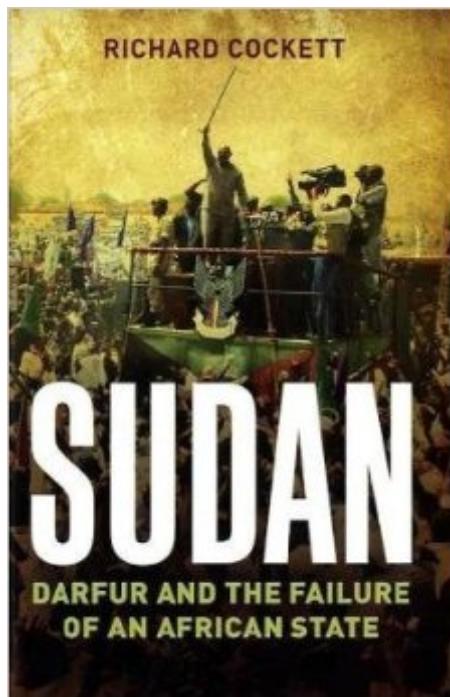


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Sudan: Darfur And The Failure Of An African State



Synopsis

Over the past two decades, the situation in Africa's largest country, Sudan, has progressively deteriorated: the country is in second position on the Failed States Index, a war in Darfur has claimed hundreds of thousands of deaths, President Bashir has been indicted by the International Criminal Court, a forthcoming referendum on independence for Southern Sudan threatens to split the country violently apart. In this fascinating and immensely readable book, the Africa editor of the Economist gives an absorbing account of Sudan's descent into failure and what some have called genocide. Drawing on interviews with many of the main players, Richard Cockett explains how and why Sudan has disintegrated, looking in particular at the country's complex relationship with the wider world. He shows how the United States and Britain were initially complicit in Darfur "but also how a broad coalition of human-rights activists, right-wing Christians, and opponents of slavery succeeded in bringing the issues to prominence in the United States and creating an impetus for change at the highest level.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

RC's dividend from his 5 years as Africa editor of 'The Economist' is an ambitious, challenging, well-structured and superbly written book about "what the hell went wrong with Sudan since independence". In 1956, its future looked promising, thanks to almost six decades of careful and intelligent institution building by a numerically small, but superbly-educated British caste of high-minded administrators. From Khartoum, and with minimal budgets, they made key decisions in transport (railways, river transport) and economic investment (e.g. the Gezira scheme), which at

independence, had become clearly defined centres of activity, condemning the rest of Sudan to marginality, except for the population living along the Nile north of Khartoum, who overwhelmingly formed the local supervisory staff of these ventures. Until 1956, the northern and southern halves of Sudan had long been kept apart and were ill-prepared to live with one another in the new, post-colonial era. War erupted in 1955 and continued until 1972. The (post-) colonial heritage has always been criticized and used as an excuse for a lot of the subsequent policy mistakes and mayhem, time and again, by Sudan's rulers and its Western-educated academics. They surely have a point, or some point. RC has written a fast-paced book based on interviews with informants in the US, UK, Kenya and all over Sudan, and has relied on only a selection of the written sources available. He has avoided too much detail and refused to be drawn into academic disputes. Good recent accounts exist about the wars in Darfur and the South. This is the first book investigating Sudan's internal conflicts in its Southern, Western and Eastern regions at a time when the regime was (and perhaps still is) under suspicion of supporting worldwide terrorism.

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