managers of capital that undergird a violent (indeed, genocidal) ‘logic of expulsion’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ As summarized by Ayers, ‘Sudan’s uncivil war,’ p. 160.

¹¹⁵ Johnston, R. N., ‘Towards a framework for researching bystanding to atrocities and structural violence in Sudan,’ paper presented at the Sudan Studies Association, 33rd Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA, 25 May 2014, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ David Harvey, ‘The “new” imperialism: accumulation by dispossession,’ *Socialist Register*, 2004, 40, pp. 63-87.

¹¹⁷ Komey, ‘Global Actors,’ p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Belknap, 2014).

Although private and semi-statal forms of land acquisition and 'violent appropriation of free and unfree labour' had indeed developed as a 'tradition' in colonial and postcolonial Sudan, until the 1970s, these processes were of an 'uneven and partial nature.' As such, pre-capitalist forms of subsistence, in particular nomadic livestock and smallholder farming, were able to survive.¹¹⁹ From the 1970s, however, neocolonial dynamics played an important role in driving a dramatic expansion of large-scale, commercial mechanised farming and 'development' schemes across Sudan. This expansion was driven by a deep reorientation of the economy, away from internal markets and production for domestic need, towards greatly increased food production for export.¹²⁰ Attention to these processes helps us understand the continuity evident across different governments and leaders by illuminating the 'complex set of global structural relations informing local agents and underlying their actions.'¹²¹

The concept of neocolonialism is, as Jones notes, ambiguous and contested, but also useful:

Under neo-colonialism, formal political rule is abandoned, while colonial structures of economic, political, and cultural control remain. The resulting exploitation may have genocidal consequences. [...] Many commentators also consider *structural violence* — that is, the destructive power residing in social and economic structures — to reflect neo-colonialism: the former colonial powers have maintained their hegemony over the formerly colonised ("Third") world, and immense disparities of wealth and well-being remain¹²² [...].

Stephen Shalom sees neocolonialism as following the same pattern of colonialism insofar as the latter is not simply a matter of one nation-state dominating another nation-state, but also involves a symbiotic alliance and collaboration between two sets of elites in ruling over the population of the weaker nation. This draws our attention to the importance of the *interaction* between neocolonial dynamics in Sudan and the above described context of internal colonialism with which it converged. Shalom thus defines neocolonialism as:

[A]n alliance between the leading class or classes of two independent nations which facilitates their ability to maintain a dominant position over the rest of the population of the weaker of the two nations.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 174.

¹²⁰ See Tony Barnett and Abbas Abdelkarim, (eds.), *Sudan: State, Capital and Transformation*, (New York: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 4-5.

¹²¹ Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 169.

¹²² Jones, *Genocide*, p. 67.

¹²³ Cited in Blanchard, W. H., *Neocolonialism American Style, 1960-2000*, (Praeger Publishers, 1996), p. 6.

According to historian Tim Niblock, during the 1970s, under Nimeiri, any autonomy the state had previously enjoyed was 'ultimately lost to international capital,' and the 'framework of economic decision-making now set by external forces, whether in the capitalist world's financial institutions, in the oil-producing states, or in Washington.'¹²⁴ During the fifteen years of Nimeiri's rule (1969-1985), a class of merchants, traders, and commission men, 'took almost exclusive control of social and political power, and thus of the state, for its own ends.' Concerned above all with its own needs for 'accumulation and conspicuous consumption,' this class, encouraged by the US, shifted development policy in a direction which led to the further marginalisation, displacement and dispossession of rural subsistence populations.¹²⁵ Indeed, in Niblock's view, the Sudanese state during the 1970s 'falls clearly' into the category of a 'bourgeois-bureaucratic' state: 'the state bureaucracy, now transformed into a state bourgeoisie, provides a dynamic link between the interests of the commercial bourgeoisie and those of the state.'¹²⁶

Particularly from 1972, with the 'open door,' or *infitah* policy, we can see a new stage of transition in postcolonial Sudan, marked by closer relations with the West. This policy, Elnur writes, 'codified Sudan's dependence on foreign capital.'¹²⁷ This period was characterized by: 'joint ventures with foreign capital; management contracts with foreign firms and investors; intensive mechanisation; [and] attempts to involve international agribusiness and Arab capital.'¹²⁸ Bassil likewise writes that beginning in the 1970s, we can discern a second key phase in the core-periphery relations previously described, emerging with what he describes as the rise and fall of the Sudanese 'developmental state'; a decade of state (and nation) building that ended in bankruptcy and turmoil.¹²⁹

From the early 1970s, Gulf countries also sought to develop Sudan as the 'bread-basket' of the Arab world.¹³⁰ The aim was that, with its huge land mass and water resources,

¹²⁴ Tim Niblock, *Class and Power in Sudan: The Dynamics of Sudanese Politics, 1898-1985*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 291.

¹²⁵ Barnett and Abdelkarim, *Sudan*, p. 3.

¹²⁶ Tim Niblock, 'The background to the change of government in 1985,' in Peter Woodward (ed.), *Sudan after Nimeiri*, (Oxon: Routledge, 1991), pp. 34-44, pp. 35-6.

¹²⁷ Cited in Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 176.

¹²⁸ Mahmoud Ali, T. M., 'The State and Agricultural Policy: In Quest of a Framework for Analysis of Development Strategies,' in Barnett and Abdelkarim (eds.), *Sudan*, pp. 19 – 36, p. 22.

¹²⁹ Bassil, *The Post-Colonial State*, p. xi.

¹³⁰ See Tim Niblock, 'Sudan's Economic Nightmare,' *Middle East Research and Information*, 15(135), Sept/Oct 1985; John Prendergast, 'Blood Money for Sudan: World Bank and IMF to the "Rescue,"' *Africa Today*, 36(3-4), 1989, pp. 43-53; Woertz, E., *Oil for Food: The Global Food Crisis and the Middle East*, (Oxford Scholarship Online: OUP, 2014), chapter 6.

the country could supply food to the Middle East, easing dependence on imported food supplies, notably from the US, while also raising national income through crop exports. The 'bread-basket' strategy rested on three 'pillars': Sudanese land and resources (including cheap labour), Arab capital, and Western know-how.¹³¹ This 'know-how' came from Washington as early as 1968, when the Mechanised Farming Corporation (MFC) was established based on the request of the World Bank in order to secure loans to facilitate credit for farmers. Subsequent expansion of mechanised farming was based on further funding by the World Bank under the umbrella of the MFC:

The Arab/African food basket ideology, in conjunction with the influx of foreign capital politically facilitated by the Washington Consensus, continued to open the Sudanese market and production.¹³²

Mechanised schemes spread across Sudan's peripheries. These expanding schemes led to ecological devastation, massive societal dislocation and escalation of inter-communal conflict over grazing routes and diminishing resources. As a consequence of these 'development' policies, both the environment and the rural peoples whom depended upon it were devastated. When crop yields dropped below profitable levels exhausted and eroded land was abandoned, and lease-holders 'moved on to repeat the cycle elsewhere, leaving behind landless labourers or migrant workers.'¹³³ Hence, the 'relentless expansion into the "peripheries."'¹³⁴ Indeed, in Suliman's view:

Sudan offers a prime example of how Third World ruling elites, driven to specialise in resource utilisation, have degraded the resource base to such an extent that its expansion becomes a necessity for them, justifying aggression against their own people or their neighbours.¹³⁵

As has been alluded to on a number of occasions, another important aspect of the colonial ecology delineated here relates to various technical governance practices and capacities. In particular, the developments described above were made possible by and enacted through a wave of legislative reform that systematically eroded customary land rights in order to facilitate government appropriation of land. Building on colonial land laws, notably The Land

¹³¹ Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 175.

¹³² Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 175.

¹³³ Prendergast, J., 'Blood Money,' p. 44.

¹³⁴ Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war,' p. 164.

¹³⁵ Suliman, 'Civil war in Sudan,' 119.

Registration and Settlement Act (1925), which designated unoccupied land as government land unless proved otherwise, a key piece of legislation was the 1970 Unregistered Land Act.¹³⁶ This Act nullified customary rights of land use and access to land by stipulating that all lands not privately owned and registered automatically belonged to the state. Hoffman describes the Act as a 'modern-day form of enclosure,' establishing the legal basis for large-scale land acquisitions by the government.¹³⁷ The new legislation enabled the government to lease out large areas of land across Sudan to well-capitalised merchants and absentee landlords primarily from the central Nile valley region for large-scale farming schemes.¹³⁸ Ultimately, the 1970 Act re-conceptualised land as a commodity that could be privatised and transferred to individual ownership.¹³⁹ The World Bank and USAID were lead supporters of this process; one study notes the Unregistered Land Act of 1970 was introduced 'at the bidding of the World Bank.'¹⁴⁰ The trend begun under Nimeiri of legislation which undermined the control of local authorities and peoples over the resources of the land, and reoriented the national economy towards heavily-capitalised export agriculture, was 'accelerated during the coalition governments of Sadiq al-Mahdi (1987 – 89) and has been pushed to a logical extreme under the current Islamic government' (1989 – present)¹⁴¹.

Later programmes of 'structural adjustment' imposed by the IMF between 1978 and 1984 expanded still further the growth of export-oriented cash crops, rather than establishing domestic food security.¹⁴² Broader processes of neoliberal globalisation are crucial to the discussion here. Such processes have increased pressures to privatise land and property rights globally:

Structural adjustment programmes and other austerity measures forced post-colonial governments to open their economies to the foreign interests of

¹³⁶ Kibreab, 2002, p. 272, p. 279.

¹³⁷ Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 174.

¹³⁸ Douglas Johnson, 'Decolonising the Borders in Sudan,' in Duffield, M. and Hewitt, V., (eds.), *Empire, Development and Colonialism: The Past in the Present*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2009), p. 177.

¹³⁹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Environmental Governance in Sudan: An Expert Review*, (Nairobi: UNEP, 2012), p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ Liz Alden Wily, 'Looking back to see forward: the legal niceties of land theft in land rushes,' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3-4), 2012, pp. 751- 775, p. 764.

¹⁴¹ Douglas Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, Revised Ed. (Suffolk: James Currey, 2012), p. 130.

¹⁴² Hoffman, 'The contradictions of development,' p. 175.

companies, banks and private investors, turning African countries into "radical testing grounds for neoliberal policies."¹⁴³

Thus, from 1978 we can discern a second phase within the 'open door' policy, with 'direct and indirect reshaping and reorientation' of the state's policies and programmes resulting from pressures from the IMF, and multinational donors and investors.¹⁴⁴ The interventions by the IMF and the World Bank, according to Cheru, 'further reinforced the existing bias toward elite-oriented development strategies.'¹⁴⁵ In short, Sudan's 'mal-integration' into the global political economy created what Suliman describes as a dependent 'class of local resource-extractors.'¹⁴⁶ This in turn gave rise to a 'specific character and dynamics' of accumulation, based on primitive accumulation and dependent primary commodity production. Sudan's capitalist class, prompted by 'assimilation into the global political economy in the restricted role of extractors of primary wealth,' have carried out an 'unprecedented exploitation of resources — including fertile land, oil, minerals, water, and cheap labour.'¹⁴⁷ They implemented increasingly violent methods in order to pursue this extraction. But why, we may ask, were successive Sudanese regimes so open and willing to accommodate foreign investors and companies? As Gertel *et al.* observe, echoing the discussion above on organising colonial discourses around 'development' and 'modernity,' it was not only the interest of financial reward but also colonial 'master narratives of civilisation, development, modernisation and globalisation' that shaped the 'visions of Sudan's ruling elites.'¹⁴⁸

Genocide and Communal Resistance on the Internal Frontiers

Drawing the trajectories described thus far together, we can see pressure towards genocide in Sudan emanating from multiple sites in a heterogeneous and 'congregational'¹⁴⁹ agential topography, a web drawing in: technical legal and financial capacities; shifts in the global

¹⁴³ Gertel, J., Rottenburg, R., Calkins, S., 'Disrupting Territories: Commodification and its Consequences,' in Gertel, J., Rottenburg, R., Calkins, S. (eds.), *Disrupting Territories: Land, Commodification & Conflict in Sudan*, (Suffolk: James Currey, 2014), p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ Barnett and Abdelkarim (eds.), *Sudan*, p. 7; Prendergast, 'Blood Money,' pp. 43-44; Mohamed Suliman, 'Civil War in Sudan: The Impact of Ecological Degradation,' *Contributions in Black Studies*, 15, 1997 (Article 7), pp. 99-121, p. 112.

¹⁴⁵ Cited in Prendergast, 'Blood Money,' p. 50.

¹⁴⁶ Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war,' p. 163; Suliman, 'Civil war in Sudan,' p. 103.

¹⁴⁷ Ayers, A., *Ibid*, p. 153, p. 163.

¹⁴⁸ Gertel *et al.*, 'Disrupting Territories,' pp. 7-8.

¹⁴⁹ Bennett, 2010, p. 20.

economy; globalised institutional networks of experts, capital, and neoliberal ‘know-how’; racial formations and colonial discourses of modernity, civilisation and ‘development’; extractivist-induced ecological devastation, scarcity and the associated inter-communal hostility, anger, fear and despair; and the various structural and ideological (living) legacies of colonialism. This web extends from globalised elites and oil companies, to the localised pastoralists; spans from the incremental colonial fracturing of Sudanese society and the slow violence¹⁵⁰ of the IDP camps, to the rapid attacks of the militias; cuts across the ideological and the material; and conjoins layers of past and present. Despite the diversity of these multi-scalar elements, a core claim advanced throughout has been that each is nevertheless affiliated and subsumable under the organising analytic categories of the three colonial logics delineated.

A further key feature of genocide’s coloniality in Sudan relates to its spatial arrangement, which has emerged in alignment with the contours of what can be seen as an internal ‘frontier’ formation.¹⁵¹ As was noted, Sudan’s post-colonial elite saw the country’s peripheries through the racist colonial lens of a ‘wild frontier’. If we recognise the inherently colonial nature of economic, political, social and cultural relations in the country, these frontier-based patterns of genocide emerge in a new, sharper light. As should be clear from the preceding discussion, Sudan’s internal frontiers began to take shape during the British colonial period. However, these frontier regions have subsequently become violent fissures – or ‘systemic edges’¹⁵² -- with the coalescence of the colonial trajectories described above. This frontier formation is the emergent whole, or pattern, that this study has sought to disaggregate.

By the end of the civil war in 2005, as Johnson writes, what the marginalised peoples located in the southern, eastern and western peripheries had in common was ‘dispossession from their land through government encroachment.’¹⁵³ Their identities, ways of life (and the

¹⁵⁰ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011)

¹⁵¹ The anthropologist Wendy James invokes the idea of an ‘internal frontier zone’ to help make sense of the broader Sudanese context of conflict and the challenges faced by the country’s peripheral indigenous peoples as they have been ‘co-opted into the body of the predatory state itself’ and ‘transformed into frontier societies’. However, she does not fully explore the colonial connotations of the conceptualization of this frontier formation. See Wendy James, *War and Survival in Sudan’s Frontierlands: Voices from the Blue Nile* (Oxford: James Currey, 2009), p. x.

¹⁵² Sassen, *Expulsions*.

¹⁵³ Johnson, ‘Decolonising the Borders,’ p. 176.

conditions of life itself) under assault¹⁵⁴, communities on the systemic edges began to resist. It is in these moments of communal resistance to colonial violence and encroachment that episodes of acute genocidal destruction have erupted. The interpretation put forward here thus contrasts with characterisations of genocide in Sudan as a form of ‘counterinsurgency genocide’.¹⁵⁵ In the context of the framing used in this article, such (mis)characterisations are only plausible if based on a truncated temporal bounding of the genocidal event. Such a perspective fails to account for the genocidal processes already in motion, that communal resistance was largely a response to.

From the mid-1970s, resistance by the millions dispossessed by this encroachment grew significantly. The formation in the south of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) was largely a response to the exclusionary and exploitative resource extraction practices of the new economic regime based on export of resources. The SPLA/M claimed to be defending the whole of rural Sudan against the ‘onslaught of the *Jellaba*’.¹⁵⁶ The discovery of oil in 1978 by US company Chevron, and the exploration of the oilfields in the years preceding this discovery, played a crucial role in catalysing these dynamics. Foreign oil companies developed an ‘interest coalition’ with Khartoum in clearing land of ‘unwanted peoples’ in order to carry out economic ‘development’.¹⁵⁷ In a destructive feedback loop, lucrative oil contracts and oil revenues also helped finance the expansion of military acquisitions, intensifying and escalating these violent relationships.

Despite a previous rapprochement with the south, in the context of increasing oil exploration by foreign companies, Nimeiri initiated a more interventionist approach, threatening the south’s autonomy and its access to oil revenues. This included a concerted campaign of Arabisation and Islamisation. War broke out in the south in 1983, spreading to the Nuba Mountains in 1985. The targets of the first attacks by the SPLA at the outbreak of the second civil war in 1983 made clear the precipitants of the new conflict: oil installations, the digger at the Jonglei canal, and the tractors of absentee landlords were attacked.¹⁵⁸ The

¹⁵⁴ Wise, L., ‘Social Death and the Loss of a “World”: An Anatomy of Genocidal Harm in Sudan’, (2017), *International Journal of Human Rights*.

¹⁵⁵ For example, Martin Shaw, ‘Darfur: counter-insurgency, forced displacement and genocide’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2011, 62(1), pp. 56-61.

¹⁵⁶ Ayers, 2010, p. 165.

¹⁵⁷ Elke Grawert, ‘Cross-border Dynamics of Violent Conflict: The Case of Sudan and Chad,’ *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 43(6), December 2008, pp. 595-614, p. 611. See also Hannibal Travis, ‘Genocide in Sudan: The Role of Oil Exploration and the Entitlement of the Victims to Reparations’, *Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 2008, Vol. 25 (1).

¹⁵⁸ Suliman, M., ‘18 Years of Civil War in the Sudan,’ *Institute for African Alternatives*, London, 2001; Travis, ‘Genocide in Sudan’, 2008, p. 44.

Jonglei canal had devastated the ecology which sustained southern populations' livelihoods, making them dependent upon mechanised schemes. This policy, according to Burton, was 'the mirror image of the manner in which the US Administration handled the "problem" of the Plains Indians a century before: by decimating their bison herds, they eradicated the indigenous populations.'¹⁵⁹ In response to SPLA resistance, into the 1980s and 1990s, Arab militias were increasingly mobilised and 'scorched earth' tactics implemented to crush this resistance and clear the land of its inhabitants for oil exploration. Tens of thousands were massacred, famine engineered, and up to 50,000 young Dinka girls were enslaved.¹⁶⁰ Helen Fein has noted that genocidal famine, enacted through the looting of Arab Baggara militias, became a tool particularly after the discovery of oil in the south.¹⁶¹

In the Nuba Mountains, land grabs and the encroachment of mechanised agriculture destroyed smallholder farming, and led to massive displacements. The 'economic and social life' of the Nuba was 'devastated,' and friendly relations with the Baggara destroyed.¹⁶² Exacerbated by anger at policies of Islamisation and Arabisation, land dispossession was the main reason the peoples of the Nuba Mountains took up arms in the mid-1980s. Khartoum's response to resistance in the Nuba Mountains, notably in the early 1990s, in concert with its militias, was 'savagely and disproportionate.'¹⁶³ This crackdown involved systematic burnings of Nuba villages, looting, destruction of property, massacres and mass executions of Nuba and village leaders. Violence in the region intensified under al-Bashir's National Islamic Front (NIF) (1989 - present), continuing and expanding policies initiated by the previous al-Mahdi government. From 1992 unprecedented levels of violence were unleashed with the

¹⁵⁹ Burton, 1991, p. 517.

¹⁶⁰ Travis, 'Genocide in Sudan', 2008, p. 9; Luke Patey, *The New Kings of Crude: China, India, and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan*, (India: HarperCollins, 2014); Human Rights Watch, *Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights*, (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2003); De Waal, 'Genocidal Warfare,' p. 543; Alex De Waal, 'How Mass Atrocities End: Sudan,' 29 March 2012, *Reinventing Peace*, blog of the World Peace Foundation. Available at: <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2012/03/29/how-mass-atrocities-end-sudan/>; Ted R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, DC: United Institute of Peace, 1993); Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

¹⁶¹ Helen Fein, 'Genocide by Attrition 1939-1993: The Warsaw Ghetto, Cambodia and Sudan,' *Health and Human Rights*, 2(2), pp. 10-45, p. 24. See also David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹⁶² Suliman, 'The Nuba Mountains of Sudan: resource access, violent conflict, and identity,' in Buckles, D., (ed), *Cultivating peace: conflict and collaboration in natural resource management*, (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1999), p. 212.

¹⁶³ Rahhal, *The Right to be Nuba: The Story of a Sudanese People's Struggle for Survival* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2001), p. 41.

launching of a genocidal *Jihad*. Livelihoods were systematically targeted, individuals of all ages killed, women and girls were raped, humanitarian aid denied, and ‘scorched earth’ tactics employed, destroying hundreds of villages. Tens of thousands perished.¹⁶⁴ De Waal describes this military campaign as ‘almost certainly the most ambitious campaign of forced social change in modern Sudanese history.’ Thousands were forcibly relocated to so-called ‘peace camps,’ with the aim of ‘entirely emptying’ the region of the Nuba people, and eradicating their traditional identities.¹⁶⁵ The ‘peace camps,’ ‘concentration camps in the true sense of the word,’ were sites of extreme physical and sexual violence and abuse, forced conversion to Islam, forced labour, and starvation.¹⁶⁶

Crucially, as Johnson notes, this was not simply a military strategy. Rather, it was ‘part of the government’s wider economic strategy’, evidenced by the fact that in March 1993, the government announced the sale of new areas land in the Nuba Mountains and received 40,000 bids from Arab entrepreneurs. Large areas of the plains were subsequently ‘cleared of their original population and sold off to the regime’s supporters.’¹⁶⁷ Similar patterns unfolded in Darfur, where vast areas of land were also appropriated; in one single public announcement in 1993, the government distributed some 7 million hectares in southern Darfur alone.¹⁶⁸ Precipitated by these processes, throughout the 1990s, as in other areas of Sudan, inter-communal conflict in Darfur escalated as arable land and water became scarcer. Daly thus describes the eruption of violence by the rebel groups in early 2003 as not merely a defence of local rights, but a ‘struggle for existence.’¹⁶⁹ This was exacerbated by drought and desertification, and exploited by Khartoum’s co-option and mobilisation of *Janjaweed* militia from nomadic Arab pastoralist groups such as the *Rizeigat* around an ideology of Arab supremacism. This racist ideology, disseminated through a ‘divide and rule’ logic, was able to take root, harden previously negotiable identities, and draw energy from the disruption wrought by land dispossession and ecological destruction. On Sudan’s marginalised and exploited internal frontiers, the ideology of Arab supremacy absorbed a violent efficacy in the context of colonial expulsion and devastation – a context, as noted

¹⁶⁴ See Totten, *Genocide by Attrition*; African Rights, *Facing Genocide: The Nuba of Sudan* (London: African Rights, 1995).

¹⁶⁵ Alex De Waal, ‘Not forgetting the Nuba war,’ *African Arguments*, 9 August 2008. Available at: <http://africanarguments.org/2008/08/09/truth-telling-nuba/>.

¹⁶⁶ African Rights, *Facing Genocide*, p. 3; Samuel Totten, *Genocide by Attrition: The Nuba Mountains of Sudan* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ Johnson, *The Root Causes*, p. 133.

¹⁶⁸ Suliman, cited in Ayers, ‘Sudan’s uncivil war,’ p. 166.

¹⁶⁹ Daly, *Darfur’s Sorrow*, p. 15.

above, itself in part a manifestation of the colonial, and later globalised, imaginaries of Sudan's elites.

The institution of Native Administration had previously provided a 'system of local governance' to manage the use of land, natural resources and seasonal grazing routes, and to avert potential conflicts between sedentary farmers and pastoralists. However, following the introduction of the Unregistered Land Act in 1970, as described above, Native Administration was dissolved by the government in 1971, leaving an absence of local customary conflict resolution mechanisms.¹⁷⁰ The expansion of the water-intensive lucrative cash crop export market led to large tracts of previously uncultivated land being claimed by the government under the controversial Unregistered Land Act of 1970, disrupting grazing routes and watering zones.¹⁷¹ As noted, with this Act, the government was able to hand out large plots of land to urban merchant elites based outside the region, primarily from the wealthier riverine and central regions of Sudan. This process undermined the functioning and authority of customary tenure structures.¹⁷² It also led to greater tensions between nomadic and pastoralist groups. With mechanised schemes obstructing traditional grazing routes, Baggara cattle herders in the Nuba Mountains often diverted their herds through Nuba farmland to avoid prosecution for trespass. Likewise in Darfur, the enclosure movement and commercialisation of agriculture undermined previously established long-term mutually beneficial relations between farmers and pastoralists, limiting access to pasture and water and blocking established migration routes. Inter-communal conflict escalated as a result.

These issues around access to land and its associated conflicts were central to creating the very conditions that made Arab herders susceptible to recruitment into the militias. As noted previously, use of Arab militia has been a common practice employed across Sudan's various sites of genocide by different regimes. Although ~~the practice of using militia~~ it had already been underway, in July 1985, the decision was taken by the transitional government of General Abdel Rahman Suwar al Dahab to step up recruitment and arming of the proxy 'tribal' militia.¹⁷³ Known as the *Murahaliin*, the militia were recruited from South Kordofan and South Darfur on a tribal basis (Misiriya and Rizeigat Arabs), and although not paid, were armed and encouraged to keep what they looted. This was a financially pragmatic but

¹⁷⁰ Musa Abdul-Jalil and Jon D. Untruth, 'Land Rights under Stress in Darfur: A Volatile Dynamic of the Conflict', *War and Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2013, pp. 156-81, p. 161.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 166-8.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 168.

¹⁷³ De Waal, 'Reflections on the Difficulties of Defining Darfur's Crisis as Genocide', *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 20, 2007, pp. 27-28.

‘fateful’ decision, which, according to de Waal, has ‘set every major [counter-insurgency] campaign down a particular path’¹⁷⁴. Under Sadiq al-Mahdi (1986-89) proxy militia were increasingly supported and endorsed by the government, and under current president, al-Bashir, they were formalised with the Popular Defence Act of 1989. Militia groups and their associated (primarily pastoralist or *abbala*) populations have ‘settled’ as occupiers in the lands they helped the military ‘clear’ of non-Arab populations.

Much has been written about the notorious *Janjaweed* militia as agents of genocide in Darfur. However, this longer history of co-opting proxy ‘Arab’ militias as part of a wider strategy to clear vast areas of land and put down resistance to an essentially internal colonial project is less well known. Some have noted, moreover, that it is a practice ‘appositely compared to colonial strategies of rule.’¹⁷⁵ Emerging in the post-colonial context in the south, notably in support of oil exploration, the ‘militia strategy’ is a significant commonality across the different geographical sites of genocide described, and can be seen as part of a broader pattern of genocidal practices. Often described in the media as animated primarily by racial and ethnic hatred, it was in fact the impoverishment of the pastoralists, particularly through the unprecedented mechanised agricultural expansion described above, that made them willing in the first place to be employed as militia.¹⁷⁶

Although racialised ideologies of Arab supremacism may have played a role mobilising them as this policy escalated, the militias were initially recruited by local landowners and oil companies in order to depopulate the oil exploration areas, particularly in Upper Nile.¹⁷⁷ Similar tactics were used to depopulate areas for projects such as the Jonglei canal in the late 1970s.¹⁷⁸ As Johnson observes, the militia strategy was ultimately driven by its ‘contribution to commercial activity.’¹⁷⁹ The fomenting of proxy wars through the use of ‘tribal’ militia, and their key role in dividing and displacing local populations, was an ‘essential element’ of the resource bourgeoisie’s strategy of primitive accumulation.¹⁸⁰ Mahmoud writes that the ideology of ‘tribalism’ has been exploited by the ‘interacting

¹⁷⁴ De Waal, ‘Genocidal Warfare,’ p. 543.

See also De Waal, ‘Reflections on the Difficulties of Defining Darfur’s Crisis as Genocide’, *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 20, 2007, pp. 27-28.

¹⁷⁵ Ayers, ‘Sudan’s uncivil war’, p. 166.

¹⁷⁶ Pantuliano, ‘The land question,’ p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Mohamed Suliman, ‘18 Years of Civil War in the Sudan,’ *Institute for African Alternatives*, London, 2001.

¹⁷⁸ See John Burton, ‘Development and Cultural Genocide in the Sudan,’ in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29(3), September 1991, pp. 511-520.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson, *The Roots Causes*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁰ Ayers, ‘Sudan’s uncivil war,’ p. 166.

interests' of the Sudanese postcolonial bourgeois parties, governments, and capitalists in order to maintain political power and accumulate capital.¹⁸¹ Yet, despite the 'tribal' and jihadist ideology, many militia leaders had no tribal base at all; they were from the merchant class and moved into raising militias 'as an extension of business.'¹⁸² Arming the nomadic tribes of Arab or Arabised herders was a strategy that 're-directed the economic frustrations of nomadic herders who had been squeezed out of traditional pastures by drought and/or economic development, towards combating southern secessionists.' As such, the Baggara militias have been drafted into 'initiating the very economic policies that have adversely affected their traditional lifestyles.'¹⁸³ In short, like Sudan's elites, the militias as perpetrators and agents of genocide (as well as government practice) have evolved historically over several decades, their very formation a relational becoming moulded by and inseparable from the colonial milieu that has determined the conditions of possibility of their emergence, their strategic (genocidal) imperatives and the means of implementing them.

Conclusion

The puzzle this article pivoted on was the seeming 'paradox' of genocidal continuity in Sudan. Manifesting as both temporally delimited event and extended process, patterns of genocide, understood within a Lemkin-based framing, have unfolded across the country's peripheries against different non-Arab groups with varying degrees of severity over several decades. As was emphasised, this genocidal continuity has historically transcended a number of regimes and leaders of varying structure and ideological orientation, against a backdrop of significant domestic and international change. In the absence of a unified 'intending' perpetrator-actor in the form of a single leader or government, this pattern presents a problem for conventional liberal understandings of genocide, and was argued to be indicative of an emergent, self-organising form of order. The questions thus posed at the outset were: what factors or forces have underpinned this genocidal continuity? What has maintained this pattern over time? Whilst large numbers of scholars and analysts have explored the issue of genocide in Sudan specifically in relation to the region of Darfur in the period 2003-4, only a handful acknowledge the occurrence of previous episodes of which Darfur was emblematic, and fewer still attempt to systematically interrogate the connections and continuities between

¹⁸¹ Cited in Ayers, 'Sudan's uncivil war,' p. 166.

¹⁸² Johnson, *The Root Causes*, p. 97.

¹⁸³ Suliman, '18 Years of Civil War.'

these historically and geographically dispersed episodes within a holistic and synthesising analytical framework.

The latter being a primary goal of the present argument, a key novel ~~methodological~~ analytical move made was to foreground Sudan's historical pattern of genocide, understood as an emergent entity, as the 'phenomenon' to be explained. In thus reorienting the method of inquiry, our empirical focus, based on a distinctive reading and interpretation of the historical literature, was attuned to delineating a deeper set of processes that extend beyond the boundaries of the Sudanese state, revealing the limitations of dominant domestic (and temporally truncated) framings. The aim was not to chart an exact and detailed chronological plot, or to identify the 'master cause' of genocide in the form of a linear model; it was, rather, to draw into focus the broad and heterogeneous landscape that has generated and shaped the contours of this pattern of genocide over time. Framing the issue in this way, the core ontological claim was that genocide in Sudan is constitutively interwoven with a systemic, historically sedimented, colonial milieu. In tracing the diachronic intersections of the processes and other elements constitutive of this milieu, genocide was conceptualised not as an outcome or discrete event that can be clearly delineated and bounded in space and time. And neither was it described as an aberrant breakdown, irrational violent outburst, or top-down co-ordinated and ideologically-driven 'master plan' — all common implicit (or explicit) explanatory tropes.

Rather, the complexity/assemblage-guided framing drawn on allowed us to see genocide as emergent from a complex systemic context — a 'colonial ecology' — its potentiality imbricated with and incipient within a temporally and geographically expansive web of processes, discourses, ideologies, actors, practices and relations. These heterogeneous elements, all of which are subsumable under the organising analytic categories of the three colonial logics described, comprise the multiple sites of a 'congregational' agency¹⁸⁴. This approach helped us grasp how long-term, low-level attritional processes as well as temporally punctuated 'moments' of more intense violence and destruction are part of a common evolving system. The more severe episodes represent extreme developments, or *intensifications*, of processes, structurings and relations already 'in motion'. Although not aspiring to 'complete' explanation, and of course unable to grasp the full complexities of the causes and experience of genocide across Sudan, the intersecting colonialisms traced were nevertheless agued to be inseparable from its logic, possibility, development, and momentum.

¹⁸⁴ Bennett, p. 20.

Indeed, genocide and the ‘three colonialisms’ were conceptualised as homologous insofar as they were shown to map onto each other in terms of their form, function, and effects.

What, given this interpretation of genocide’s occurrence, are we to make of concepts such as responsibility, accountability and blame? What are the politics and normative implications of thinking of genocide as a systemic, emergent entity? Whilst detailed consideration of the implications of the present analysis for the meaning of ‘anti-genocide’ action in Sudan, or more widely, falls beyond the scope of this article, what is clear is that such implications are likely to present a deep challenge to mainstream official and activist ‘genocide prevention’ discourse, and indeed to our sense of the parameters of meaningful political action.

One aim of the article has been to make visible the constitutive relationship between genocide and Sudan’s (deeply colonial and globally constituted) political economy, especially in relation to agricultural policies and issues around land ownership. In doing so, it aimed also to problematise the (temporal, geographical, ontological) boundaries drawn (or imposed) separating the ‘genocidal’ from the ostensibly ‘non-genocidal’ - to unsettle our sense of ‘where’ and ‘when’ genocide begins and ends. The challenge was instead to think in terms of incipencies and conditions of possibility, thus also problematising a simple linear tracing and separation of cause and effect. Moreover, in uncovering the complex coloniality of a genocidal system that is seldom recognised in those terms, the article demonstrated the importance of Lemkin’s neglected insights about the constitutive relationship between genocide and colonialism, and further extended debates around these insights through attention to how different colonial forms evolve and intersect over time. It thereby sought to contribute to broader projects of unsettling the field of genocide studies by challenging not only conventional patterns of thought and assumptions about what it means to be engaged in genocide scholarship, but also challenging ourselves to see how we as researchers may be situated within relations of genocide, rather than outside of them.¹⁸⁵

In contrast to the myopic focus on the intentions and ideologies of genocidal elites, the perspective of the present argument suggests the need (at least in the contemporary context) for more focussed attention on questions about the incipient genocidal logics implicit in macro-economic trajectories, notably neoliberal globalisation, and the role of the major

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Woolford, ‘Unsettling Genocide Studies at the Eleventh Conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, July 16-19, 2014, Winnipeg’, *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, Vol. 9(2), pp. 98-102; Tony Barta, ‘Relations of Genocide: Land and Lives in the Colonisation of Australia’. In *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, Wallimann and Dobkowski (eds.), pp. 237-52 (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

‘development’ actors in disrupting subsistence economies and traditional rural societies. It should also thus help us better grasp the high stakes of these debates. The argument also suggests the importance of paying greater attention to how such global processes interact with pre-existing local or national dynamics to produce conflict, in particular over land. The approach should also prompt us to give greater attention to how these processes may be implicated in the generation of crisis conditions (particularly in post-colonial states), which could then go on to form the context for assaults on civilian populations, increased violence and conflict, the polarisation of identities and escalation of radical, exclusionary discourses and group labelling.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, when it comes to the question of genocide, the argument presented points to the need for recognition of the constitutive role played by an extractive economic imperative to clear land of populations whom depend upon it.

More generally, these brief suggestions intimate towards the need to cultivate greater sensitivity towards the systemic potentiality for genocide,¹⁸⁷ and the need for deeper recognition that ‘anti-genocide’ action cannot be unproblematically decoupled from broader and longer-term global struggles for economic, social and environmental justice, or from indigenous peoples’ movements and struggles for land rights. These ideas also amount, in this sense, to a deep challenge to mainstream discourses about genocide prevention, which are overwhelmingly underpinned by (depoliticising) ideas about the ‘West’, through its promotion of liberal norms, justice, economics, legal institutions and humanitarian intervention, embodying the solutions to the problem of genocide.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, as we have seen, some of these factors are in fact implicated in the production of genocide. For all the international attention Darfur received in 2003-4, the multiple UN peacekeeping forces and international diplomacy, not to mention the ICC’s indictment of President al-Bashir, the situation across the country, and now also in the new state of South Sudan, remains one of unfolding genocide¹⁸⁹, albeit with evolving dynamics.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Ahmed, N. M., ‘Colonial Dynamics of Genocide: Imperialism, Identity and Mass Violence,’ in *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security*, 1(1), April 2011, pp. 30-31. See also Alexander Barder, ‘Neo-Materialist Ecologies’, *Globalizations*.

¹⁸⁷ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 157.

¹⁸⁸ Power, S., *A Problem from Hell*.

¹⁸⁹ Discussion of the recent turmoil in South Sudan, which seceded from Sudan in 2011 is beyond the scope of this article. On the ongoing crisis in Sudan, see for example, Ahmed Adam, *African Arguments*: <http://africanarguments.org/2017/06/05/amid-silence-atrocities-in-darfur-have-restarted/>; Eric Reeves, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/darfur-the-most-successful-genocide-in-a-century_us_58fa0eb9e4b086ce58980fe3; Amnesty International, ‘Sudan: Credible evidence of the use of chemical weapons to kill and main hundreds of civilians including children in Darfur revealed’, 29 September, 2016 [Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/09/sudan-credible-evidence-chemical-weapons-darfur-revealed/>]; Aicha Elbasri, ‘Unlike Syria, No “Red Lines” For

According to Mark Levene, the prevention of genocide requires not only a ‘much broader engagement with the systemic sources of conflict in the contemporary world’, but nothing less than a ‘paradigmatic shift in our approach to the fundamentals of human life on this planet’¹⁹¹. This study has aimed to contribute to this broader, systemic engagement, and its diagnosis it is in concordance with the potentially radical implications of Levene’s statement. By shedding light on the systemic nature of genocide in Sudan, a further aim of the preceding analysis has been to contribute to opening up new critical routes into thinking about the meaning and possibilities of genocide prevention and intervention, whilst at the same time avoiding easy answers, and acknowledging the necessary humility that must accompany the confrontation of such a task.

Chemical Attacks in Darfur’ [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/aicha-elbasri-phd/syria-darfur_b_12437658.html]; Mukesh Kapila, ‘Remembering Darfur: The World’s Longest Running Genocide,’ *E-International Relations* [<http://www.e-ir.info/2016/01/27/remembering-darfur-the-worlds-longest-running-genocide/>]

¹⁹⁰ Enough Project Report, ‘Darfur’s Gold Rush: State-Sponsored Atrocities 10 Years After the Genocide’, Omer Ismail and Akshaya Kumar, May 2013.

¹⁹¹ Levene, M., ‘David Scheffer’s “Genocide and Atrocity Crimes”: A Response,’ in *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, 2(1), Article 10, 2007, pp. 81-90, p. 81.