

The internationalization of the internal conflicts in South Sudan and Darfur

Key words :

Internationalization, agenda setting, public mobilizations/transnational activism, interactions between internal and external dynamics, peace negotiations

Abstract of research :

This research focuses on the internationalization of the conflicts in South-Sudan and in Darfur. Internationalization is here understood as the process through which these two conflicts, at different periods in time, but with related causes and dynamics, have gone from being struggles over local and national governance to become issues of high level international concern. Although conflict resolution is still mostly a state business, non-state actors, especially within Western civil society, have played a central role in setting these conflicts on the international agenda. Although strategic and political considerations have often stood in the way for the application of the solutions these activists have advocated, they have had a much larger influence than what can be measured in concrete and visible terms.

In the case of South Sudan, the conflict was ended thanks to the willingness of the parties to negotiate and regional and international support and pressure on them to fulfill this commitment. This approach originally did not have the support of the pressure groups in the US, where many had grown to become fiercely anti-Khartoum. While they were eventually persuaded that engagement with Khartoum was needed to end the conflict in the South, the break out of the conflict in Darfur was the last drop triggering massive protests mainly in the US but also in Europe. New activists have joined the older South Sudan movement, and created what has been called by some the largest American protest movement for an African conflict since the Anti-Apartheid movement. Their most important achievement however is how they have imposed their own framings and qualifications of this conflict, as a "genocide" and "the new Rwanda", and thus also of what should be done. These qualifications have become the narratives the international diplomatic contingent and the Sudanese political actors have had to relate to, whether they agreed with them or not.