

Security Dialogue for East Africa: Insights & Perspectives

The Rapid Support Forces and Sudan's War of Visions

Paramilitary Power, Peripheral Identity, and the Struggle for a New Sudan

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Abstract

This analysis paper posits that the identity-based conflict in Sudan is not merely ethnic, it is transactional, shaped by broken social contracts around resource access, political dignity, and institutional neglect. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), emerging from these same dynamics, are undeniably a product of governance collapse. But they also represent a catalyst, however fraught, for reimagining governance itself. With the RSF leader, Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo “Hemedti” now invoking inclusion, justice, and equality in tones reminiscent of John Garang’s “New Sudan” vision, this paper’s central provocation lies in the question: Is the RSF seeking merely to install new players in an old system or to change the rules, and the field, on which governance is played in Sudan?

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Faiz Abubakar for NPR
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1 Introduction

Sudan's ongoing civil conflict is certainly a fierce contest over territory and military dominance; however, it is more fundamentally a clash of competing visions of the state—a “war of visions,” as Francis Deng famously coined it, that pits historically inclusive nation-building projects, such as the New Sudan Vision, against the Old Sudan vision of ethnic and religious hegemony and state control.¹ Alongside this framing, new models of militarised fragmentation and para-sovereignty have now emerged. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), created as a counterinsurgency instrument, have since evolved into a formidable political-military formation, governing as a parallel authority within, and now against, Sudan's formal state architecture. For some, the RSF promises a new unity grounded in inclusion of Sudan's “periphery.” For others, it represents a dangerous decompression of the Sudanese state into its pre-colonial proto-nationalities—its constituent civilisational memories. And for many, perhaps most, the RSF is viewed less ideologically and more cynically: as a mercenary enterprise driven by personal enrichment and power accumulation.

The RSF's rise is not a historical anomaly. It is the logical outcome of long-standing governance failures. Sudan's post-Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) trajectory, including the secession of South Sudan in 2011, addressed geographic division but left the structural roots of exclusion, state fragility, and institutional decay largely untouched.² While rhetorically expansive, the CPA paid only lip service to the more profound questions of legitimacy, inclusion, and equitable governance, questions that were ultimately sidelined, albeit for different reasons in the North and South. What was framed as a contest between unity and self-determination failed to engage the more fundamental challenge adequately: reimagining the state's relationship with its people, its centers of legitimacy, and its ability to absorb shocks and distribute opportunity.

In reducing the concept of self-determination, the most expansive of group rights, to the

singular right to secede, Sudan forfeited its most potent framework for recalibrating governance.³ The real question was never simply whether to pursue self-determination or unity but whether a transformation of governance could be achieved through self-determination, regardless of whether it led to unity or secession. This unresolved tension left insufficiently addressed during the post-CPA transition, continues to reverberate, fueling both disintegration and new ideological experiments.

One such experiment was explained in 2001, in the northern Abyei region, during a USAID delegation visit to Noong, by a Missiriya man who stood under a tree as he addressed the group, explaining how the Government armed them to take war in Dinka land under promises of reward that never materialised. Because of that failed promise, they would now bring peace.

Though it predates the Darfur crisis, this cattle-herder turned militia man articulates the resource driven logic, transactional violence, and eventual disillusionment that would define Sudan's wars in the decades to follow. It reveals how peripheral communities were militarised through promises never kept and how a recalibration becomes possible when the costs of war outweigh its imagined returns. When we project this sentiment to scale, we have conditions for the RSF.

This window onto a deeper dimension of the RSF's story is often missed in pure military or political analyses: the question of identity. For many in the RSF's core constituencies, Missiriya and Reizeigat communities of Darfur and South Kordofan, identity has long been shaped by a dual heritage: a paternal lineage connecting them to Arab-Islamic traditions and a maternal lineage rooted in African ancestry. This hybridity, shaped by legacies of military slavery, racial stratification, and elite-driven Arabisation, has long subordinated African identity to an invisible background. These dynamics reflect broader patterns of racialised hierarchy in Sudanese statecraft, where Arabness has historically been equated with power and civilization while African heritage was systematically marginalized. In short, how one determined what resources they could access.

The wars these communities fought, often against their maternal kin, reflected an internalised identity hierarchy that privileged Arab-Islamic lineage while subordinating African ancestry. Hemedti's recent continental tour and his embrace by several African heads of state suggest a symbolic and strategic realignment: not a renunciation of Arab identity, but a reclamation of the African.⁴ In a

country where access to power has long been racially and culturally encoded, this shift is not merely rhetorical. It marks an anthropological reorientation, and potentially a geopolitical one. Yet it raises critical questions: Is this a genuine reimagining of belonging or a performative recalibration designed to offset the SAF's deeper ties to Gulf patrons? Could it reflect a pragmatic cost-benefit calculation, African solidarity offered at a lower political price than continued Gulf alignment, especially amid shifting regional dynamics? Hemedti's repositioning may reflect both anthropological realignment and geopolitical maneuvering. A generous reading might see in his rhetoric the seeds of a broader turn toward inclusive governance. A more skeptical lens sees a tactical disguise, worn by a warlord seeking broader legitimacy in a crowded regional marketplace of patrons.

Still, it would be a mistake to romanticise the RSF or see a clear blueprint for transformation in its gestures. The RSF remains implicated in atrocities, deeply entangled in Sudan's war economy, and structurally ill-equipped for democratic governance. Its orientation towards Africa may be tactical, a ploy based on the knowledge that its enemy has a solid Arab base internally and in its external relations. Yet, understanding the RSF's rise purely as a pathology is to miss the larger conversation unfolding: a live and contested negotiation over what Sudan was, is, and must become if it is to remain a viable state. The RSF reflects a break from the past and the vacuum left by that past's failure to hold together a credible social contract, institutional legitimacy, and a unifying national identity. This leads us to the central provocation of this paper:

Is the RSF seeking merely to install new players in an old system or to change the rules, and the field, on which governance is played?

This paper contends that the void left by hollowed-out institutions and fragmented political authority has enabled militarised actors like the RSF to occupy the space between state and society, offering security, patronage, and alternative networks of rule. At the heart of Sudan's current collapse is not simply the RSF's strength but the absence of a coherent national vision, an enduring failure to forge inclusion, institutional coherence, and meaningful local agency. Either way, the implications are profound. Sudan's national identity, governance trajectory, and geopolitical orientation remain contested and unresolved. So, does RSF have the will to build inclusive governance where all communities, including Arab tribes, are stakeholders? And does it have the capacity? Suppose its stated policy orientation is merely rhetorical, and the principal actors are unwilling to change a system that continues to serve their interests. In that case, the future of Sudan's peacebuilding may amount to power-sharing among strongmen, or worse, kleptocrats.

The analysis proceeds as follows: first, we trace how the post-2011 order created fertile ground for the RSF's consolidation; second, we analyze the RSF's wartime governance model and economic entrenchment; third, we examine the RSF's regional alliances and geopolitical posture; and finally, we assess what this model means for Sudan's long-term trajectory, whether toward renewed fragmentation or reinvented governance.

Key inflection points, including the collapse of the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, the 2021 military coup, and the erosion of the civilian-

military consensus, are treated not just as events but as moments that expose the absence of shared institutional purpose, the collapse of civic identity, and the failure of elite pacts to translate into legitimate governance.

Ultimately, this paper contends that Sudan requires reconstructing a unifying national project that moves beyond binary paradigms of unity versus secession and embraces a layered, multi-systemic vision of governance. Such a vision must be rooted in local legitimacy and capable of coordinating across national and regional scales. Rather than restoring a centralised order that has repeatedly failed, Sudan's future may depend on building interconnected and adaptive layers of authority where communities are not passive recipients but central governance agents. In this framework, identity functions not as a fault line but as connective tissue, linking communities through shared custodianship of territory, resources, and political vision. Failure to execute this transformational vision may realistically result in further fragmentation of the country.

The final section explores a strategic cooperation pilot in the RSF-controlled Diffra oil fields in the Abyei area between the two Sudans, where oil infrastructure, inter-communal dynamics, and cross-border economic corridors converge. This initiative is a test case for scalable peacebuilding: an experimental model for localized peacebuilding with low-risk and high-impact potential. In this contested terrain, Sudan might yet begin to articulate a new grammar of belonging, one shaped not by coercion or exclusion but by negotiated interdependence based on cooperation and multi-levelled agreements.

2 Historical Context: The 'New Sudan' Vision and Post-2011 Trajectory

To understand Sudan's post-2011 political fragmentation, one must revisit the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and its foundational "*New Sudan*" vision. Articulated by the late Dr. John Garang, this vision imagined a pluralistic, democratic Sudan anchored in inclusive governance, ethnic equality, and political secularism (Garang, 1987).⁵ Contrary to assumptions that the SPLM/A was solely a separatist movement, Garang sought not secession but a reconstitution of the Sudanese state, one that dismantled the Arab-Islamist exclusivism that had dominated Khartoum's political order since independence (Flint, 2005).⁶

While Garang's articulation was distinctive in its scope and timing, it was not without antecedents. Earlier nationalist movements, such as the Southern Front in the 1960s and elements within the Sudan African National Union (SANU), had also called for federalism, cultural recognition, and inclusive citizenship, though often from a more regionally circumscribed base.⁷ Similarly, some segments of the Sudanese Communist Party and unionist movements in the North advocated for secular, class-based inclusion that pushed back against religious or ethnic hierarchies. Garang's *New Sudan* vision can thus be seen as both a continuation and an expansion, synthesising earlier threads into a broader national project for state re-imagination.⁸

Yet even within the SPLM/A, Garang's

call for a united, transformed Sudan met resistance. For many Southern Sudanese, the liberation struggle remained oriented toward independence, not reform. Garang's untimely death in 2005 exposed the fragility of his coalition. Without his political vision and leadership, the movement splintered. His successors in the South rapidly shifted course, culminating in South Sudan's independence in 2011.

What is often overlooked is that the *New Sudan* vision had attracted support well beyond the South. Through the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a coalition of opposition parties and armed movements, including the Sudanese Communist Party, the Umma Party, and armed factions from the East and Nuba Mountains, the vision of an inclusive, secular Sudan became a rallying cry for those in the political and geographic peripheries who had long resisted Khartoum's domination. For these groups, Garang's vision offered the possibility of a Sudan transcending sectarian and ethnonational divisions.

In practice, however, the *New Sudan* was abandoned not only by Khartoum but also by those for whom it was initially conceived. The post-independence period saw many peripheral allies politically sidelined or militarily isolated. What endured was not the promise of transformation, but the ideological void left behind, an unfulfilled blueprint that still haunts Sudan's fragmented political landscape.

The secession of South Sudan in 2011 severed more than geography. It removed the North's most potent voices for federal reform and stripped Khartoum of vital oil revenues, exacerbating its economic and political vulnerabilities. Yet perhaps most consequentially, it stranded SPLA-aligned fighters in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, those who had fought under the banner of the *New Sudan* and now found themselves on the wrong side of a new border. These forces were reconstituted as SPLM-North (SPLM-N), continuing to wage a political and military struggle not for Southern independence but for a reimagined Sudanese state.

Simultaneously, armed opposition groups in Darfur, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the various factions of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), as well as Eastern Sudanese movements like the Beja Congress, sustained their own resistance against Khartoum's centralising and extractive governance model. Though not always ideologically aligned with the SPLM/A, these groups shared overlapping grievances: political exclusion, economic marginalisation, and the violent repression of local autonomy. These historical cleavages laid the groundwork for the convergence of peripheral insurgencies in Sudan's post-Bashir landscape, setting the stage for the tactical and rhetorical alliances seen today, particularly between groups like the RSF, SPLM-N (al-Hilu), and Darfuri factions once adversarial to one another.

Meanwhile, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) under Omar al-Bashir entrenched its Islamist-military governance model, dismissing both calls for reform and peripheral autonomy. Absent Garang's vision and any broad-based framework for inclusive

governance, the post-2011 state devolved into a landscape of fragmented authority, deteriorating services, and expanding conflict. Insurgencies rekindled across Darfur, South Kordofan, and the East. In this vacuum, militarised actors like the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) emerged, not merely as instruments of state coercion, but as autonomous political-economic entities vying for influence and legitimacy in the wreckage of the center.

Sudan's post-secession political malaise cannot be reduced to institutional collapse or economic crisis alone. It reflects a deeper ideological impasse, what Francis Deng once termed a "war of visions" between exclusionary state models and the aspirations of Sudan's marginalised communities. That impasse intensified after the 2019 revolution, when mass protests toppled Bashir but failed to produce a shared framework for governance renewal.

The slogans of the uprising, *freedom, peace, justice*, echoed the spirit of the *New Sudan* vision. However, in the absence of a unifying ideological project or pragmatic roadmap, these principles remained unanchored. The incomplete transition and subsequent 2021 coup further eroded trust, fragmenting the civilian bloc and the military hierarchy. Compounding this, many civic groups adopted, and in some cases continue, maximalist positions that the prevailing political context could not realistically absorb. In doing so, they unintentionally contributed to political stalemate, alienating potential allies and weakening leverage over transitional institutions.

Within this fragmented landscape, the RSF's ascent should be understood as a symptom and a driver of Sudan's political decomposition.

Its rise does not simply reflect the collapse of formal authority, but the vacuum left by the absence of a cohesive narrative about what Sudan is, and what it might yet become.

The following section examines how this ideological and institutional void facilitated the RSF's entrenchment, tracing the evolution of its wartime political economy and the logic of paramilitary governance it now exemplifies.

3 The RSF's Ideological Positioning: From Militia to "Africanist" Populism

In the wake of Bashir's ousting, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have worked to reframe their identity, not merely as a militia born of repression, but as a political actor speaking on behalf of Sudan's neglected peripheries. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known widely as *Hemedti*, has positioned himself as a defender of marginalised communities and a champion of inclusive citizenship. A Darfuri Arab from the Rizeigat tribe, fluent in Arabic and raised in the pastoral margins of the state, Hemedti has sought to distance himself from Khartoum's traditional Islamist elite. In their place, he has invoked themes of equality, social justice, and an African identity distinct from the Arab-Islamist exclusivism that has historically dominated Sudanese governance.⁹

Hemedti's public rhetoric, calling for "an end to discrimination," "equal citizenship," and "the rights of all Sudanese, regardless of region or ethnicity", mirrors the inclusive ethos of the *New Sudan Vision* articulated by John Garang. In an April 2023 statement, for instance, he declared: "We want a Sudan that belongs to all Sudanese, not just a select group... a Sudan where every citizen, from Darfur to Kassala, is treated with dignity and equality".¹⁰ This pivot serves

both ideological and strategic purposes. Domestically, it allows the RSF to tap into longstanding grievances among peripheral communities long marginalised by Khartoum's political order. Internationally, Hemedti's anti-Islamist posture aligns with the strategic interests of regional actors like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which, since the Arab Spring, has positioned itself as a patron of stability through secular or non-Islamist authoritarian regimes.¹¹

In distancing himself from Sudan's Islamist 'deep state', including the legacy of the National Congress Party, Hemedti seeks to rebrand the RSF not merely as a paramilitary force, but as a populist, reformist alternative to the militarised secular nationalism embodied by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). A December 2022 RSF communique stated, "*We support the goals of the December Revolution and the demand for civilian rule that includes all regions of Sudan equitably*" (RSF Official Telegram Channel, 2022). While skepticism about the authenticity of this repositioning persists, the messaging itself reflects an effort to shift the ideological terrain.

Strategic alliances with historical adversaries have accompanied this ideological repositioning. Chief among them is the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), particularly the faction led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu in South Kordofan. Though they emerged from radically different origins, with the RSF emerging from Khartoum's security architecture and the SPLM-N from Southern insurgency, the RSF and SPLM-N now share a mutual interest in dismantling Sudan's centralised governance structure. Field reports and conflict monitoring suggest at least a tacit non-aggression pact between these forces in parts of the Nuba Mountains if not coordinated operational zones.¹²

Yasir Arman, a veteran SPLM-N leader and long-time advocate of the *New Sudan Vision*, also engaged directly with Hemedti during the transitional period. His outreach reflected an effort to build cross-cleavage coalitions between reformist military actors and civilian constituencies, an approach aimed at marginalising the Islamist deep state and Khartoum's old guard. The RSF's prominent role in brokering the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, alongside rebel movements from Darfur and South Kordofan, including JEM, SLA factions, and SPLM-N (Malik Agar), furthered this image of ideological realignment. Whether driven by opportunism or conviction, these efforts signaled Hemedti's ambition to recast the RSF as a legitimate political force capable of absorbing historically excluded regions' aspirations into a broader national conversation.

Hemedti's rhetorical transformation has also leaned heavily on populism. He frequently invokes his origins as a camel trader from Darfur, contrasting himself with Sudan's

Khartoum-based political elite. In a 2019 interview, he described himself as *"a man of the people, not one of the elites who live in glass towers,"* emphasizing his pastoral roots and outsider status.¹³ He has styled himself as a *"son of the people,"* grounded in the lived experience of ordinary Sudanese, particularly those from neglected regions like Darfur, Kordofan, and the East.

As tensions escalated with General Burhan in 2023, both men vied for public legitimacy. But Hemedti sought to appropriate the symbolic language of the 2018–2019 uprising. In a November 2022 public address, he condemned the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) for their role in protester killings, stating, *"Justice must be done for the martyrs of the revolution. Those who committed these crimes must face trial, whether they wear military uniforms or not".*¹⁴ He further admitted the RSF's role in the October 2021 coup, calling it *"a mistake"* and declaring support for *"the people's demand for civilian rule".*¹⁵

Perhaps most strikingly, Hemedti issued public apologies for the RSF's role in the October 2021 coup, calling it a *"mistake"* and pledging to support the goals of the December Revolution.¹⁶ In so doing, he attempted to align the RSF with the very civilian movement it had once helped suppress. This maneuver revealed a core insight: narrative power matters in a political arena bereft of institutional legitimacy. Hemedti understands that coercive control alone cannot confer national authority. A story, which backs up the claim to moral leadership grounded in grievance, redemption, and inclusion, is required.

Yet public reaction to these narrative overtures have been deeply uneven. Sudan's fractured social fabric reflects cleavages between armed

factions and urban-rural, generational, ethnic, and class lines. Many Darfurians, Reizeigat, and Missiriya, communities from which the RSF draws its ranks, continue to view Hemedti as a protector or provider, particularly where state services have long been absent. Some civil society actors, especially in Khartoum, see the RSF and SAF as illegitimate militarised factions vying for power without a democratic mandate. Meanwhile, a growing cohort of Sudanese youth—disillusioned by repeated betrayals since the 2019 revolution—remain skeptical of all political actors. Their cynicism stems not from apathy but from exhaustion with elite bargains that have failed to deliver material or moral transformation. Within this contested landscape of loyalty, fatigue, and guarded hope, the RSF's populist rhetoric attempts to gain traction.

Yet the contradiction remains. The RSF's record is marred by war crimes and systematic violence, particularly in Darfur. The attempt to rebrand as a "people's militia" sits uneasily with its legacy. Still, the pivot is revealing. It exposes a critical dynamic in Sudan's ongoing war of visions: a contest over territory or command and the frameworks for defining legitimacy, identity, and governance. In this sense, the RSF's ideological evolution, however contradictory, could be read as propaganda to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the old order or, it could be a work in progress, facing operational and technical challenges in realising a new one. This later view notes that while fighting a war through a makeshift army comprised of poorly educated units loyal to tribal communities and only roughly aligned, unity of command, discipline, and accountability prove difficult, if not impossible.

Since open conflict erupted between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in April 2023, the RSF has seized control of large parts of Sudanese territory, prompting urgent scrutiny of how it claims to govern these zones. In Darfur, the RSF has invoked pre-existing tribal loyalties to stabilise its rule. At the same time, in cities like El Geneina, Nyala, and parts of Khartoum, the group has often vacated or dismantled formal governance institutions, presenting a narrative of decentralised authority that purports to empower residual civilian administrations to handle service delivery.¹⁷ Hemedti himself has stated that RSF forces "have nothing to do with the government" and that residents should "choose their own administration," reflecting a posture that is more rhetorical than realized.¹⁸

This narrative masks deep dysfunction. Numerous reports confirm widespread looting by RSF fighters, targeting homes, banks, fuel stations, and food stocks, as well as credible allegations of massacres and systematic sexual violence in RSF-held areas (Reuters, 2023c; UN Security Council, 2023).¹⁹ ²⁰Essential services have ground to a halt, and governance, where it exists, is often ad hoc and coercive. This wartime governance approach could best be described as militarized extraction: the RSF captures territory by force, exploits its resources, and refrains from providing governance beyond what serves its strategic or economic interests. Analysts agree that while the RSF can seize and hold territory, it lacks both the administrative depth and political vision to govern it effectively. The purpose of occupation, it appears, is less about state-building than bargaining leverage in any future settlement, a paramilitary logic antithetical to transformative governance.²¹

Where the RSF has proven highly competent is in the realm of economic acquisition. Over the past decade, Hemedti and his family have built a sprawling business empire anchored in the gold sector, especially through the firm Al-Junaid. Investigations show that the RSF and its affiliates have captured a significant portion of Sudan's gold industry, particularly in Darfur and South Kordofan, enabling the group to self-finance weapons purchases, payrolls, and logistical operations independent of the Sudanese state.²²

Much of this gold is smuggled through the United Arab Emirates, with documented accounts of RSF bank accounts in Abu Dhabi. One major RSF procurement included nearly 1,000 Toyota pickup trucks, used as armed "technicals", funded through these channels.²³ Since the 2023 war began, the RSF has further captured state assets such as Central Bank branches in Darfur, customs outposts on the Chad and Libya borders, and commercial stockpiles in Khartoum, tightening its grip on both licit and illicit revenue streams.²⁴

This financial autonomy is strategically significant. Unlike the SAF, which depends on state coffers increasingly strained by war, the RSF can sustain its war economy and buy loyalty with hard cash. In addition to revenue from gold and looted assets, the RSF is reported to extract rents from oil infrastructure and logistical corridors within the territory it controls, including areas near the Heglig-Port Sudan pipeline, which transports South Sudanese oil to international markets.²⁵

Politically, this control grants Hemedti outsized influence, allowing him to shape negotiations or dominate territories through economic patronage. Analysts have argued that the RSF is less interested in governing civilians than in

maximising extractive leverage and securing a strong post-war position.²⁶ While the RSF has at times engaged in formal political processes, such as the Transitional Military Council and Sovereign Council post-2019, it increasingly appears committed to paramilitary governance as its preferred model. Since the war's escalation, RSF spokesmen have floated plans to launch a "Government of Peace and Unity" to manage areas under their control, and Hemedti has allegedly explored using Nairobi as a base for a government-in-exile.²⁷

Notably, during his regional tour, Hemedti sidestepped South Sudan—a calculated omission highlighting geopolitical sensitivities and emerging tensions. Juba, deeply dependent on Sudanese oil infrastructure, finds itself in a fraught position: it must maintain working relations with both SAF and RSF while navigating domestic outrage over events like the Wad Medani massacre, in which RSF SAF reportedly targeted South Sudanese migrants.²⁸ Public sentiment within South Sudan appears to have tilted in favor of the RSF, even as Salva Kiir's administration pursues neutrality. This dynamic further complicates the possibility of regional alignment and highlights the latent volatility that transboundary politics introduce into Sudan's evolving governance crisis.

This is part of a broader political trajectory in which battlefield control increasingly translates into de facto autonomy, with parallel institutions emerging to fill the vacuum left by collapsed national consensus-building. While the RSF remains nominally open to political settlement, Hemedti's actions suggest an alternative vision in which governance is mediated less through constitutional frameworks than through informal authority, resource flows, and negotiated loyalties.

To some, this reflects a warlord model antithetical to democratic norms. But to others, particularly in the RSF's core constituencies, it represents a pragmatic response to decades of exclusion by Khartoum's centralised bureaucracy. In this view, RSF rule is not merely coercive, but adaptive: a form of governance that, however imperfect, reflects ground-level dynamics in zones long neglected by the state.

Yet if this model consolidates without checks, it risks formalising fragmentation, partitioning Sudan into semi-autonomous zones governed by force rather than consensus and undermining aspirations for an inclusive national project. The dilemma is not simply about legitimacy or legality but about the frameworks through which authority can be recognised, contested, and ultimately shared.

4 Regional and International Dimensions of RSF Expansion

Sudan's internal fragmentation cannot be disentangled from the geopolitical interests of external actors, particularly those operating through transactional modes of engagement. The RSF's rise has both shaped and been shaped by regional rivalries, especially among Gulf States such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where political relationships are often driven less by institutional norms and more by personalised deals, financial patronage, and strategic leverage.²⁹ In such environments, state actors are treated as instruments rather than partners, with alliances shifting according to short-term gains rather than shared governance values.

This pattern exemplifies what some analysts call para-sovereignty, a condition in which armed groups operate alongside or in place of formal state structures, often with external backing legitimising their autonomy without subjecting them to accountability. These dynamics, where fragmented authority is

not a byproduct of collapse but a deliberate structure of power, feed into Sudan's current crisis.

Viewed through a conceptual framework focused on resilient governance, Sudan's predicament becomes clearer. Fragmented governance, supported externally for transactional ends, corrodes the foundation of inclusive state-building, producing a feedback loop where external support for coercive actors reinforces internal fragmentation and where governance is shaped more by bargaining than by constitutional consensus. Hemedti's most significant external alliance is with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This relationship enhances geopolitical leverage rather than local legitimacy. The UAE's motivations are manifold: countering Islamism, securing access to Sudan's gold and farmland, and consolidating strategic control along the Red Sea. Hemedti's anti-Islamist positioning made him a natural ally.

In return for deploying RSF troops to Yemen, the UAE provided financial backing, logistical support, and political legitimacy, often bypassing Sudan's formal state institutions.³⁰ While this support has enabled the RSF to maintain its war economy, it has also entrenched a warlord governance model. Reports of weapons flows through Chad further illustrate how transnational networks enable localized conflict while subverting regional norms of transparency and accountability.³¹

Saudi Arabia's engagement has been more ambivalent, balancing between backing Hemedti and hosting ceasefire negotiations with the U.S. in Jeddah. Still, the Gulf states' role in militarizing Sudan's internal dynamics complicates international peacebuilding frameworks and erodes anticipatory governance capacities.

Russia's involvement in Sudan, particularly through the Wagner Group, reveals the feedback loop between militarized extraction and political disorder. Wagner has reportedly trained RSF forces, facilitated disinformation campaigns, and assisted in gold smuggling operations. This interplay³² between economic predation and authoritarian diplomacy illustrates an entrenchment of conflict logics rather than their transformation.

Wagner's interest lies in mining concessions, strategic ports like Port Sudan, and geopolitical leverage within the Red Sea corridor. Russia's engagement exemplifies the broader trend of state fragmentation-as-opportunity, where global actors bypass weakened institutions and invest directly in coercive actors, corroding legitimacy and weakening absorptive capacity at both state and community levels.

The RSF's transnational networks extend across the Darfur-Chad-Libya corridor, a region long characterized by overlapping ethnic, economic, and militarized linkages. Hemedti's Rizeigat kinship ties in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) have enabled cross-border recruitment, logistical resupply, and sanctuary. Reports suggest that Libya's General Khalifa Haftar has supplied the RSF with fuel and weapons, reinforcing a transregional economy of militarized trade and proxy warfare.³³

This RSF's cross-border entrenchment exemplifies the hollowing of state authority through external alliances and kin-based para-sovereignty, a system that governs through familiarity and force rather than formal consent. These alliances create a corridor of instability that weakens formal borders and undermines regional security cooperation. The killing of West Darfur Governor Khamis Abakar and its cross-border reverberations highlight the urgency of localized governance arrangements that can manage ethnic fault lines and build transnational trust.

South Sudan plays a more complex, dual-role in the conflict. Juba's mediation of the Juba Peace Agreement and its dependence on oil flows through Sudanic territory give it both leverage and exposure. President Salva Kiir has maintained pragmatic ties with Hemedti, motivated by the shared interest in maintaining trade corridors and cross-border economic stability.

Despite official denials, reports of RSF access to South Sudanese fuel networks point to overlapping logistical infrastructures and informal wartime economies. While South Sudan has attempted to stabilize, the

entanglement of SPLM-N factions with both SAF and RSF highlights how elite interests can instrumentalize trust networks.

Adding to this complexity are accusations by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) that a significant portion of RSF fighters are in fact South Sudanese nationals. These claims were particularly prominent in the wake of the Wad Medani massacre. While some have challenged the narrative, noting the lack of concrete evidence to support broad claims of foreign composition, there are credible reports of smaller, unaffiliated militias, such as forces aligned with former SPLA General Stephen Buay, operating in northern Sudanese theaters. These realities suggest a messy and overlapping security architecture where both governments rely on or tolerate proxy forces, further undermining regional stability.

This dynamic underscores the fragility of peace efforts when transactional diplomacy displaces cooperative sovereignty, and when the definition of "domestic" or "foreign" becomes blurred by decades of civil war, migration, and overlapping loyalties.

Egypt has consistently backed General Burhan and the SAF, reflecting its preference for a centralized, military-led Sudanese state.

This stance reinforces a statist governance model misaligned with Sudan's emerging decentralized realities. Egypt's support also reflects broader strategic concerns, including control of Nile water flows and Red Sea access.

Other regional actors, Ethiopia and Eritrea, remain cautiously engaged, wary of spillover effects and their own internal fragilities. Yet the overall trend is clear: Sudan has become a proxy battlefield for competing regional visions, with external actors privileging short-term interests over long-term stability. Unless regional engagement is anchored in the logic of inclusive governance and legitimacy, Sudan's crisis will spiral outward.

Two pivotal events propelled Sudan's fragile transition into spiraling collapse: the unraveling of the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) and the military coup of October 25, 2021. Together, they exposed the fragility of Sudan's hybrid governance architecture and the perils of elite settlements that bypass community-rooted legitimacy and long-term institutional coherence.

5 The Juba Peace Agreement – Promise and Breakdown

Signed in August 2020 between Sudan's transitional government and several armed opposition groups, the JPA was heralded as a comprehensive framework for ending decades of internal conflict. It promised wealth-sharing, regional autonomy, security sector reform, and the political integration of rebel movements, including JEM, SLA factions, and the SPLM-N Malik Agar faction.^{34 35}

Yet the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) was structurally fragile. It was elite-centric, excluded key holdout groups (notably Abdelaziz al-Hilu and Abdelwahid al-Nur), and deferred disarmament until after elections, a decision that allowed multiple armed actors to continue operating legally and independently of state command. Rather than demobilizing insurgents into a unified national force, the JPA institutionalized parallel sovereignties, replicating the same design flaws that contributed to South Sudan's ARCSS collapse in 2016. In both cases, deferring security integration in favor of political expediency created an unstable hybrid order in which armed actors retained leverage outside civilian oversight.

In practice, the JPA produced overlapping and competing claims to authority. Former rebels entered government but aligned more with military elites than with civilians. By October 2021, prominent JPA signatories such as Jibril Ibrahim and Minni Minnawi supported the coup that ousted the civilian-

led cabinet, exposing the agreement's failure to transform armed actors into genuine peace stakeholders. As Gerrit Kurtz observed, "The JPA has not pacified conflicts in Sudan; rather, it created new alliances between armed groups and the military elite."³⁶

Meanwhile, implementation lagged. The Darfur Joint Security-Keeping Force was never fully deployed; DDR (disarmament, demobilization, reintegration) efforts stalled. Clashes in Darfur resumed even before the coup, further undermining the peace framework.

The JPA attempted to impose a national settlement without first cultivating hybrid legitimacy or bottom-up coherence. It institutionalized elite power-sharing but bypassed Pillar 2's principle of grounding peace in community trust systems. The result was a fragile edifice, top-heavy and brittle, that accelerated fragmentation rather than healing it.

On October 25, 2021, Generals Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti) staged a military coup, dissolving the civilian cabinet and freezing the constitutional transition. What began as a tactical alliance between the SAF, RSF, and ex-rebels rapidly became a new military oligarchy, ruling without civilian oversight.³⁷³⁸

In the short term, this triumvirate consolidated power. But the deeper effect was institutional

rupture. The coup eliminated Sudan's fragile political balance, embodied by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), that had previously constrained both SAF and RSF. The anticipatory governance capacity evaporated: no foresight mechanisms, civic checkpoints, or functioning social contract.

Divisions between Burhan and Hemedti quickly surfaced. Burhan sought to reintroduce Islamist figures into state structures, consolidating SAF's traditional base and reactivating elements of the National Congress Party's old guard.³⁹ ⁴⁰Hemedti, by contrast, adopted a more reformist posture, courting civilians, invoking inclusive language, and appealing to international norms. These rhetorical gestures were met with skepticism, yet they reflected divergent visions of statehood. Analysts such as Alex de Waal (2023) and Gerrit Kurtz (2022) have noted this ideological divergence, framing Burhan as the custodian of a centralized, security-first model of governance, while Hemedti positions himself as an outsider advancing a more populist, peripheral-centric discourse, even if inconsistently and self-servingly applied.⁴¹

The most explosive disagreement concerned Security Sector Reform (SSR). The SAF demanded RSF integration into the army within two years. Hemedti insisted on a ten-year timeline. With no independent mediator, the trust deficit metastasized into arms buildup and parallel command structures.

By early 2023, the so-called "Framework Agreement" failed to resolve the deeper governance impasse. Sudan's model of sovereignty had fractured—no longer anchored in shared legitimacy but contested between rival militaries. The war erupted

in April 2023 was not an anomaly; it was the predictable consequence of a transition process gutted of coherence, inclusivity, and institutional resilience.

Despite the scale of the violence and the regional risks it poses, mediation efforts have largely failed to produce a breakthrough. The U.S.- and Saudi-led Jeddah talks, launched in May 2023, sought to broker humanitarian ceasefires but repeatedly broke down over verification mechanisms and mutual mistrust. Meanwhile, the African Union's roadmap suffered from limited buy-in and confusion over leadership, particularly with IGAD's parallel initiatives.⁴² ⁴³ Initially spearheaded by UNITAMS under Volker Perthes, UN efforts have faced credibility challenges and were eventually sidelined. While drawing pledges, a Geneva-based humanitarian summit in early 2024 underscored the international community's reactive posture, focused more on aid delivery than on reshaping the conflict's political incentives. The absence of a unified mediation track or meaningful enforcement tools continues to embolden armed actors and deepen the fragmentation of both the battlefield and the peace architecture.

The JPA and coup collectively dismantled Sudan's absorptive and adaptive capacities. By replacing institutional pluralism with top-down military rule, the post-2019 transition drifted into warlord competition masked as governance.

Where Garang's "New Sudan" once envisioned layered, inclusive authority, the coup calcified a zero-sum logic: multiple militaries, no agreed framework, and shrinking civic space. Elite bargains, when untested by iterative legitimacy and disconnected from everyday

peace, risk becoming accelerants of renewed violence rather than anchors of durable stability.

Ultimately, these turning points illustrate the limits of transitional frameworks built atop fractured sovereignty. Peace becomes

a fleeting performance without grounding in identity inclusion, community-based legitimacy, and governance coherence. And war returns—not as a breakdown, but as a return to the norm in an architecture that never truly transformed.

6 Conclusion

Sudan's present crisis is often characterized as a rupture, but this author has argued it is more so a culmination. It reflects a long arc of misread opportunities, distorted priorities, and governance by fragmentation and domination rather than transformation. From the reduction of the *New Sudan Vision* to a binary between unity and secession to the entrenchment of paramilitary rule, to elite bargains among foreign-sponsored factions that unraveled in bloodshed, each misstep layered fragility atop exclusion.

The rise of the RSF and the broader war of the generals reveals what happens when governance is severed from legitimacy and statehood is claimed by coercion rather than consent. The underlying failure is not simply institutional but psychological and imaginal: a collapse in the collective capacity to envision and believe in a shared, inclusive, and resilient Sudanese identity and authority.

The urgent task now is to re-anchor political pathways in the aspirations of Sudan's people, not in the ambitions of armed factions. This requires a revival of the 2019 revolution's

unfinished promise and a re-engagement with the original spirit of the *New Sudan Vision* a polity defined by plural citizenship and unity in diversity rather than domination by center or clique.

In practice, this means dismantling paramilitary governance and restoring institutional legitimacy. If Sudan is to remain viable, the RSF cannot persist as an autonomous fiefdom bankrolled by foreign patrons; it must be either disbanded or fully integrated under civilian-led command. The SAF, likewise, must submit to civilian authority and commit to a reformed national defense architecture. Yet, such reforms cannot be imposed by civilians alone. Given the current power imbalance, the transformation will also require coalitions within the armed forces, officers and rank-and-file alike, who recognize that institutional coherence and national legitimacy are in their long-term interest. All that is required is a cursory look at Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to know that such transformations from within the military does indeed occur, and may be picking up steam across the Sahel, a region that Sudan is part of.

External actors, particularly the UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the AU, must recalibrate their engagement: away from zero-sum proxies and toward joint frameworks that incentivize compromise, enforce accountability, and support neutral interim institutions. Technocratic governance bodies should be empowered to restore essential services, health, food, water, security, thereby reconnecting the state to its foundational purpose.

Yet peace will not be forged through elite compacts alone. Durable transformation requires strategic peacecraft, a pragmatic yet visionary approach rooted in Sudanese realities and scaled through low-risk, high-value experiments that institutionalize trust, cooperation, and inclusion. Such an approach can reconcile, at the community level, the war of visions that now threatens to fracture the nation, while embedding grassroots governance within broader state, regional, and international frameworks for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

- 1 Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995).
- 2 See Alex de Waal, *Sudan: What Kind of State? What Kind of Crisis?*, Crisis States Research Centre, LSE, 2007. De Waal argues that while the CPA provided a roadmap for managing center-periphery tensions through formal mechanisms, it failed to address the deeper systemic causes of marginalization and state weakness.
- 3 See The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination, which defines self-determination as a community's right to choose its political destiny, including choices regarding sovereignty, government forms, and cultural development. Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination+1Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination+1

Additionally, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) recognizes in Article 1 that all peoples have the right to self-determination, allowing them to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. Wikipedia+5Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination+5Wikipedia+5
- 4 Between December 2023 and January 2024, RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagaló (Hemedti) conducted a diplomatic tour of six African countries, meeting with heads of state including President Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ethiopia), President Ismail Omar Guelleh (Djibouti), President William Ruto (Kenya), President Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa), and President Paul Kagame (Rwanda). This marked his first public international engagement since the outbreak of Sudan's civil war in April 2023. See: *Africanews*, Dec 28, 2023; *Al Jazeera*, Dec 31, 2023; *Dabanga Sudan*, Jan 2024; *Wikipedia Timeline of Sudanese Civil War* (2024).
- 5 Garang, J. (1987). *John Garang Speaks*. Edited by Mansour Khalid. London: Kegan Paul International.
- 6 Flint, J. (2005). "Obituary: Authoritative Sudanese leader and former rebel commander with a vision of a secular, democratic Sudan." *The Guardian*, 3 August 2005. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/aug/03/guardianobituaries.sudan>
- 7 See Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), esp. Chapter 3; and Peter Adwok Nya-ba, *The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider's View* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1997), which together document how early Southern political movements such as the Southern Front and SANU advocated for federalism, cultural autonomy, and inclusive citizenship.
- 8 See Justin Willis, *Sudan's Democratic Experiment: 1953-1958* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014); and Heather J. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), both of which explore the role of northern secular and leftist movements, including the Sudanese Communist Party, in promoting inclusive governance and resisting ethnoreligious hierarchy.
- 9 See Sudan Tribune, "Hemedti calls for inclusive Sudan, acknowledges past mistakes," April 2023, <https://sudantribune.com/article279827/>; and The Africa Report, "Sudan: Hemedti's populist push - from militia chief to people's champion," October 2023, <https://www.theafricareport.com/308416/>, both of which document Hemedti's public statements invoking themes of equality, justice, and inclusion in contrast to Sudan's historical political elite.
- 10 Sudan Tribune, "Hemedti calls for inclusive Sudan, acknowledges past mistakes," April 2023, <https://sudantribune.com/article279827/>.
- 11 Barzegar, K., & Mir, S. (2021). Post-Islamism in Practice: The Rise of Authoritarian Secularism in the Middle East. *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 3; and International Crisis Group (2022), "The Gulf States' Strategic Realignment in the Horn of Africa," <https://www.crisisgroup.org>.

- 12 See McGregor, A. (2023). "The Third Front: Sudan's Armed Rebel Movements Join the War Between the Generals," Jamestown Foundation – Terrorism Monitor, August 8, 2023, which documents cooperation and parallel military presence between SPLM-N and RSF in South Kordofan. Also see ACLED (2023), "Sudan: Conflict Tracker," which highlights conflict event mapping and coordination patterns in the Nuba Mountains.*
- 13 See Al Jazeera (2019), "Who are Sudan's RSF and their commander Hemedti?" which includes Hemedti's self-characterization as a man of the people and his contrast with Khartoum-based elites. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/6/6/who-are-sudans-rsf-and-their-commander-hemeti>.
- 14 See The Guardian (2023), "Sudan war: Hemedti demands justice for protester's killing," which reports on Hemedti's November 2022 speech condemning the SAF's role in protester killings and calling for accountability. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/14>.
- 15 See Sudan Tribune (2023), "Arman urges international collaboration to resolve Sudan conflict," which includes Hemedti's admission of the RSF's role in the October 2021 coup and his pledge to support demands for civilian rule. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article279827/>.
- 16 Eye Radio. (2023, February 20). October coup a mistake, says Gen Hemedti. Retrieved from <https://www.eyeradio.org/october-coup-a-mistake-says-gen-hemeti>
- 17 See Reuters (2023a), "In Sudan's war zones, governance breaks down as RSF seizes territory," which describes the RSF's dismantling of governance institutions and their claims of decentralised authority. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudan-rsf-control-looting-2023-09-05/>
- 18 See Reuters (2023b), "RSF commander Hemedti says local people should govern themselves," which quotes Hemedti urging residents to form their own local administrations. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/hemedti-governance-statement-2023-06-12/>
- 19 See Reuters (2023c), "Sudan's civilians caught between RSF looting and SAF shelling," which documents extensive RSF looting and alleged atrocities in RSF-controlled areas. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudan-rsf-saf-looting-2023-08-27/>
- 20 See United Nations Security Council (2023), Report of the Panel of Experts on Sudan, UN Doc. S/2023/521, 15 August 2023, for substantiated allegations of human rights abuses, including sexual violence, by RSF fighters.
- 21 See Reuters (2023d), "RSF commander Hemedti says local people should govern themselves," which highlights the RSF's lack of administrative capacity and their preference for symbolic governance. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/hemedti-governance-statement-2023-06-12/>
- 22 See Global Witness (2019a), "Exposing the RSF's Secret Financial Network: The Money Behind Sudan's Most Powerful Militia," for details on Al-Junaid's control of gold assets and RSF's financial autonomy. Available at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-minerals/exposing-rsfs-secret-financial-network/>
- 23 See Global Witness (2019b), "Banking on Hemedti: How the RSF Set Up Shop in Abu Dhabi," which documents gold smuggling routes to the UAE and associated bank accounts. Available at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/sudans-rsf-bank-accounts/>
- 24 See Global Witness (2023), "War Economy in Sudan: RSF's Financial Empire and the Gold Trade," for RSF seizures of financial institutions and resource sites since 2023. Available at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/sudan-rsf-gold-war-economy/>
- 25 See United Nations Security Council (2023), Report of the Panel of Experts on Sudan, UN Doc. S/2023/521, 15 August 2023, for evidence of RSF control over oil corridors and economic assets.

- 26 See Reuters (2023d), "RSF Commander Hemedti Says Local People Should Govern Themselves," which discusses RSF economic motives over administrative ambitions. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/hemedti-governance-statement-2023-06-12/>
- 27 See Africa Confidential (2025), "Hemedti's Nairobi Strategy: RSF Pursues Government-in-Exile Plan," for reporting on RSF's proposed governance models and Nairobi-based political maneuvering.
- 28 See Sudan Tribune (2023), "Arman urges international collaboration to resolve Sudan conflict," for coverage of regional reactions, including South Sudan's complex position amid the Wad Medani incident. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article279827/>
- 29 See Alex de Waal, *New Pathways to Stability? Gulf States and the Political Marketplace in Sudan, South Sudan and the Horn of Africa*, Conflict Research Programme, London School of Economics, 2020. De Waal analyzes how Gulf powers operate through "political marketplaces," using transactional relationships and patronage to shape governance outcomes in fragile states like Sudan. See <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/crp/2023/04/28/the-political-marketplace-in-sudan-from-revolution-to-counter-revolution/>
- 30 See Global Witness, "Exposing the RSF's Secret Financial Network," 2019. The report details the UAE's role in financially supporting the RSF through gold trade channels and military collaboration, including Hemedti's deployment of forces to Yemen in exchange for political and material backing.
- 31 See Reuters, "Advances Give Sudanese Paramilitary Force Momentum in Seven-Month War," November 15, 2023. The article reports on weapons supply routes into Sudan via Chad, underscoring the RSF's reliance on transnational support networks that undermine conventional arms control frameworks.
- 32 See U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Gold and Money Laundering Network Fueling Wagner Group in Sudan," June 27, 2023. The report outlines the Wagner Group's involvement in supporting the RSF through training, disinformation, and gold smuggling networks that contribute to regional instability and undermine democratic processes. Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1581>.
- 33 See Reuters, "Sudan's paramilitary leader gains weapons, fighters from foreign allies – sources," May 24, 2023. The report details RSF's support from regional allies, including fuel and arms reportedly provided by General Khalifa Haftar in Libya, facilitated through cross-border tribal and economic networks in Chad and the Central African Republic. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudans-conflict-whos-backing-rival-commanders-2023-05-03/>
- 34 See Elhaj, A., & Ajayi, A. (2021). *The Juba Peace Agreement: Prospects and Challenges*. Economic Research Forum. Available at: <https://theforum.erf.org.eg/2021/02/02/juba-peace-agreement-prospects-challenges/>
- 35 See Sudan Tribune, "Sudan signs historic peace agreement with armed groups," October 3, 2020. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article260038/>.
- 36 See Gerrit Kurtz, "The JPA and Post-Coup Realignments in Sudan," SWP Comment 2022/C 53, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), December 2022. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/the-juba-peace-agreement>
- 37 See ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), "Sudan: Coup and Conflict Tracker," January 24, 2023. Available at: <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/24/sudan-tracker>
- 38 See Gerrit Kurtz, "The JPA and Post-Coup Realignments in Sudan," SWP Comment 2022/C 53, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), December 2022. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/the-juba-peace-agreement>
- 39 See Gerrit Kurtz, *A Shattered Transition: The 2021 Coup in Sudan*, SWP Berlin, 2022. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/a-shattered-transition>

- 40 See Sudan Tribune, "Burhan Moves to Reinstate Islamist Figures in Key Positions," 2023. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article279827/>
- 41 See Alex de Waal, "The Political Marketplace in Sudan: From Revolution to Counter-Revolution," London School of Economics Blogs, 2023. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/crp/2023/04/28/the-political-marketplace-in-sudan-from-revolution-to-counter-revolution/>
- 42 See African Union, "AU Roadmap for Sudan Peace Process," Press Release, 2023. Available at: <https://papsrepositary.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1872/African%20Union%20Roadmap%20for%20the%20Resolution%20of%20the%20Conflict%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Sudan%20-%20EN%2030-05-23.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=40>
- 43 See International Crisis Group, "A Ceasefire in Sudan Will Require More Than Talks in Jeddah," Crisis Group Commentary, 2023. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/b204-sudans-calamitous-war-finding-path-toward-peace>. Update the link accordingly.Crisis Group+1Crisis Group+1



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