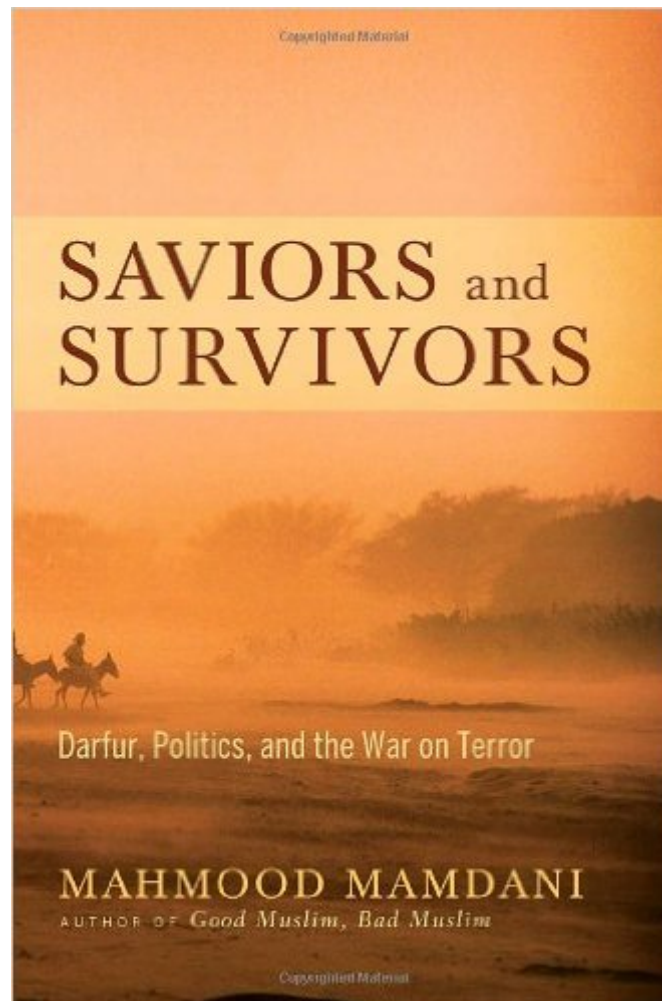


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Saviors And Survivors: Darfur, Politics, And The War On Terror



Synopsis

From the author of *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* comes an important book, unlike any other, that looks at the crisis in Darfur within the context of the history of Sudan and examines the world's response to that crisis. In *Saviors and Survivors*, Mahmood Mamdani explains how the conflict in Darfur began as a civil war (1987-89) between nomadic and peasant tribes over fertile land in the south, triggered by a severe drought that had expanded the Sahara Desert by more than sixty miles in forty years; how British colonial officials had artificially tribalized Darfur, dividing its population into "native" and "settler" tribes and creating homelands for the former at the expense of the latter; how the war intensified in the 1990s when the Sudanese government tried unsuccessfully to address the problem by creating homelands for tribes without any. The involvement of opposition parties gave rise in 2003 to two rebel movements, leading to a brutal insurgency and a horrific counterinsurgency—but not to genocide, as the West has declared. Mamdani also explains how the Cold War exacerbated the twenty-year civil war in neighboring Chad, creating a confrontation between Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi (with Soviet support) and the Reagan administration (allied with France and Israel) that spilled over into Darfur and militarized the fighting. By 2003, the war involved national, regional, and global forces, including the powerful Western lobby, who now saw it as part of the War on Terror and called for a military invasion dressed up as "humanitarian intervention." Incisive and authoritative, *Saviors and Survivors* will radically alter our understanding of the crisis in Darfur. From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

For anyone interested in the situation in Darfur (or, indeed, Sudan) Saviors and Survivors is must reading. Mahmood Mamdani's extensive research and fine scholarship are impressive. His work is particularly valuable in addressing the question of whether what is taking place in Darfur is, indeed, as claimed by many, genocide - and he shows, convincingly, that it is not. Moreover, he shows that the highly-emotional claims by organizations such as "Save Darfur" have misrepresented both the nature and magnitude of the conflict; nor is not simply a matter of "Arabs" killing "Africans." That is not to say that Mamdani treats lightly the conflict or dismisses reports of atrocities. But he makes the important point that the conflict (or, more properly, conflicts) cannot be understood - and hence addressed - without understanding their nature and the various contexts, including historical and regional in which they take place. Mamdani shows clearly that the conflict is, fundamentally, civil war, but not one in which the various factions are easily categorized - most certainly not easily grouped as "Arab" or "African." In this mix there are groups rebelling against the authority of the government in Khartoum, just as there are government-supporting factions and government involvement. (In contrasting the civil war in Sudan with what he terms a "liberation war against a foreign occupation" in Iraq, however, Mamdani surprisingly errs, as the conflict in Iraq, too, is complex, with most of the casualties due to conflict between Iraqis, not the American occupation.) The question of when (or if) foreign interventions - military and/or humanitarian - are appropriate (as well as feasible) is a difficult one.

The last two sentences of the book summarize what is a very radical thesis for good liberals and their desire to stop genocide in the world. "More than anything else, 'the responsibility to protect' is a right to punish but without being held accountable--a clarion call for the recolonization of 'failed' states in Africa. In its present form, the call for justice is really a slogan that masks a big power agenda in Africa." Mamdani distinguishes between the justice of the victor and that of the victim. The former punishes losers, for possibly real crimes. It is a victor's vengeance. The latter seeks an avenue of reconciliation: being able to abide unpunished crimes with the goal of living together in the future. Even though I follow the news rather closely the Sudan and Darfur are nothing like what I imagined them to be. To the extent they were in my consciousness I saw the government and its Janjaweed henchmen as perpetrators and Dafurees and Southern Christians as victims, the former of camel riding killers supported by radical Arab or Islamic fundamentalist villains. It is so much more complicated, that I find it hard to tease out all the various actors and their roles in the ongoing drama. It is as complicated as medieval East Indian history, the ethnic groups, their flavors of religion, multitudes of kinds of rulers and social organizations, on top of which are a series of

outside political influences which waxed and waned. From Darfur being the source of slaves into the 20th century, to British and Egyptian imperialism retribalizing the country after it was somewhat united by the Mahdi.

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