

Backdrop, Paths, and Ceasefire Opportuni- ties



Spotlight on Sudan No. 9

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Executive Summary:

Sudan has been witnessing a brutal war since April 2023, one that has displaced approximately a quarter of the population internally and externally. It has also created a massive humanitarian crisis.

This war takes root in the protracted political conflict that has been ongoing since the 2018 December revolution that ousted former President Omar al-Bashir. In this context, three dimensions have emerged in the inter-Sudanese interactions, including the ideological and ethnic dimensions of the political conflict, as well as the military's ambitions to seize political power, which it has succeeded in attaining through military coups throughout modern Sudanese history.

This crisis has manifested in its three dimensions during the Sudanese transitional period from 2019 to the present moment, as political and military parties agreed to form a partnership under the umbrella of a constitutional document that defined the transitional structures of the Sudanese state: a Sovereignty Council, an executive civilian government, and a legislative council.

These structures were tasked with preparing for new elections to resolve the issue of political legitimacy. However, the interactions between the Sudanese parties resulted, first, in the failure to form the legislative council as well as a multi-level conflict. Some of these conflicts were within the context of the civilian component, and others within the interactions between the civilian component (i.e., the political forces) and the military component. It is worth noting that the military component is not limited only to the official state forces, but also includes armed factions, some of which were launched by the state during the era of President Omar Al-Bashir, such as the Rapid Support Forces, as well as others that rebelled against the state but reconciled with it under the Juba Agreement in October 2020.

Accordingly, the constitutional document governing the transitional period lost its effectiveness in preserving the political stability of Sudan. Civilian rule was also attacked by a military coup in the fall of 2021, during which Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and his government were sacked. In this context, political and military elites failed to reach political consensus, and a conflict emerged within the military component itself, producing the current war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and the militia of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

So far, all local and international efforts to stop the war have failed. The world is currently looking forward to a new attempt by the Republican US administration, headed by President Donald Trump, in cooperation with the key Arab countries Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

In light of this context, the paper addresses in detail the course of the political crisis that has led to the Sudanese war, presenting the influencing factors and background information, as well as the roles of the political and military elites within it. It also explains the field maps of the conflict.

Finally, the paper presents a number of recommendations regarding proposed approaches and policies to address the Sudanese crisis.

Introduction

The Sudanese crisis is one of the most significant crises globally, due to its impact on regional and international geopolitical interests and the resulting widespread humanitarian crisis, which is currently the largest in the world. Furthermore, the current indicators suggest that the possibilities of a ceasefire and beginning the stages of political and social negotiations are very remote.

It is important to examine the roots of the crisis, to uncover the nature of its implications on all levels, and to present the paths through which the crisis has crystallized over the past decade, leading to the results of the December 2018 youth revolution, which sought to establish a democratic civilian system of government, but lacked the necessary tools for this transition amid complex political and social interactions.

In light of this scenario, the Sudanese war broke out in April 2023 between the wings of the Sudanese military component, that included both the nationalist institutions, and the tribal militia.

For more than two years, all efforts to stop the expanding war have failed. Such expansion is attributed to the fact that both sides of the conflict seek to crush each other with decisive military methods. It has also been exacerbated by the emergence of regional actors whose visions overlap with regard to the nature of the political and military equations in Sudan. This has occurred under the umbrella of international visions that have interacted with the Sudanese problem without considering the nature of its historical, political and social complexities. This has also been due to preconceived biases at the internal and regional levels that have contributed to the accumulation of conflict factors rather than contributing to its resolution.

In this context, this paper discusses the following pillars:

First: The facts and motives behind the Sudanese war

I. At the political level

The current Sudanese war is not in the least surprising. It was widely predicted by everyone; the Sudanese political forces, the international community, most experts and observers, and even airlines which suspended their flights to the capital Khartoum three days before the outbreak of the war on April 15th, 2023.

The events leading up to this crisis appear to manifest in three stages: the first relates to the determinants of the relationship between the parties, namely the constitutional document signed in August 2019; the second relates to managing the interactions between the political parties themselves; and the third addresses the repercussions of the internal conflict in the peripheral regions, namely eastern and western Sudan.

During these three stages, there were direct reasons for the confusion in the Sudanese political scene for more than two years after the Sudanese revolution had succeeded in ending Omar al-Bashir's rule. These can be detailed as follows:

A- The Constitutional Document Crisis

Following the SAF's siding with the Sudanese revolution and the removal of former President Omar al-Bashir from power on April 11th, 2019 a preliminary political agreement was reached between the Military Council, headed by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), comprised of Sudanese political parties and professional unions represented by the Sudanese Professionals Association.

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This agreement was reached following al-Bashir's removal, stipulating the formation of a joint Sovereignty Council, which would exercise presidential powers and lead a three-year transitional period, after which general elections would be held. However, a battle erupted between the military and civilian parties over who would lead this council during April and May 2019. The military insisted on assuming leadership, while the civilians refused and announced the end of negotiations on this matter on May 19th, 2019.

The FFC relied on their vast popular support and took to the streets to resolve the conflict. As a result, revolutionary convoys converged on the army's General Command headquarters to pressure it, in an open sit-in that was forcibly dispersed on June 3rd, 2019, resulting in casualties and cases of rape.

In September 2019, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok issued a decree to form an independent investigation committee to investigate the dispersal of the sit-in. The committee comprised seven members, headed by a Supreme Court judge. However, due to political pressure and conflict, the committee was unable to submit a final report on its work, and its headquarters was attacked in March 2022 by the then military authorities.

This political crisis escalated and extended for several months until the Sudanese political equation was resolved within the framework of a constitutional document signed in August 2019. This document granted civilians the right to chair the Sovereignty Council, but only after a two-year term of leadership under the military component.

This document, however, was quite fragile, as it was not a decisive factor regulating the relationship between the actors. The primary reason for this fragility was that it was compromised due to two factors:

1. Pressures from the Sudanese Marginalization forces and armed movements to give precedence to the political peace agreements signed with them over the constitutional document. The Juba Peace Agreement signed in October 2020 between the Sudanese government and the armed movements resulted in extending the three-year transitional period to four years. The Sovereignty Council was expanded, and new councils were formed as partners in the transitional period to accommodate the political elites of the marginalization forces reconciled with the center. The constitutional structures were not considered on a national basis. The direct result of the marginalization forces' position was the extension of the transitional period for a year, which resulted in a crisis related to the clause that stipulated the date for handing over the presidency of the Presidential Council to the civilian component. Was it going to take place in November 2021 according to the first arrangement, or June 2022 due to the extension of the transitional period?
2. Failure to fulfil the document's requirements, particularly with regard to completing the transitional period's structures, including a legislative council and a constitutional court, etc. Consequently, the constitutional document was no longer a solid foundation for the parties to refer to. Accusations have been exchanged between the civilian and military components regarding each party's responsibility for obstructing the establishment of the constitutional structures for the transitional period.

B- Imbalance of Power Between actors in the Political Equation

According to the meetings I conducted in Khartoum in December 2020 with a number of Sudanese political actors, it can be said that the prelude to the revolution against Bashir in 2018 emanated from two factors: the Arab revolutions of 2011, and the accumulation of political and social tension resulting from the use of excessive violence in the 2013 uprising.

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Sudanese trade unions and professional organizations began to organize their efforts to lead an opposition against Bashir. Their ultimate goal was to weaken the regime and revolt against it. In this context, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) emerged and attempted to oust Bashir in September 2013, when anger against the Sudanese regime erupted in massive demonstrations. However, the regime was able to contain these demonstrations with brutal security intervention, resulting in over 200 casualties.

The SPA continued its political struggle, but made it mainly focused on wage demands. These demands evolved in 2018 with the intervention of the National Consensus Forces (one of the opposition coalitions against Bashir), transforming the limited agenda of demands into an open political agenda.

The SPA led the Sudanese revolution within a broader framework, formed on January 1st, 2020 and named the Alliance for Freedom and Change. This alliance led the revolution and included all political parties, social movements, and civil society organizations. Its core was the SPA. However, over the two years of the transitional period, both the Alliance for Freedom and Change and the SPA were subject to erosion and division due to several reasons, including:

- › The role of the military component in drafting the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, and the resulting increased influence of the military, particularly in its relations with armed movements, prompted both Darfur Governor Minni Arko Minawi and Finance Minister Khalil Ibrahim to side with it in leading the remainder of the transitional period and announce their split from the Freedom and Change Alliance, and forming the "National Consensus Charter for the Unity of the Forces of Freedom and Change". This split sparked demonstrations on October 16th, 2021, with its supporters staging a sit-in in front of the Republican Palace.
- › The Communist Party's withdrawal from the Freedom and Change Alliance, in protest to the formation of the joint Sovereignty Council that combined both the civilian and military components together. That happened despite its approval of the Constitutional Document earlier. The Communist Party considered this step a strategic mistake based on what it called a "blood partnership." This withdrawal contributed to the split of the Professionals Association, the core of the Sudanese revolution, against the backdrop of internal elections that produced only Communist Party members, a move rejected by the other components.
- › The tendency of some components of the FFC, including parties with a nationalist character, to support the military component in political interactions and contribute to increasing its influence vis-à-vis other political parties. This has resulted in a weakening of the FFC, the political incubator for the civilian government led by Abdalla Hamdok who was hence prompted to adopt an initiative seeking unity within the FFC to preserve the political weight of the civilian component in the equation.
- › The Professionals Association has been divided between supporters of the Communist Party and other FFC parties. The former has exerted political pressure on the remaining components under the umbrella of the partnership established in the Constitutional Document between the civilian and military components in managing the transitional period. This partnership has been dubbed the "Blood Partnership," reflecting the escalating phenomenon of political outbidding among the opposition coalition's factions. This is particularly true given the disruption of the work of the investigation committees into the events of the sit-in at the General Command of the Armed Forces, which was forcibly dispersed on June 3rd, 2019, resulting in casualties. There were also testimonies of rape cases against women.

The end result of these extended interactions was an imbalance of power in favor of the military component, despite numerous international pressures aimed at weakening its ability to control the government and the country's resources. In December 2020, the US Congress passed a bipartisan

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law requiring the US State Department to detail its policies and procedures in support of human rights and transparency in Sudan, particularly in the economic sphere. It also requires the US President to submit a quarterly report on his administration's progress in this process, under the title of the Sudan Democratic Transition, Accountability, and Financial Transparency Act of 2020.

II. At the military level

Sudan experienced irregular military formations before its national independence in January 1956, following the outbreak of the civil war between North and South Sudan in 1955. This resulted in the emergence of the Anyanya I and Anyanya II movements in southern Sudan, which fought a civil war against the central government in Khartoum until 1972 when a peace agreement was signed, under which some irregular military formations were integrated into the official army, allowing South Sudanese citizens to join the Sudanese national army. However, about a decade later, a new rebellion erupted against the Sudanese government, led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), led by John Garang, who held the rank of captain in the national army. This war continued until the signing of the Naivasha Peace Agreement in 2005.

Similarly, irregular military formations emerged in the Darfur, Nuba Mountains, and Blue Nile regions, a direct result of the outbreak of war in Darfur in 2003, and also due to the marginalization of the Nuba and Blue Nile regions in the Naivasha Agreement which did not include a comprehensive settlement of their issues. Most of these formations adopted the name "People's Liberation Movement," based on each region's geographical name, and engaged in armed conflicts against the SAF based on ethnic and political considerations, driven by political and economic marginalization, as well as personal ambitions.

In this context, the military and political influence of these armed movements varied depending on the nature of their demands, and the extent to which they were able to represent the populations they claimed to be fighting for. It depended, as well, on the amount of external support they received. Ironically, the Sudanese government itself, under President Omar Al-Bashir, resorted to forming an irregular militia known as the Rapid Support Forces, pursuant to an official decree issued in 2013. A special law was also issued for this purpose, and was ratified by the Sudanese Parliament in 2017, transferring its affiliation from the National Intelligence and Security Service to the Sudanese Armed Forces.

The idea of establishing the RSF came in response to two main factors:

1. President Omar al-Bashir's desire to fortify his regime against any potential military coup, especially in light of growing regional and international opposition to his continued rule and the increasing external and internal pressures, most notably from leaders in the ruling National Congress Party, to dissuade the president from running for a new presidential term in 2015.
2. Managing the armed conflict in the Darfur region, which has continued since its outbreak in 2003.

When the RSF were officially established in 2013, their numbers were estimated to be approximately 5000 troops. The majority were from the Arab Mahamid and Mahariya tribes, in addition to a group led by Mohammedin Ismail from the Zaghawa tribe, who had split from the Sudan Liberation Army in Darfur.

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Naturally, the composition of these forces evolved over nearly a decade, as the government relied on Arab tribes in a proxy war in Darfur. With international pressure mounting on the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed militia for committing grave violations and crimes against humanity, the government temporarily stopped paying their salaries, particularly after the Security Council issued resolutions against Sudan under Chapter VII of the Charter. A UN peacekeeping mission was also established in Sudan, in conjunction with the formation of transnational civilian alliances to save the people of Darfur from the government's genocide.

In 2007, a gradual process of integration of some of these groups into state structures, such as the Border Guard Forces, began. This, later, paved the way for the establishment of the RSF as an official force affiliated with the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), before its subordination to the armed forces.

This was achieved with the strengthening of the position of the new commander, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), as the forces now operated under the authority of the Sudanese Intelligence Service and were mandated with protecting the borders.

With the discovery of gold in the North Darfur State in 2012, the Janjaweed forces, then led by Musa Hilal (Hemedti's uncle), seized mining and production sites, and an armed conflict erupted, resulting in hundreds of deaths.

By 2017, gold resources accounted for approximately 40% of the Sudanese government's revenues. Hemedti controlled the mining areas and acted as the government's agent for gold sales, after a fierce competition with his uncle, who was later arrested by former President Omar al-Bashir.

In addition to all of the above, the Sudanese government's approval to send a battalion of regular forces to participate in the Arab coalition forces in Yemen in 2015 contributed to the emergence of a regional role for the RSF as they constituted the main component of the Sudanese participation in the Yemen war. Consequently, direct relations were established by the RSF's leadership with the rulers of the Gulf states, particularly the United Arab Emirates.

It can be argued that the outcomes of these regional relations, along with growing financial capabilities, resulted in the formation of a financial empire for Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the commander of the RSF, and a military force estimated at approximately 20,000 troops. This force carried out combat operations and seized control of UN camps in Darfur, from which it withdrew after the end of the UN-AMID peacekeeping mission in early January 2022.

On the political level, Hemedti's Political manoeuvring and his siding with the Sudanese revolution camp in April 2019 led to a shift in the balance of power, contributing to the overthrow of the Bashir regime. This, in turn, gave him broad political influence in the post-revolutionary period, particularly among the Sudanese political forces.

Hemedti strengthened this influence by expanding his investments in real estate and companies, along with strengthening his relationships with prominent media figures in newspapers and websites that influence public opinion. He also gained support from political forces that were concerned about the armed forces' dominance of power, especially in light of leaks about the affiliation of military leaders to the security committee responsible for what was then called the "soft landing" which referred to the removal of Bashir while preserving the structure of his regime.

These political balances led to Hemedti's rise to become deputy to the head of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. Calls also emerged to integrate the RSF into the SAF.

These developments allowed Hemedti a broad political role, particularly in Sudan's peace process. Hemedti was appointed by civilian Prime Minister Dr. Abdalla Hamdok as head of the Economic

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Committee in April 2020. This appointment sparked resentment among the military establishment and public opinion for several reasons. Most notably, the RSF had confiscated mineral resources for their own benefit, and its members were not militarily qualified according to the academic and technical standards adopted in regular armies.

Second: The Paths of the Sudanese Crisis:

1. The Repercussions of the Crisis on the Peripheral Regions of Sudan

A- The Eastern Sudan Crisis

The Eastern Sudan issue emerged as a direct cause of the conflict between the revolutionary forces seeking a democratic transition and building a state on new foundations, and the former regime, which was ousted by a popular revolution in 2018. This conflict manifested itself in several issues, most notably that of the peripheral regions, given that these regions have historical grievances and various political demands.

Procedurally, the political and social tension that caused the eruption of the Eastern Sudan crisis resulted from two factors: the first was the practices of the Empowerment Removal Committee (ERC) against elements of the Bashir regime, both politically and economically. These practices lacked the appropriate expertise and awareness of the concept of political reconciliation to keep the civilian rule intact in the face of its opponents; particularly from the institutions of Bashir's regime, which the Muslim Brotherhood had controlled for thirty years.

The second factor is the emergence of tendencies on the part of both the military component affiliated with the Bashir regime, and the National Islamic Front to weaken the civilian component. Mohamed El-Amin Turk, head of the Supreme Council of Beja Nazirs and Independent Chiefdoms in Eastern Sudan called for ending the work of the ERC, the formation of a new military council that is representative of Sudan's six regions, and the dismissal of Dr. Abdullah Hamdok's cabinet. It is worth noting that the abolition of the eastern track in the Juba Peace Agreement signed between the government and armed factions in October 2020 was considered the core demand from which the aforementioned demands were derived. In this context, Turk resorted to closing the national roads leading to Port Sudan from Khartoum to have his demands met.

The three demands of the eastern Sudanese region have resulted in confusion in the political scene and an exchange of accusations regarding the parties responsible for the blockade that was a threat to the Sudanese national security. The eastern region controls Sudan's communication with the world via the Red Sea platform, and its closure affects the entrance of vital supplies to the country. The effect of this blockade can be understood in light of the fact that Sudan imports 70% of its needs from abroad, particularly fuel, food, and medicine. These supplies have been in short supply in the markets during said period.

Additionally, the closure of the Eastern Sudan region also impacts the economy of South Sudan as it controls their oil exports, which constitute almost the entirety of the South Sudanese budget. The oil is exported from Bashayer Port, which was closed along with all the other ports in eastern Sudan. In this context, a segment of the Sudanese political community believed that the events in the east were orchestrated by the military component in order to prevent the transitional authority from being handed over to a civilian component.

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B- The Darfur Crisis

Historically, this is a region that joined the Sudanese state only about a century ago. Darfur was an independent sultanate with its own administrative system, national army, and foreign relations. The world dealt with it accordingly until its last sultan, Ali Dinar, who ruled from 1898 to 1917.

In this context, the weakness of Sudanese national integration and the nature of the practices of the national independent state, in terms of marginalizing Sudan's peripheries in terms of fair political representation and sustainable development, produced a number of changes on the ground, which can be detailed as follows:

- › The weak interactive relationship between Darfur's tribal formations, that are more than 80 tribes, and the country's center. Moreover, there were unstable inter-relations due to the escalating water scarcity umbrellaing light of pastoral and agricultural economic activity, in which Arabs virtually monopolized pastoral activities, while those of African origin settled within the agricultural production area. This water scarcity produced a conflict that emerged in the 1940s on a limited scale, but it gradually deepened with the accelerating rates of desertification due to climate change, especially in recent decades.
- › The Khartoum government's arming of some tribes against others in the 1980s, which resulted in security crises in subsequent periods.
- › The power struggle between the two wings of the Sudanese government, Bashir and Turabi, in 1999. This conflict was reflected in Darfur in 2003, where armed Darfuri factions formed, demanding separation, similar to the independence achieved by the southern Sudanese in 2011. These factions attempted to exploit ethnic differences in Darfur to achieve their separatist goal.

In this context, the Darfur region became a threat to the authority of the Bashir regime, which committed genocide against its population. This prompted the international community to mobilize against the Bashir regime. The Security Council issued a number of resolutions against Sudan under Article 7 of the UN Charter, and the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants in 2009 and 2010 for Bashir and some members of his regime, on charges that remain pending against them.

With the atrocities committed by the RSF during the 2023 war against the African ethnic group in the town of El Geneina in the western part of the region, which were condemned by the international community, tendencies toward separation in Darfur have currently emerged. This is highlighted in the statement of the Sultan of Dar Masalit, Saad Abdel Rahman Bahar al-Din, who traveled to Chad two months later, in June 2023. He explained the intention to review the Qalani Agreement, concluded in the second decade of the twentieth century, under which the Masalit tribe, along with their lands, joined Sudan under the umbrella of the Franco-British conflict, beginning in 1922. They ceded the Adré region, currently part of Chad. This agreement gave the Masalit tribe, along with its lands, the right to review their status after a hundred years. It also stipulated that they have the right to choose between remaining in Sudan or becoming independent.

Joining the rebellion against the center in Khartoum are the Fur people, who are the ethnic majority in the region named after them under the leadership of Abdul Wahid al Nur, head of the Sudan Liberation Movement. He seized control of the region through exploiting the various economic resources such as gold and minerals.

As for the Darfur armed factions currently allied with the Sudanese army under the 2020 Juba Agreement, they will determine their position on whether to continue or withdraw from this alliance, depending on the course of the current conflict between the RSF and the army and the resulting self-serving interests. This is currently causing pressure from the armed factions on the army. Moreover,

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the army's intention to expel their members from Khartoum could directly impact the future conflict equations in Sudan.

In this context, the parallel government in Sudan, whose charter was signed in Nairobi in April 2025, and its leadership structure, headed by Hemedti in early July 2025, do not reflect a political division in the conventional sense. Rather, they also reflect tribal, ethnic, and cultural divisions that, among other factors, have contributed to this war in Sudan. The conflict, at its various levels, cannot be resolved solely at the military level, but its tribal and cultural manifestations must be addressed as well.

To summarize Sudan's internal dynamics, it can be said that the state of tribal and regional division was a direct cause of the weakening of the civilian component and Sudanese political forces in general. This occurred under the umbrella of the Sudanese December Revolution from 2018 until the outbreak of war in April 2023. The people of Darfur in particular, and the so-called marginalization forces in general insisted on guaranteeing political rights on ethnic basis, at the expense of the nationalist constitutional document signed by the revolutionary forces and the military component in August 2019.

The ethnic and tribal dimensions, along with the political reasons behind the Sudanese military conflict, indicate that the parallel government announced by Hemedti is likely to complicate the Sudanese situation and lead to an extension of the military conflict for years to come. This development suggests that Sudan is heading towards one of two scenarios: either complete fragmentation in the event of the outbreak of regional and tribal conflicts in other areas of the Sudanese national territory, or the division of the Darfur region, which lacks the conditions for stability, similar to what has happened in South Sudan.

2- The repercussions of the crisis on political interactions:

1. Disagreements between the civilian and military components

Disagreements escalated between the military and civilian components over the handover of the presidency of the Sudanese Sovereignty Council to civilians. The US support for the Hamdok government in this battle contributed to the Professionals Association's demand to end the partnership with the military component and hand over all power to the civilian component. The military component responded to this move on September 26th, 2021, stating that "the armed forces are the guardians of the security of the Sudanese people." The military component withdrew the guards of the joint security forces from the ERC and approximately 22 economic sites under its jurisdiction. It also suspended meetings with the civilian component, accusing some of its members of having "dual loyalties."

Thus, the disagreements between the military and civilian components led to a coup against the civilian component in October 2021, whereby Dr. Abdullah Hamdok and his government were removed from power. Moreover, the Transitional Council was dissolved, and a state of emergency was declared, in addition to suspending some articles of the constitutional document. This followed a widespread campaign of arrests of members of both the Sovereignty Council and the government, as well as some political party leaders.

A statement was issued by the Minister of Defence, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, announcing the formation of a technocratic government after a period of what he called "political bickering." He also pledged to adhere to the Juba Peace Agreement, resolve the eastern crisis, and establish transitional structures, including a legislative council, a constitutional court, etc. Additionally, he pledged to hand over power in accordance with the constitutional document, but in 2023.

The coup was orchestrated by the then-official military component, namely the SAF and the RSF. This occurred after two members of the civilian government, both from Darfur and signatories of the Juba

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Agreement with the army, mobilized against the government. Both Gibril Ibrahim, the Minister of Finance, and Minni Arko Minawi, the Governor of Darfur, announced their demands for a change in the government and a broadening of political participation. They staged a sit-in with their supporters, particularly from some tribal groups, in front of the Republican Palace on October 16th, 2021.

2. The Framework Agreement Crisis

The Sudanese political crisis has become increasingly complex, with public rejection of the removal of the civilian government, escalating political tensions among the parties of the internal equation, not to mention the nature of the horizontal and vertical divisions that have plagued the Sudanese military and political bodies.

The framework agreement in the fall of 2022 was founded on the draft transitional constitution put forward by the Sudanese Bar Association, based on a US proposal, according to multiple Sudanese sources. This followed a period of multiple political initiatives to end the crisis in Sudan, all of which failed to achieve consensus. These initiatives were categorized according to the political and social forces that produced them, exacerbating political tension and division.

The production of this transitional constitution was facilitated by political consultation workshops held at the headquarters of the Sudanese Bar Association between the political forces involved in the central Freedom and Change Alliance. These forces led and contributed to the continuation of popular protests against the military component's actions to remove the civilian government. The political forces that called for and supported the military component were absent. Therefore, the central forces were called the revolutionary forces, and the forces supporting the military component were called the transitional forces.

According to this classification and division, the forces that signed the framework agreement with the military component, and were given international support in this regard, refused to have the transitional forces as partners in the framework agreement. This is because the draft transitional constitution granted the forces that would sign the political declaration the authority to select members of the Sovereignty Council, the Cabinet, and the Legislative Council, in addition to regional and state governors, the Chief Justice and his deputies, and the President and members of the Constitutional Court.

According to the aforementioned classification, the participation of the forces supporting the military component in this agreement ultimately means having the ability to represent their elements in the transitional structures. This is what the political forces describe as a political submergence of the goals of the Sudanese revolution, a failure to guarantee a credible transition to democracy, and a continued ability of the military component to lead and influence the Sudanese political equation. That also meant that the Army will not withdraw/return to the barracks, as demanded by the revolutionary forces, ranging from the central Freedom and Change Alliance to the youth resistance committees, whose organization has influenced Sudanese events and interactions since the December 2018 revolution.

In light of this crisis, international and regional efforts converged to pressure the military component, which earlier insisted that the framework agreement should be inclusive of all forces, and made this a condition for its withdrawal from the political scene. This was interpreted as being a mere justification used by the military component to maintain its position as the de facto authority leading the country.

Indeed, the military component, under direct international pressure, played a role in attempting to bridge the rift between the revolutionary forces and the transitional forces. Following a meeting with all parties, the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan,

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announced an agreement on a political declaration that would allow the transitional forces to be present in the framework agreement.

In accordance with the declared position of the central Forces of Freedom and Change, three forces were included in the framework agreement. A preliminary signing of a "full political declaration to be part of the final agreement" was reached with the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Minni Arko Minawi; the Justice and Equality Movement, led by Gibril Ibrahim; and the Democratic Unionist Party, led by Jaafar al-Mirghani. However, the military component continued to have doubts regarding the credibility of the revolutionary alliance's stance on the issue of expanding the participation of various political forces.

3- Challenges of Integrating Armed Factions into the Sudanese Army

The Sudanese transitional period collapsed in April 2023, resulting in a war that emanated from the political conflict over the political weight of civilian forces, on the one hand, and the internal conflict within the military component on the other as the conflict between the revolutionary forces and the forces of the old regime had already escalated.

At a parallel level, internal fears escalated regarding Hemedti's efforts to build political, financial, and military influence, resulting in discontent within the SAF. Furthermore, Hemedti's move to bring his forces to Khartoum, in addition to his already well-established position in the camps within the capital, as a component of the army, caused concern in the Sudanese public sphere. Such concern stemmed from Hemedti's forces not being subject to the chain of command and control within the armed forces. This was a result of Lieutenant General Burhan's repeal of Article 5 of the RSF Law.

In this context, a power struggle emerged between Burhan and Hemedti. Burhan had traditional ties to the forces of the old regime, due to his professional involvement in the military. Meanwhile, there was interaction between the political forces that feared the military would seize power and Hemedti, who had shifted his allegiance from Bashir to the forces of the December Revolution, as part of his efforts to create political leverage for himself. His speeches featured expressions of democratic transition and civilian rule.

Internationally, Hemedti strengthened his international relations, particularly with Paris, where he received the Imam of the Drancy suburb of Paris, Hassan Chalghoumi, a French citizen of Tunisian origin and a vocal critic of religious extremism. He is also a staunch advocate of the Abraham Accords, which resulted in the normalization of Israeli relations with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan under the auspices of US President Donald Trump. Chalghoumi enjoys the support of French President Emmanuel Macron.

Simultaneously, Hemedti enlisted the services of a French public relations agency to facilitate interviews with French media outlets and improve his international image. For a brief period in 2019, Hemedti hired the Canadian firm Dickens & Madison and its Canadian-Israeli manager, Ari Ben-Menashe, to ensure his voice reached Washington, D.C. In Khartoum, Engineer Idris Mudallal of the RSF managed Hemedti's media relations.

Since 2019, Hemedti has sought to portray himself as a man of Sudan's peripheries, opposing the generals of central and northern Sudan, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. He reinforced this message by reaching four reconciliation agreements between various tribal groups in Darfur. His marriage to a woman from the Ababda tribe, which straddles the Egyptian-Sudanese border and in Sinai, was part of his strategy to demonstrate his local legitimacy.

Hemedti has pursued an approach that seeks to engage with the Sudanese youth and the local community. He has frequently appeared wearing a white turban on TikTok, the most popular social media platform among young people. Hemedti has also launched media campaigns against his opponents

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in the Sudanese military. In August 2022, he publicly criticized the head of the Sovereignty Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, even stating that the October 25th coup was a failure and that without his support, Burhan would not have been able to remove civilians from power so easily.

In this context, Burhan attempted to undermine Hemedti's tribal influence by releasing Hemedti's uncle, Musa Hilal, who had been imprisoned on Bashir's orders and was not released after the revolution. Hilal is one of the most important Arab tribal leaders in Darfur, and his influence rivals that of Hemedti himself. He was also the first commander of the Janjaweed forces, the core of the RSF. Burhan also issued a decree banning all members of the Sovereignty Council from traveling outside the country.

Hemedti then became aware of attempts to undermine him, prompting him to defy the decision issued by the head of the Transitional Council. He travelled without permission to Turkey, with which he concluded economic agreements. In response, a video of Hemedti's brother's participation in the dispersal of the sit-in at the General Command of the Army during the Sudanese revolution was leaked. This operation is still the subject of a lengthy investigation, with no definitive results to date.

It appears that this state of tension has led some to anticipate armed clashes between the two sides of the Sudanese military component during 2021. Especially since Burhan, and the Armed Forces behind him, have gained support from numerous regional and international powers, particularly the United States, which issued a statement on the eve of the demonstrations supporting the rights of the martyrs of the sit-in dispersal, indirectly referring negatively to the RSF.

With this growing tension, each side's camps witnessed a process of maximum military preparations, especially as the tensions extended to public opinion channels. The escalation of tension within the military component contributed to the outbreak of war and the threat of partitioning Sudan, as the RSF control the states of the Darfur region, with the exception of the besieged enclave of El Fasher in North Darfur, according to the following map, which reflects the military situation in mid-August 2025.

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Source: Nile website (available at: <https://nile1.com/>)

A map of the military conflict in August 2025 shows the following:

1. Areas under SAF control

The Sudanese army currently controls the entire Sudanese national territory, as shown on the attached map in green. These areas are the northern, eastern, and central regions of Sudan, as well as the eastern and northern Kordofan region.

2. Areas under RSF control

The RSF control the areas shaded in red: the southern and western regions of Darfur, the western region of Kordofan, and the southern and western city of Omdurman, near the capital, Khartoum.

3. Areas of engagement:

The RSF are besieging the city of El Fasher in North Darfur State, without having yet succeeded in capturing it. If such control were to occur, it would tip the military balance, deprive the army of its troop assembly points and its ability to supply its forces. It would also threaten its control of the North Darfur State.

The Rapid Support Forces are threatening the city of El Obeid, the economic capital of Sudanese agricultural crops and a crossroads between Eastern and Western Sudan, making it a hub for all types of supply chains. The RSF threaten areas in Omdurman, an influential part of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

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In this context, it can be said that the strengths of the SAF lie in their air and artillery superiority, as well as external recognition of legitimacy.

The challenges they face can be outlined as follows:

- › Long supply lines

The RSF possess drones, tactical flexibility, and supply lines relatively close to Libya and Chad, in addition to the presence of tribal-based social incubators.

The challenges facing the RSF lie in its current international isolation, troops exhaustion due to being sieged in some areas, and retreating from others. This makes the maps of military control fluid and unstable.

However, overall, we can say that the SAF hold the eastern, northern, and central parts of the country and face the challenge of the fall of El Fasher, which would deprive them of their supply lines to the west of the country.

Third: Ceasefire Opportunities

The regional and international communities, at the state and organizational levels, are currently engaged in attempts to achieve a ceasefire in Sudan. However, all these attempts have so far failed. Recent interactions have resulted in the formation of the so-called Quartet Committee, comprising the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. However, this committee failed to convene due to regional disagreements between the UAE on one side, and both Egypt, and Saudi Arabia on the other side regarding the day after the war.

It can be generally said that the administration of US President Donald Trump was aiming for three outcomes from this meeting. The first was to present its plan to stop the war and discuss it with its strategic allies in the Middle East. The second goal was to examine the Sudanese situation in general from an Arab regional perspective, where the divergent views among its parties appear to have become one of the challenges to ending the Sudanese war.

The third goal was to bring the views of the Arab parties closer together and seek to advance the American project through regional platforms that are in agreement, rather than conflicting, regarding Sudan. With the failure of the Quartet meetings, Washington invited Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Commander of the SAF, and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, Commander of the RSF, to two secret meetings in Switzerland with Massad Boulos, President Trump's senior adviser on Arab and Middle Eastern affairs. Information in this regard indicates that the United States has proposed a comprehensive plan for a ceasefire in Sudan.

Naturally, the US objectives of having a leading role in ending the Sudanese war stem from the concerns of the US and European Union countries regarding the repercussions of the Sudanese war on international security and interests, including the growing terrorist threats, the impact on navigation in the Red Sea, and the potential expansion of Russian or Iranian influence.

In this context, the primary challenge facing the US objectives may be the nature of the discrepancy between Washington and Abu Dhabi, on one hand, and Riyadh and Cairo, on the other, regarding the classification of the Sudanese warring parties in terms of legitimacy, competence, and level of participation in future equations in Sudan. The success of the meeting depends on regional balances, the Quartet countries' agreement on ceasefire arrangements and the subsequent political process with the participation of the agreed-upon Sudanese parties. The second, and perhaps more important, challenge is the ability of Sudanese political parties to reach consensus and accept each other, given the ethnic divisions and weak national integration.

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At the regional level, the challenges are not easy at all, especially for Cairo that considers the situation in Sudan part of its national security. Moreover, Egypt has been affected tremendously by the Sudanese war in a manner that is incomparable to any other country. It has borne, and continues to bear, the burden of the massive Sudanese displacement, over a short period of time.

As for Riyadh, there are fears of escalating security threats in the Red Sea from the Sudanese coast, in light of reports indicating a current state of networking and coordination between the Houthis in Yemen and the Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahideen organization in Somalia, as well as some Sudanese militia groups. This threat appears to be significant, especially given that Saudi Arabia and Sudan share opposing coasts, separated only by the Red Sea.

Given this scenario, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other, agree on the major goals related to ending the war in Sudan and achieving stability. These include the belief that there is no possible military solution to this war, and that the Jeddah Platform and the Manama Agreements and their outcomes remain valid for a ceasefire. They also agree on the necessity of intervention to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Sudan.

Recommendations

1. Garnering the support of the EU policymakers, specifically Germany, for ending the war in Sudan, especially since Sudan's Red Sea coastline extends for over 800 kilometers, making it a platform for escalating security threats in the Red Sea, impacting global economies in general and European economies in particular.
2. Raising the level of awareness on the fact that ending the Sudanese war is not an end in itself, but rather a necessity to ensure the continued existence of the Sudanese state and prevent its fragmentation or division, which in turn opens the door to security threats in the region, particularly in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, and the Central African Republic.
3. Ending the violence and achieving a ceasefire, which is currently the top priority. Nevertheless, this should happen without sacrificing a sustainable, rather than temporary, political system that possesses the conditions for stability and the ability to undertake economic development and reconstruction tasks under the umbrella of civilian rule, in which civil-military relations are stabilized in a manner agreed upon at the national level.
4. Attempting to contribute to ending the discord among the Gulf states over Sudan, perhaps by encouraging informal dialogues between the Gulf and other regional parties regarding the nature of their interests and the means of achieving them, in a manner that does not lead to the collapse of the Sudanese state.
5. Supporting a Sudanese-Sudanese dialogue in Cairo at the political, tribal, and social levels, thus making a ceasefire and political consensus a path to building sustainable peace and stability.
6. Addressing the phenomenon of climate change and its impact on the tribal conflict in Darfur and other conflict zones in Sudan.
7. Focusing on building a Sudanese model of transitional justice that supports opportunities for a comprehensive national reconciliation.
8. Focusing on launching an informal dialogue on civil-military relations in Sudan.

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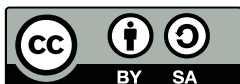
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