

FULL RESEARCH ARTICLES

The Fall of Khartoum: Understanding the War in Sudan

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On the morning of April 15, 2023, Sudan descended into violent conflict, marking a devastating collapse of its fragile political transition following the 2019 ousting of longtime president Omar al-Bashir. The capital city, Khartoum, was swiftly overtaken by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces whose roots lie in western Sudan—a historical echo of 1885, when the Mahdist forces, also from the west, seized the city. Sudan's latest crisis underscores the deep-rooted tensions between military factions and the persistent struggle for democratic reform—a struggle that continues to shape the fate of the nation. The war has led to unprecedented polarization across Sudan both among armed groups and civilians. Despite divisions, there is hope, however. Some traditional leaders refused to take sides in the war and that the spirit of December 2018 Revolution as well as the traditions of communal tolerance and solidarity are still alive. Also, four key countries—United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates—are working together to broker peace. A credible ceasefire would help the people of Sudan work toward a unifying national agenda. Local elders, women, religious leaders, the youth, artists, human rights activists, the wider civil society groups, and historically tested indigenous mechanisms need to be included in any pathway for the future of Sudan. This paper seeks to offer a basic overview of the war. It builds on the author published in *The Conversation* four days after the war broke out. The sources used include various Sudanese and international news outlets, investigative reports, and the available literature.

Keywords: Khartoum, Hemedti, al-Burhan, Rapid Support Forces, Sudan Armed Forces, Forces for Freedom and Change, Darfur, al-Bashir, Sovereign Council, el-Fasher.

Introduction

In the fall of 2018, I offered *Darfur in Historical Perspective* as one of my regular courses. Toward the end of the semester, I assigned a short response paper in which students reflected on the future of Darfur. Remarkably, every student concluded that the removal of President Omar al-Bashir was essential to resolving the crisis and establishing lasting peace. We revisited their responses together in class and collectively agreed that ousting the long-standing dictator appeared to be the most viable path forward. Just a few weeks later, on December 19, a popular uprising erupted, ultimately culminating in the removal of President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. Although the course had concluded by then, I continued to keep my students abreast of these historic developments into the spring semester.

On April 11, al-Bashir was succeeded by former Defense Minister General Awad Ibn Ouf. However, sustained mass protests demanding a democratic transition forced him to step down the very next day. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.¹ Al-Burhan was relatively unknown and kept a low profile in the army. He was “Born in 1960 in the village of Gandatu, north of Khartoum,” and “studied at a Sudanese military academy and later in Egypt and Jordan.” He served for a while as the defense attaché to Beijing, China. He “is married and has three children.”²

The head of the Rapid Support Forces, Lieutenant General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti, became the deputy chairman of the Transitional Military Council. Hemedti hails from the Abbala Arabs who straddle the border between Sudan and Chad. Hemedti’s family may have come to Darfur from Chad due to war in the 1980s.³ Hemedti “came of age in South Darfur, where his family eventually settled.” Dropping out of school at an early stage, he eventually began “to do business along Sudan’s porous borders with Libya and Egypt.” He was active in “in the camel and sheep trade,” and later “expanded into selling furniture and knick-knacks” in the city of Nyala. The escalation of the rebellion in Darfur in 2003 “transformed his fortunes.”⁴

Due to drought and other factors, many Abbala Arabs moved from the north to the south, which has relatively better climate. South Darfur has “sufficient rainfall to support both farming and grazing, including production of rare and valuable crops.” It also “contains significant gold deposits, capable of generating significant resources.” In addition, South Darfur “has a relatively developed infrastructure in terms of a railway and airports that are capable of linking it to the rest of the world.”⁵ Hemedti reportedly built a new village for his community at Umalgora, near Nyala in South Darfur, and president al-Bashir attended its inauguration in 2017.⁶

Hemedti had been commander of the notorious Janjaweed militia during the war between the army and Darfur rebels that escalated in 2003. In fighting alongside the army, the Janjaweed played a key role in weakening the rebel forces. Later, in 2013, the government transformed the militia into a paramilitary force. The government’s plan was to establish a well-trained, well-equipped, and centrally integrated security force that could be deployed against threats to its regime. Al-Bashir chose Hemedti as the force’s

1 “Sudan’s Burhan, from relative unknown to regional player,” *France 24*, June 3, 2019.

2 “Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the general who leads Sudan,” *France 24*, October 25, 2021.

3 “Hemedti - the warlord who may control Sudan’s future,” *BBC News*, June 5, 2019.

4 Nesrine Malik, “Sudan’s outsider: how a paramilitary leader fell out with the army and plunged the country into war,” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2023; see also “Military Leaders Square Off in Battle for Sudan,” *Africa Defense Forum*, May 30, 2023.

5 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, “Conflict Dynamics in South Darfur,” December 28, 2023.

6 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, “Conflict Dynamics in South Darfur.”

leader. The great majority of Rapid Support Forces personnel are Darfurians; many were picked by Hemedti himself. By 2021, the paramilitary group was estimated to number between 75,000 and 100,000 men, compared with the Sudanese Armed Forces of 120,000 to 200,000 troops.⁷

Since their inception, the paramilitary group has created havoc by targeting civilian villages and committing atrocities including rape in the states of Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. For instance, in 2014 and 2015 the Rapid Support Forces, under Hemedti's command, was deployed by the government to Darfur. They looted civilian properties and raped women and young girls. The targeting of civilians to eliminate support bases for the rebels has become the hallmark of their activities.⁸ Hemedti and his force had established a strong friendship with al-Bashir. Sudanese writer Reem Abbas states:

In his own words on a popular TV show in 2017, Hemedti [said](#) that he came to Bashir himself, hoping to secure arms to protect his business and his community's interests and offered his services. In the same interview, Hemedti said that he had a direct line with Bashir and their work was facilitated by SAF and the intelligence apparatus. His interests intersected with Bashir's, who wanted to secure both Darfur and his own political future. Thus, armed with state funds, Hemedti recruited thousands of soldiers and continued to cultivate his growing closeness with Bashir; in his final days, Bashir would come to refer to Hemedti as 'Hemeyti,' or 'my protection' in Arabic.⁹

The Rapid Support Forces is “widely believed to be [responsible for atrocities](#) in the Kordofan and Darfur regions in the past years and is also widely condemned for [their role in the October 25 military coup](#) and subsequent violence against pro-democracy protesters.”¹⁰ Given that the crimes in Darfur and Kordofan go back at least since 2003, the “West Darfur governor Mohamed El Doma urged Sudan's Attorney General to prosecute atrocities committed in the past, as key witnesses and investigators are dying or suffering from dementia.” The Governor particularly mentioned “the

⁷ Tsega Etefa, “Sudan Created a paramilitary force to destroy government threats – but it became a major threat itself,” *The Conversation*, April 19, 2023.

⁸ Etefa, “Sudan Created a paramilitary.”

⁹ Reem Abbas, “Money is Power: Hemedti and the RSF's Paramilitary Industrial Complex in Sudan,” *The Tabrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, July 26, 2023.

¹⁰ “Anger as RSF launches mass detention campaign in West Darfur,” *Radio Dabanga*, August 5, 2022.

Janjaweed attack in Wadi Salih in Central Darfur in 2004, where at least 145 people were killed. He pointed to the alleged involvement of a former governor in the mass murder. The suspects are still at large.”¹¹

In August 2019, the Transitional Military Council was replaced by a new ruling body consisting of military and civilian majority members called the Sovereign Council. The Sovereign Council was formed to rule for three years and three months, to be followed by national elections. The Council had five military and six civilian members. The military would lead the Council for twenty-one months and the civilian prime minister would take over for the remaining eighteen months until the election. Former United Nations diplomat Dr. Abdallah Hamdok became the civilian Prime Minister, while al-Burhan assumed the presidency.¹²

Although some did not want the military to be part of the Council at all, many Sudanese hoped the plan could lead to democracy. International organizations also believed that a new era had arrived after thirty years of al-Bashir’s brutal administration. Indeed, al-Burhan revived Sudan’s relations with the United States and, in 2020 he even met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel in Uganda.¹³

Instead, al-Burhan, along with Hemedti, staged a coup on October 25, 2021, blaming the civilian part of the Council for infighting.¹⁴ Prime Minister Hamdok was removed and al-Burhan assumed full authority. The two military leaders could not work together, however, and Hemedti later regretted participating in the coup.¹⁵ He said the coup “was wrong and admitted that the coup has become a gateway for affiliates of the former Islamist Al Bashir regime to return.”¹⁶ He “even apologized for it.”¹⁷ Tensions grew between the two generals until war broke out on April 15, 2023. Let alone bringing peace to Darfur, the December Revolution had been hijacked and the whole country engulfed in a devastating war. The capital, Khartoum, witnessed war for the first time in more than a century.

Since its establishment as a capital, Khartoum first witnessed war during the Mahdist Uprising (1881–85) against Turkish-Egyptian rule that began occupying the country in 1821. The leader of the movement, Muhammad Ahmad El Mahdi-bin-Abdullah, said of the fall of the capital, “according to

11 “West Darfur governor urges justice for atrocities,” *Radio Dabanga*, December 2, 2020.

12 Nermil Ismail, “Sudan’s democratic transition takes shape,” *Deutsche Welle*, August 20, 2019.

13 “Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the general who leads Sudan,” *France 24*, October 25, 2021.

14 Michelle Gavin, “Sudan’s Coup: One year Later,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 24, 2022.

15 Munzoul Assal, “When a Caretaker Government Goes Missing in Action, shouldn’t a Crisis Government be the Answer?” *Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker*, June 12, 2023.

16 “Signing of Sudan’s Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences,” *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

17 Volker Perthes, *Sudan’s Transition to War and the Limits of the UN’s Good Offices*, SWP Research Paper 14, October 2024, 23.

the fulfilled promise of God, the city of Khartoum was entered by the help of God on the 9th Rabeen-cl-Akhur (26 January, 1885), at the instant of daybreak.” He stated that only ten soldiers of the movement lost their lives and that no one was wounded as the enemy “fled away from before the troops of God.” “All has happened,” continued the Mahdi, “by the Providence of God, &c. And we bow our heads in thanks to God for the help we have received from Him.”¹⁸ Other than a few days of coup-attempt skirmishes especially in 1976, Khartoum has never experienced a major war of this scale despite continuous wars in the south since 1955 and the west since the 1980s.

The Mahdiyya movement started in 1881, by sheikh Muhammad Ahmad from the city of Dongola on the west bank of the Nile River in North Sudan. He claimed himself to be the Mahdi—the awaited one—and quickly gathered followers, particularly in the Western region. In January 1883, his forces took control of El Obeid town in Kordofan province, which confirmed the Mahdiyya’s “undisputed possession of Western Sudan.”¹⁹

Five months after El-Mahdi led the takeover of Khartoum, he died and was replaced by Khalifa Abdullah, who was from the Ta’iasha Arabs of the Western Sudan. Mahdi’s widow also hailed from Darfur. Similar to the Mahdiyya with its stronghold in the West of the country, Khartoum fell in April 2023 to forces that had a stronghold there. Since the army and the Rapid Support Forces were “positioned in major urban bases across the country, fighting broke out nearly simultaneously all over the map, most prominently in Khartoum and Darfur.”²⁰ The war led to the collapse of central and regional governments and millions became trapped in another of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters. The Rapid Support Forces controlled the capital until March 2025, two years after the fall of the city, when the army regained control. Although they were forced out of Khartoum, the Rapid Support Forces are still holding firm in the West of the country.

Sudan is a federal state with regions handling local affairs. But since the outbreak of the war, there was total collapse throughout the county; even the traditional rulers could not function. There was “a complete absence of government, especially in Khartoum.” Despite the official federal structure in place since 1994, “Everything was centralized in Khartoum and state governments were completely paralyzed.”²¹

18 FO/ 403/78. The Mahdi to Sheikh Karamalla, April 28, 1885. Relief of Emin Bay in Uganda. Correspondence, 1886, The National Archives, United Kingdom.

19 WO/287/40. Egyptian Military report, 1937. The National Archives, United Kingdom.

20 International Crisis Group, *Stopping Sudan’s Descent into Full-Blown Civil War*, April 20, 2023.

21 Assal, “When a Caretaker Government Goes Missing.”

The collapse of the governance structure can be traced back to the October 2021 military coup. There were also consistent street protests, particularly in Khartoum, starting with the fall of al-Bashir in April 2019. That crippled the normal state administration. The coup further “derailed the transition to democracy, severed Sudan’s relationship with the international community and put Sudan in the line of failed states.” The war that broke out in 2023 was the final straw to the collapse of the state.²² After the coup, the military “returned former regime loyalists to key government positions” as well as access to their “seized assets,”²³ completely dashing hope of transition to democracy and lasting peace for all Sudanese.

Contributing Factors to the War

Under the previous regime, both the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces entrenched themselves in far-reaching socioeconomic and political networks, which they are now intent on preserving during the transition. In the aftermath of al-Bashir’s fall, their priority was not the advancement of genuine democratic reforms but rather, the protection of their entrenched power and privileges.

From an economic perspective, Sudan has long experienced chronic neglect and marginalization of its peripheral regions, with a disproportionate concentration of resources in the so-called “triangle area” that covers the valley of the Nile to the North of Khartoum, the Blue Nile and White Nile areas immediately south of Khartoum, central Kordofan, and the southern parts of Kassala province. This pattern of uneven development dates back to the Turkish-Egyptian rule (1821–1885) and continued under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898–1956), during which the Nile Valley region received the bulk of development attention. The British used a policy of developing the central Nile Valley region by promoting the interests of some powerful Arab families into the business class. Most of these influential Arabs include chiefs, merchants, and religious leaders who had already emerged in influence before the Condominium. They had received access to education, health, and development schemes and went on to dominate Sudan after independence.²⁴ “The root causes of mutiny, instability and civil war in Sudan,” corroborates Professor Abdu Mukhtar Musa, “is uneven development for more than half a century of independent Sudan. With the absence of any comprehensive vision for development, the majorities are alienated and small elitist groups monopolized power and wealth.”²⁵

²² Assal, “When a Caretaker Government Goes Missing.”

²³ Assal, “When a Caretaker Government Goes Missing.”

²⁴ For details, see Tsega Etefa, *The Origins of Ethnic conflict in Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

²⁵ *Comprehensive Analysis of the Conflict in Sudan*, An International IDEA Commissioned Study, Horn International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024.

The former prime minister, Abdallah Hamdok, was right when he objected to al-Burhan's recent appointment of a civilian prime minister, stating "that a ceasefire and a credible process to restore democratic, civilian rule would need to confront Sudan's deep inequalities, including uneven development, issues among different identity groups, and questions about the role of religion in government. Trusting the soldiers to bring democracy is a false pretence."²⁶ *Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker* also concluded that "We should remain clear eyed about the reasons for this fighting. The SAF and the RSF are vying for supremacy in a new Sudanese political dispensation. Each side is seeking to preserve and expand the kleptocratic networks of privilege and power that they built up under the Bashir regime and during the subsequent transition."²⁷ The next section addresses some of the major networks and privileges that the two main belligerents are adamant to preserve.

The Economics of War

Since independence, the Sudanese army has played a dominant role in the country's political, social, and economic spheres. This influence intensified during the 1960s and 1970s, particularly under President Jaafar Nimeiri (1969–1985), whose administration pursued aggressive nationalization policies across various sectors. As a result, the military expanded its reach beyond traditional defense roles, becoming heavily involved in "commercial trade, industrial, and agricultural activities." According to Reem Abbas, "A particularly drastic change in economic activity happened during Bashir's rule due to [increasing oil revenues](#). As a result, the SAF [invested](#) in banks, companies, agricultural land, and businesses, including entertainment. A prime example of such ventures is the Omdurman National Bank, Sudan's largest financial institution, largely [owned](#) by the SAF."²⁸ The army and the security sector "possess numerous investment companies engaging in diverse military and civilian economic activities."²⁹

According to the US Department of State Report (May 2022), "Though Sudan's military has long controlled a network of entities, following its seizure of power on October 25, 2021, it is in effective control of all SOEs [State-Owned Enterprises]. Further, Sudan's military is increasing its direct control of Sudan's many SOEs and plans for civilian control over SOEs has been abandoned."³⁰

²⁶ "Former PM Hamdok dismisses Sudanese army's new government as 'fake,'" *Sudan Tribune*, June 4, 2025.

²⁷ Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, "Urgent action needed to preempt Sudan's descent into civil war," April 2023.

²⁸ Abbas, "Money is Power."

²⁹ Sudan Democracy First Group, "Soldiers in Business Suits: The Dual Role of Military Investments in Sudan's Conflict," January 27, 2024.

³⁰ US Department of State, "Risk and Considerations for US Businesses Operation in Sudan," May 23, 2022.

While it is difficult to provide the number of companies run by the country's armed forces, estimates are that "250 companies are under the ownership of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and other security services." They include diverse sectors across all sections of the society, including "the production and export of gold and other minerals, marble, leather, livestock, and Gum arabic export." They also "exert control over 60% of the wheat market" and "their activities span across communications, banking, water distribution, construction, real estate development, aviation, transportation, tourism facilities, household appliances production, pipes, medicines, and the textile industry."³¹

These companies do not go through the normal government business structure, and the army is always intent "to safeguard their substantial financial assets and profits beyond the reach of civilian governance."³² They were not subjected to the established pattern of civilian oversight and control similar to other civilian-led companies. For instance, in the 2020 Auditor General Report, "ten companies obtained tax exemptions ranging from 10 to 26 years." In addition, "military and security company vehicles are supplied with government fuel and receive favorable treatment by traffic police." At the same time, these vehicles "are exempt from routine procedures that other vehicles undergo, such as highway traffic tolls, and inspection procedures at security, traffic, and customs checkpoints."³³ Reportedly, al-Burhan has "immense wealth. As commander of the SAF, he has access to an extensive business empire that controls companies ranging from construction to meat processing."³⁴

During his anniversary speech in 2020, the civilian prime minister Abdallah Hamdok "called for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to have full jurisdiction over public funds, revealing that 82% of the Sudanese economy was controlled by military and security companies, outside the Ministry of Finance's purview." It was widely believed that the civilian Council's move was "a pivotal factor leading to the army's coup" of October 2021.³⁵

Hemedti and his family also own "a gold mining company that operates in lands he seized in Darfur in 2017." A year later (2018), president Omar al-Bashir "gave Hemedti permission to mine and sell gold, and operations extended to other gold-rich areas outside Darfur in the south of the country." The gold was sold "circumventing capital controls, and even sold to the

31 Sudan Democracy First Group, "Soldiers in Business Suits."

32 Sudan Democracy First Group, "Soldiers in Business Suits."

33 Sudan Democracy First Group, "Soldiers in Business Suits."

34 "Military Leaders Square Off in Battle for Sudan," *Africa Defense Forum*, May 30, 2023.

35 Sudan Democracy First Group, "Soldiers in Business Suits."

Sudanese central bank for a preferential rate. The yield was allegedly used to enrich Hemedti and his family, and fund the expansion of the RSF.” According to Nesrine Malik of *The Guardian*, “Hemedti sees no conflict between his political role and his business interests. Hemedti actually stated, “I’m not the first man to have goldmines.”³⁶ In an interview with *The New York Times* in 2019, he also stated (about gold mine) that “It’s nothing, just an area in Darfur that belongs to us.”³⁷ One of the Rapid Support Forces controlled gold mines in Darfur is called Jebel Amer believed to be “the third largest gold-mine in Africa.”³⁸ From North Darfur gold trade alone, the Rapid Support Forces “earned over \$3 billion” between 2014 to 2019.³⁹ As of 2023, Hemedti is believed to be worth “\$7billion.”⁴⁰

According to Sudan expert Alex de Waal, “Money and firefights are interchangeable currencies in Sudan’s political marketplace, and Hemedti trades in both.”⁴¹ Hemedti’s brother Lieutenant General Abdel-Rahim Dagalo owns the “Al Junaid Company for the Treatment of Mineral Waste, a subsidiary of Al Junaid Company for Multi Activities, which since 2017 has been the sole operator of a gold tailings processing factory in Songo area.” Having “Greater control of South Darfur’s rich resources is a major motivation of the clans that dominate the RSF command structure.”⁴²

Unlike the other Janjaweed commanders, Hemedti “was ambitious and had an aptitude for cutting deals. Other senior leaders were less cunning, and more rebellious.” He “was not a freedom fighter, but a pragmatist who used the intersecting strands of Sudan’s conflicts to advance his interests.”⁴³ Hemedti also rented out his forces to Libya to support the forces of Khalifa Haftar in 2019. In 2015, the Rapid Support Forces fighters also participated in the Yemen war. Hemedti said his group lost “412 forces, including 14 officers” in Yemen.⁴⁴ In addition, there are reports of European Union indirectly funding the Rapid Support Forces in an effort to curb illegal immigration to Europe. According to the *Enough Project* report (2017):

36 Partly quoted in Nesrine Malik, “Sudan’s outsider: how a paramilitary leader fell out with the army and plunged the country into war,” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2023. See also Khalid Abdelaziz, Michael Georgy, and Maha El Dahan, “Exclusive: Sudan militia leader grew rich by selling gold,” *Reuters*, November 26, 2019.

37 Quoted in Declan Walsh, “The Gold Rush at the Heart of a Civil War,” *The New York Times* December 11, 2024, updated February 7, 2025.

38 “Sudan’s Gold Production: In the Midst of a Devastating War,” *Darfur 24*, May 20, 2025.

39 “Sudan in a Week: Ayin News Bulletin # 8,” *Ayin Network*, November 11, 2025.

40 David Hearst, “Sudan crisis: What if Hemeti lost the war he started?,” *Middle East Eye*, May, 3, 2023.

41 Alex de Waal, “The Revolution no one wanted,” *London Review of Books* 45 no. 10 (May 2023).

42 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, “Conflict Dynamics in South Darfur,” December 28, 2023.

43 Malik, “Sudan’s outsider.”

44 “June Came: The month of the death of the Prophet, the killing of Osman, Al-Bashir Coup, Al Turabi’s lie, and Ali Osman conspiracy,” *Alrakoba Sudan News*, June 6, 2025 (Arabic).

The EU's action plan will involve building the capacities of Sudan's security and law enforcement agencies, including a paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which has been branded as Sudan's primary 'border force.' The EU will assist the RSF and other relevant agencies with the construction of two camps with detention facilities for migrants. The EU will also equip these Sudanese border forces with cameras, scanners, and electronic servers for registering refugees.⁴⁵

The Rapid Support Forces members, better trained, better equipped, and better paid, "for years, rendered Hemedti seemingly untouchable"⁴⁶ and in a good position to challenge al-Burhan's national army. When they joined the army against the Darfur rebels they pressured the al-Bashir government to give them rewards for their service. These included, according to Hemedti, "military ranks, political positions, and development in our area."⁴⁷ As a result, he was given the title of Brigadier General and the force was "put under the command of the government's powerful intelligence unit, the National Intelligence and Security Service."⁴⁸

The strength of the Rapid Support Forces, "to the point where they are viewed as being on par with the national army," was a big concern within the armed forces. Hemedti was a real strongman in the country and his forces procured advanced weapons. Post-Bashir, both he and al-Burhan had strong convictions to control the direction of the country and "to exert control over government institutions."⁴⁹ For instance, in an attempt to strengthen his position, Hemedti met with electricity workers who were protesting for more pay. After the meeting, they ended the strike and he paid them bonuses. He also met with teachers and provided similar bonuses. Hemedti eventually became a "rising star," which al-Burhan did not appreciate. Also, as stated above, al-Burhan wanted to reinstate former regime officials, while Hemedti refused because "the restoration of Islamists and ex-regime civil servants shamed his influence efforts given the animosity Islamists hold towards him."⁵⁰ Some influential members of the deposed regime openly stated that "the fight against RSF is a *jihad* and its leaders and politicians should be killed."⁵¹

45 Suliman Baldo, "Border Control from Hell: How the EU's migration partnership legitimizes Sudan's 'Militia State'," *Enough Project*, April 2017.

46 Malik, "Sudan's outsider."

47 Malik, "Sudan's outsider."

48 Malik, "Sudan's outsider."

49 "Sudan's hidden power struggle between Burhan, Hemedti over civil service," *Sudan Tribune*, September 28, 2022.

50 "Sudan's hidden power struggle between Burhan, Hemedti over civil service," *Sudan Tribune*, September 28, 2022.

51 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, *The Sudan Conflict Monitor* #.2, May 9, 2023.

It seems that “Hemedti formed a team comprised of 5,000 – 8,000 civil servants who worked in vital sectors including banking, commerce and media. The goal, he said, is to enable Hemedti to impact government agencies and their decisions.” This tension over the civil service sector “threatens the integrity of government institutions and further erodes the concept of civilian control in favour of the military.”⁵² Thus, the tensions between the two generals included the structuring of the civil administration. In particular, “The reinstatement of the Sudanese Islamists in the civil service after the coup has raised concerns not only among the pro-democracy forces but also of the commander of the Rapid Support Forces.”⁵³

The relationship between Hemedti and al-Burhan “was shaky from the start” and “It grew increasingly unstable as military rule persisted, especially as Hemedti’s power and ambitions grew along with his paramilitary force, which expanded across the country.” At the same time,

the listless economy, whose woes were a major cause of the 2019 uprising, tipped further into sclerosis, exacerbating social unrest as Sudanese continued to press for restoration of civilian government. Increasingly, the RSF leader tried to align himself with the public’s demands, even presenting himself as an unlikely reformer. He cultivated an unofficial partnership with members of Khartoum’s civilian elite, who were negotiating in fits and starts with the military to bring the above demands to fruition.⁵⁴

The civilian elites distrust the army the same as they do the Rapid Support Forces, and Hemedti tried to present himself as a populist.

Hemedti’s influence was also growing internationally. After the 2021 coup, Hemedti “brokered a multimillion-dollar lobbying deal to increase his sway in the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and multilateral institutions and welcomed a former member of the US Congress to Khartoum for meetings amid a growing power struggle in the east African country.”⁵⁵ He signed “a \$6 million deal with a Canadian lobbying firm in May to curry favor in the United States, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.”⁵⁶ There are reports that key figures in the army were said to have criticized al-Burhan “for being too lenient with Hemedti and the RSF.”⁵⁷ On the surface, both stated that there were

52 “Sudan’s hidden power struggle between Burhan, Hemedti over civil service,” *Sudan Tribune*, September 28, 2022.

53 “Sudan’s hidden power struggle between Burhan, Hemedti over civil service,” *Sudan Tribune*, September 28, 2022.

54 International Crisis Group, “Stopping Sudan’s Descent into Full-Blown Civil War,” April 20, 2023.

55 Justin Lynch and Robbie Gramer, “Seeking to Secure Power, Sudan’s Military Ruler Hires Lobbying Help,” *Foreign Policy*, June 28, 2019.

56 Lynch and Gramer, “Seeking to Secure Power.”

57 Perthes, *Sudan’s Transition to War*.

no tensions between them and that they “are on inseparable terms.”⁵⁸ On September 6, 2022, al-Burhan brushed off tensions with Hemedti and “went even further to accuse those pushing the narrative of the feud between the two men of living a fantasy world and hoping to drive a wedge between the army and RSF.”⁵⁹

The Framework Agreement

The economic issues were a key obstacle to the final agreement of the political framework. The proposed transitional framework agreement stipulated:

the transfer of ownership of all military and security investment companies with civilian activities to the Ministry of Finance. The agreement suggests that military and security institutions should retain ownership of companies involved solely in military activities, which must also be subject to the supervision and control of the Ministry of Finance. This proposal poses a direct threat to the massive economic empires owned by both conflicting parties in Sudan.⁶⁰

After the outbreak of the war, although many companies were affected, both the army and Rapid Support Forces continued to run their companies in areas they controlled, which sustained the continuation of the war. They “became heavily reliant on its investment companies’ revenues after the banking system collapsed, and most state financial institutions rendered out of service due to the war. Similarly, RSF continued to rely on their economic strength, driven by their investment companies, to modernize and develop their forces.”⁶¹

In addition, while “most public and private sector institutions experienced disruptions, resulting in halted monthly salary payments for many employees,” the “military and security services personnel continued to receive their salaries, illustrating the dependence of military authorities on substantial financial returns provided by military investment companies. These companies, particularly those associated with gold production and export, not only sustained the SAF financially but also contributed to financing the subsistence and food supplies of forces engaged in conflict areas and stationed in other states.”⁶² The European Union Council sanctioned several companies belonging to both the armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces for “undermining the stability and political transition of Sudan.” Those

⁵⁸ “Sudan’s hidden power struggle between Burhan, Hemedti over civil service,” *Sudan Tribune*.

⁵⁹ “Sudan’s hidden power struggle between Burhan, Hemedti over civil service,” *Sudan Tribune*.

⁶⁰ Sudan Democracy First Group, “Soldiers in Business Suits.”

⁶¹ Sudan Democracy First Group, “Soldiers in Business Suits.”

⁶² Sudan Democracy First Group, “Soldiers in Business Suits.”

particularly responsible for weapons production for the army, including Defense Industries Systems and SMT Engineering as well as Zadna International Company for Investment Limited, were targeted. The Rapid Support Forces–owned companies Al-Junaid Multi Activities Co Ltd, Tradive General Trading, and GSK Advance Company Ltd were sanctioned.⁶³ Recently, the Council put two more, including the Red Rock Mining Company of the armed forces and Al-Khaleej Bank, mainly owned by the Hemedti family, under sanction.⁶⁴ Defense Industries Systems was initially established in 1993 as Military Industrialization Corporation to strengthen the army’s manufacturing capabilities. It eventually “evolved into one of the largest state-owned conglomerates within the country.”⁶⁵

The other key roadblock to the framework agreement was the question of integration of the Rapid Support Forces into the national army. Even the language used about the creation of a unified national army was contentious. Was it going to be an army ‘reform’ or ‘integration’? Al-Burhan and the Sudan Armed Forces insisted on “integration,” while the Rapid Support Forces were in favor of “reform.” According to Nada Wanni, “The military has resisted reform both in and of itself and civilian involvement in any reform process, specifically.”⁶⁶ Al-Burhan wanted the integration of Rapid Support Forces “rather than speaking about an equal merging or ‘unification’.”⁶⁷

The timing of the integration framework was also a thorny issue. The army was “pushing for as short a time frame as possible (SAF has suggested two years) while Hemedti is advocating for a more extended period (RSF has suggested 10 years).” The fact that “The numbers of proposed years for the integration changed more than once during the negotiations” shows lack of genuine determination on unifying the army.⁶⁸

Additionally, the two leaders could not agree on “command and control” of the would-be unified army.⁶⁹ Hemedti wanted the army to be under a civilian minister, while al-Burhan resisted placing the army under civilian authority. Overall, the two strongmen were not genuinely interested in transitioning the country to a civilian democratic structure. Nada Wanni states that “The

63 Council of the European Union, “Sudan: Council adds six entities to EU sanctions list,” January, 2025.

64 “EU sanctions target Sudanese commanders, mining and banking sectors,” *Sudans Post*, July 18, 2025.

65 “The Intersection of Power and Profit: How Economic interests and Corruption Drive the Sudanese Military’s control of Political Life,” *Alrakoba Sudan News*, August 7, 2025.

66 Nada Wanni, “A Political Process Besieged,” *Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker*, April, 2023.

67 “Signing of Sudan’s Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences,” *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

68 Wanni, “A Political Process Besieged.”

69 Wanni, “A Political Process Besieged.”

basic assumption should be that Al-Burhan's ultimate goal is not to leave power, but to cement his position until elections are held at the end of the transition."⁷⁰

Former Sudan Navy member lieutenant colonel Omar Arbab stated that the main disagreement between the generals was of "both political and economic nature." He stated that "talk about the integration of the armed forces is based on a political vision and focuses on the RSF, whilst turning a blind eye to the rebel movements." It is important to note that there are several rebel movements with armed forces of their own in Sudan, but the main focus was the integration of the Rapid Support Forces. That was not well taken by the paramilitary forces. In doing so, al-Burhan might have been "trying to politically outmaneuver Hemeti and get rid of him." The Rapid Support Forces, however, "has doubled its military power and expanded in other economic and social areas, even externally, and it has become a state within a state, and this is a worrying matter." At the time, Arbab believed that war would be unlikely between the two but if, indeed, it did break out "it means the end of a state whose name was Sudan."⁷¹ According to Volker Perthes, a UN Special Representative for Sudan (2021–2023), "The core issue for Hemeti, however, was obviously the prospect of being subordinate to the commander-in-chief in a unified army. This would eventually have cost him his independent power base—a quasi-private 'regular force' under his family's control—and was clearly a red line for him."⁷²

The role of the former regime officials also contributed to the tensions between the two. Some even suggest that the first bullet was shot by members of the Al-Baqir group in the capital around 9 a.m. local time against the Rapid Support Forces located in the Sports City section of the city. The group was alerted by civilian former officials two months prior and only told to strike on the morning of April 15, 2023. The Rapid Support Forces fought back and took control of the camp where the al-Baqir soldiers were stationed. The al-Baqir group belonged to the deposed al-Bashir regime. Some former army and civilian officials may have taken advantage of tensions within the army and the civilian opposition to return to power.⁷³ Even Hemeti recently (June 23, 2025) stated that the war was started by a group of former regime officials: "We did not want this war—it was forced upon us. A gang and the old regime ignited the conflict to cling to power."⁷⁴ He reiterated that they are fighting in self-defense against them. *Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker* reported that "The remnants of the NCP [National Congress

⁷⁰ Wanni, "A Political Process Besieged."

⁷¹ "Signing of Sudan's Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences," *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

⁷² Perthes, *Sudan's Transition to War*.

⁷³ "Sudan: Controversy over First Bullet," *Atrakoba Sudan News*, May 18, 2025 (Arabic).

⁷⁴ Quoted in "We will return with dignity": Hemeti rallies RSF in first public address since 2023," *Sudans Post*, June 23, 2025.

Party] are fighting to resurrect their three-decade Islamist rule and see the ongoing conflict as an opportunity to reassert ideological dominance over state institutions and promote governance rooted in Islamist principles.”⁷⁵ Some members of the civilian opposition also blamed “the remnants” of the deposed al-Bashir administration for trying to “destroy” the transitional political framework process.⁷⁶

Indeed, several forces affiliated with the Islamic movement of the fallen regime are actively fighting alongside the army. These include the Al-Bara bin Malik, Al-Barq al-Khathif, and Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous. They joined “the current war with all their weight and at the forefront”⁷⁷ and they were accused of committing horrendous crimes against civilians including beheadings and disembowelment. They were also accused of being the principal instigators of the outbreak of the war itself.⁷⁸ Al-Burhan and his supporters may have assumed that they would be able to both eliminate the Rapid Support Forces challenging their command within a short time period and eradicate civilian opposition.⁷⁹ Volker Perthes argues that the strength of the various forces that opposed the transitional political process, including the former regime loyalists, had been underestimated. The al-Bashir regime that ruled for thirty years “had built a constituency with strong networks in the security apparatus, bureaucracy and business community that did not simply disappear with the fall of Bashir.”⁸⁰ The former regime supporters strongly sabotaged the transition to democracy and eventually were able to return to key government positions.

The growing influence of Hemedti may have influenced the army’s decision to include some old regime members in the transitional government. Al-Burhan lacks a constituency and he may have calculated that working with the old regime officials could work in his favor to cement his political future. Nada Wanni states that “there are indicators that the Sudanese Army’s top brass are growing more and more disgruntled with Hemedti’s powerful political and economic status and his actions.”⁸¹ High-ranking Army officers and the supporters of the al-Bashir regime “openly threaten to kill Hemedti

75 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, *Sudan Conflict Monitor*, #21, July 1, 2025.

76 “Signing of Sudan’s political agreement postponed again due to military differences,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 5, 2023.

77 “Security expert: ‘Sudan becoming world’s largest hotbed of terrorism and violent extremism,’” *Radio Dabanga*, September 29, 2025.

78 “Calls are mounting to designate the Islamic Movement in Sudan as a terrorist organization,” *Alvakoba Sudan News*, June 10, 2025.

79 Dr. Al-Nour Hamad, “On the threshold of the disastrous era of militias,” *Sudanfile*, July 16, 2025.

80 Perthes, *Sudan’s Transition to War*.

81 Wanni, “A Political Process Besieged.”

and those who they say have collaborated with him.”⁸² Reem Abbas adds that “The transitional government was never able to contend with the RSF as Bashir’s most dangerous legacy.”⁸³

Since his coup in 2021, al-Burhan has been “resorting to an alliance of convenience with figures he helped force from power when Bashir was overthrown in 2019.” Several members of the al-Bashir regime were appointed to key ministerial positions as well as key positions in banks, media, and local governments.⁸⁴ Several “key Islamist groups linked to the former ruling party pose a serious threat to the democratic transition, having ramped up their public threats against authorities over the past month.”⁸⁵ Even before the coup of October 25, 2021, al-Burhan proposed changes to the draft transitional constitution that would grant him “sweeping new powers, including the authority to appoint and dismiss the prime minister.” The measures were intended to sideline the civilian opposition Forces for Freedom and Change as well as the Rapid Support Forces.⁸⁶

Right from the start, the relationship between al-Burhan and other members of the army and Hemedti and the Rapid Support Forces was shaky. Hemedti and his forces were never welcomed in the capital in the first place. They were brought to the capital by al-Bashir as his personal protection force when the December Revolution started in 2018. The Nile Valley politicians and army officers, including al-Burhan, rightly called them the notorious Janjaweed militia and never welcomed their inclusion into the security forces. The Arabs of Darfur, including Hemedti’s Rezigat, were not equally accepted by the Nile Valley Arabs, for that matter. They considered them remote, uneducated, and not even real Sudanese. Therefore, Hemedti was already not on the same path with the rest of the Arab members of the army. The fact that he and his forces were also given special attention by the al-Bashir administration was not favorably received by many. There were some army officers who resisted Rapid Support Forces inclusion in the security structure in 2017. Some Sudanese scholars and activists even suggested that “the ongoing conflict in the country is not essentially between the army and the Rapid Support Forces and the various factions behind them. Rather, it is between the December revolution and the Egyptian regime, which insists on standing in the way of any solution that does not guarantee the permanent

82 de Waal, “The Revolution no one wanted.”

83 Abbas, “Money is Power.”

84 [Khalid Abdelaziz](#) and Nafisa Eltahir, “Sudan’s military rulers draw on Bashir-era veterans to tighten grip,” *Reuters*, November 11, 2021.

85 “The paths of return: Sudan’s former regime and Islamist allies,” *Ayin Network*, April 9, 2023.

86 “Sudan’s Burhan set for expanded powers under proposed constitutional changes,” *Sudan Tribune*, January 9, 2025.

establishment of the military as rulers of Sudan, as is the case in Egypt.” They believe that Egypt uses the Sudanese army as their agent to fulfill Egyptian interests.⁸⁷

The signing of the final framework agreement between the political parties and the military was scheduled for April 1, 2023, but it was postponed until April 6 to give time to the military to work out their differences on security sector reform. More than forty political parties and the military initially agreed to sign a framework on the political future and direction of the country. But many believed that five days was not enough time to flesh out those differences.⁸⁸

The leaders of some rebel forces, including Malik Agar, Minni Minawi, and Gibril Ibrahim, tried to solve the disagreements between the two generals. After they met with Hemedti, they said, “After a frank and serious dialogue, the brother (RSF) leader assured us of his full commitment to non-escalation, and his readiness to sit down with his brother, the Chairman of the Sovereign Council, and Commander in Chief of the Sudan Armed Forces at any time and unconditionally, in order to reach a radical solution to the crisis that will stop the bloodshed and achieve security in the country.”⁸⁹ Some foreign diplomats also tried to diffuse the tensions between the two generals.⁹⁰

On the surface, al-Burhan seemed to be someone working to advance the civilian interests of the country and even blamed the political party members. He said, “We have witnessed controversies among political groups, and frankly, I urge all of them to step aside. We, and they, the Democratic Bloc and the (FFC) Central Council, let us move away and make room for others. We have wasted four years repeating the same words, and no one wants to accept the others. Everyone wants to get the biggest share.” He “stressed the need to prioritize the national interest, adding that no one can achieve the transition alone. He further said that if the two sides fail to reach an agreement, they will establish a national consensus bloc that can achieve the transition.” He was also positive on the discussions with the RSF, stating “that minor things remain and an agreement over the pending issues is expected soon.”⁹¹ But deep-rooted issues remain—and they are not just “minor” issues.

Both the military and the civilian parties had differences that required more time to address. Although the two military leaders met, they did not address key issues. The *Sudan Tribune* stated that the meeting between al-Burhan and

87 Dr. Al-Nour Hamad, “Egypt’s project to Swallow Sudan,” *Sudanile*, July 21, 2025.

88 “Signing of Sudan’s Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences,” *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

89 “Sudan rival military leaders show willingness to end escalation, mediators say,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 14, 2023.

90 “Sudan rival military leaders show willingness to end escalation, mediators say,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 14, 2023.

91 “Political forces have to step aside, if they fail to reach consensus: al-Burhan says,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 7, 2023.

Hemedti “at the Republican Palace was short and did not discuss any of the contentious issues between the SAF and RSF. Hemedti appeared angry and refused to speak at the meeting, which ended with the decision to postpone the signing of the Final Agreement.”⁹² The army dragged out the transitional framework agreement by stating that the Rapid Support Forces should be integrated into the national army first. One of the key members of the army, Brigadier General Nabil Abdallah, stated, “We cannot make an agreement when there are two armies in the country.”⁹³

While meetings between the two took place to defuse tensions, there was a rigorous drive by both forces for new recruits in Darfur and elsewhere in the few months before the war broke out. In addition, “Rumours that the army was re-establishing a border guard historically tied to Hemedti’s long-time rival, Musa Hilal, head of a tribal militia that had helped suppress the Darfur revolt in the 2000s, further intensified the animosity between the regular army and its paramilitary foe.” As well, “Burhan’s proposal to dissolve the Sovereign Council and form a new military council also heightened friction, as it implied that Burhan could strip Hemedti of his formal political position as deputy chair.” Both amassed forces in the capital, but the two reached a deal on March 11, 2023, to defuse tensions.⁹⁴ Many Sudanese and the international community believed that “the framework agreement itself was an important step toward transition to civilian government.”⁹⁵ And many were disappointed when the agreement was postponed and that they were nowhere near fleshing out their key differences.

According to the civilian opposition group The Civil Democratic Alliance of Revolutionary Forces (Sumud), the “war, in essence, is a war to liquidate and bury the glorious December Revolution and block the path to initiating a genuine civil transformation that achieves the revolution’s goals of peace, freedom, and justice.”⁹⁶ It is also important to note that there are other parties that were not included and opposed to the Framework Agreement. One of these described their objections as such:

The Communist Party of Sudan (CPoS), which strongly opposes any settlement with the current military junta, said that ‘the goal of the agreement is to jump directly to general elections without completing the tasks of the transitional period, and to reach power through rigged voting procedures’. The party said that the Framework Agreement ‘leaves the

⁹² “Signing of Sudan’s Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences,” *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

⁹³ Partly quoted in “Signing of Sudan’s Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences,” *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

⁹⁴ International Crisis Group, “Stopping Sudan’s Descent into Full-Blown Civil War,” April 20, 2023.

⁹⁵ “Negotiations on outstanding thorny issues for Sudan’s Final Agreement to start soon,” *Radio Dabanga*, December 13, 2022.

⁹⁶ “The Sumud coalition presents a political document to end wars- full details,” *Alrakoba Sudan News*, June 17, 2025.

military to continue to rule, without providing conditions for creating a conducive atmosphere for dialogue’ and pointed to the continued [violent suppression](#) of demonstrations and the [abuse of political detainees](#). ‘The Security and Defence Council will be the centre of the actual governance and concentrates power in the hands of the putschists,’ they warned.⁹⁷

The Communist Party was “concerned with the military’s demand for impunity; which could mean [immunity from prosecution](#) for crimes committed since the 2019 coup, including the June 3 Massacre in which the military killed at least 186 whilst another 100 went missing and many more were injured. At least [7,000 protesters were injured](#) between the October 25, 2021, coup and August 2022, and the Resistance Committees of Khartoum reported that at least 120 protesters have been killed since the 2021 Coup.”⁹⁸

Many Sudanese were also frustrated by the civilian politicians in the Sovereign Council. Even before he was removed during the October 2021 coup by the army, Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok lost the trust and support of the population due to the inability of the civilian force to advance an acceptable transitional plan. According to Sudan expert Eric Reeves, “Hamdok has lost the support of the popular political forces that brought about his initial appointment as prime minister in summer 2019.”⁹⁹ People were frustrated because their elite political parties were unable to translate the revolution into democracy in a timely manner.¹⁰⁰ The inability of the civilian component of the Sovereign Council to work together due to divisions and divergent interests, sabotage by the former regime loyalists, and the strength of the army that was allied with two powerful Darfur rebel groups—the Justice and Equality Movement led by Jibril Ibrahim and the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minawi—played a key role in the collapse of the civilian cabinet.¹⁰¹

Since independence, Sudanese political elites have had a history of short alliances and then divisions. That continued after the fall of the al-Bashir regime. The elites could not work in unison to steer Sudan to democracy and put pressure on the army despite strong street protests. The December Revolution was one of its kind in popular uprisings against brutal regimes around the world, but the elite’s forces could not translate it to transition to democracy. And the country was engulfed in a devastating war.

⁹⁷ Partly quoted in “Negotiations on outstanding thorny issues for Sudan’s Final Agreement to start soon,” *Radio Dabanga*, December 13, 2022.

⁹⁸ “Negotiations on outstanding thorny issues for Sudan’s Final Agreement to start soon,” *Radio Dabanga*, December 13, 2022.*

⁹⁹ Eric Reeves, “Responding to Sexual Violence in Darfur,” *Sudan; Research, Analysis, and Advocacy* December 26, 2021.

¹⁰⁰ “Signing of Sudan’s Final Agreement postponed over SAF-RSF differences,” *Radio Dabanga*, April 4, 2023.

¹⁰¹ Munzoul A.M. Assal, *War in Sudan 15 April 2023: Background, Analysis and Scenarios*, International IDEA, Stockholm, August 2023, 14.

The War

A few weeks after the war began on the morning of April 15, 2023, “Whole towns have been emptied out. Once-bustling, overcrowded Khartoum, the capital, has been reduced, in parts, largely to rubble.”¹⁰² Across the country, “cities have been turned into battlefields. Fighting has been marked by mass rape and murder, hospitals have been attacked, one in five people have now fled their homes, and cholera is on the rise. The scale of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan far outstrips Gaza and Ukraine, yet it receives almost no attention.”¹⁰³ The capital in particular “has been all but destroyed, few homes are left un-pillaged, entire villages have been wiped out, and over 11m people have been forced to flee. This is the equivalent of the entire population of London and Birmingham losing their homes and being driven across the country.”¹⁰⁴ From the outbreak of the war to early 2024, the capital Khartoum suffered the most destruction and loss of lives according to *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data* (ACLED).¹⁰⁵ “Some of its biggest battles were fought”¹⁰⁶ in Khartoum.

Until the outbreak of the war, Khartoum was “a relatively opulent city and a haven of calm.”¹⁰⁷ The Rapid Support Forces took control of it, and al-Burhan was trapped inside the city “before emerging in August 2023 and fleeing to the coastal city of Port Sudan,”¹⁰⁸ which became the temporary capital. Eventually the army regrouped and, with the help of several allied forces, recaptured Khartoum on March 21, 2025. Through several fierce battles, looting, and vandalization, many areas of the capital were “completely destroyed.”¹⁰⁹ Barbara Plett-Usher describes the situation in the recaptured Khartoum neighborhoods:

Top officials have abandoned their homes in the nearby affluent suburb of Karfuri. The RSF elite had embedded itself into Khartoum’s establishment before the paramilitary group and the army turned on each other in April 2023 in a battle for control. Karfuri is now eerily empty and thoroughly looted. Even the house of the RSF’s deputy commander, Abdel Rahim Hamdan Dagalo, and brother of the group’s leader, was not spared. The big empty swimming pool in the yard is scattered

102 Richard Cockett, “Inside Sudan’s Forever War,” *Engelsberg Ideas*, April 2, 2024.

103 Venetta Rainey, “Battle Lines: The world’s forgotten war: Sudan,” *The Telegraph*, September 18, 2024.

104 Tufail Hussain, “The international community’s failure on Sudan has shocked me to my core,” *The Telegraph*, November 11, 2024.

105 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, “Sudan: The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) Gains Ground in Sudan,” January 2024.

106 Barbara Plett-Usher, “Sudan army recaptures presidential palace after two years of war,” *BBC News*, March 21, 2025.

107 de Waal, “The Revolution no one wanted.”

108 “Sudan’s military says it breaks siege of army headquarters,” *France 24*, January 24, 2025.

109 Barbara Plett-Usher, “Tortured and terrified” - BBC witnesses the battle for Khartoum,” *BBC News*, March 14, 2025.

with rubbish. Sofas in the spacious rooms are overturned, the windows broken, gold jewellery boxes are bare, the door of a waist-high safe has been pulled off.¹¹⁰

Similar to the war in Darfur in the early 2000s, Khartoum saw a “widespread pattern of arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment of detainees by the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces in Khartoum State.” Several people, “including women and children, have been held without charge, with limited or even no contact with their families, in squalid and overcrowded facilities, since the conflict broke out in April 2023.”¹¹¹

Similar atrocities befell Darfur, where several families lost their lives at the hands of the Rapid Support Forces and their allied Arab militias as well as by the Armed Forces and their allies. For example, “Djadah Ali Ismail, 44, from Al-Madaris, in West Darfur was shot in the upper right leg when the RSF stormed her family home. The militants killed her family of ten, shooting her husband in the head in front of her. Djadah, with her baby on her back, survived, and was carried in a wheelbarrow to the border. The severity of her injuries mean she now has to walk with two walking sticks.”¹¹² For more than two decades, Darfurians have witnessed constant wars and many have suffered from trauma. The survivors inside Darfur and refugees in Chad have been in complete mental shock.

Because of the collapse of the government, the governor of Darfur, Minni Minawi, ordered a general mobilization in May 2023, stating that it was needed “in response to ‘the complete absence of the authorities while militants and bandits are wreaking havoc in the region, by attacking cities, plundering and torching of the houses and offices, and violently robbing the people of their property.’”¹¹³ While the forces of Minawi’s Sudan Liberation Movement and other rebel forces were stationed along the main routes, they were not able to secure other cities of Darfur. The two main belligerents “were disliked by many Sudanese especially the notorious RSF. But it still was able to take over and control major cities in Darfur except al Fasher and Khartoum.”¹¹⁴

In June 2023, armed men wearing Rapid Support Forces uniforms detained and then killed the West Darfur governor, Khamis Abakar. The governor had publicly blamed the Rapid Support Forces for atrocities in the region. The Rapid Support Forces blamed the killing of the governor on “outlaws”

110 Plett-Usher, “Tortured and terrified.”

111 UN Human Rights, “Detention facilities and practices in Khartoum State in the context of the conflict in the Sudan,” March 6, 2025.

112 Tom Nicholson, “‘People are hopeless here’: Sudan’s sick, starving and injured spill into camps across its borders,” *The Telegraph*, October 1, 2024.

113 “Darfur governor calls on ‘all men and women’ in the region to take up arms,” *Radio Dabanga*, May 29, 2023.

114 Eric Reeves, “Sudan, Genocide, and a Nexus of Evil,” *Sudan: Research, Analysis, and Advocacy*, January 28, 2025.

related to ethnic tensions in the region.¹¹⁵ In El-Geneina, the capital of the state, thousands were killed by the Rapid Support Forces and their allied community-based militia from the outbreak of the war in April to November 2023.¹¹⁶

In May 2024, el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, also came under siege by the Rapid Support Forces and the Zam Zam refugee camp on its outskirts was destroyed. Civilians were trapped and the historic city and neighboring towns in North Darfur faced “catastrophic” living conditions.¹¹⁷ As of July 7, 2025, the *United Nations’ International Organization for Migration* reported that one million people had been displaced from the city and its environs.

¹¹⁸ The joint forces of the Armed Forces and the Sudan Liberation Army, led by Minni Minawi, and the Justice and Equality Movement, led by Gibril Ibrahim, and others put up fierce resistance to the Rapid Support Forces’ numerous offensives on el-Fasher. Alex de Waal states that “Most of the fighters are ethnic Zaghawa, who have been in fierce conflict with the Arab groups that form the core of the RSF.” Therefore, “Zaghawa communities in el-Fasher fear that if the Joint Forces are defeated, they will suffer savage reprisals at the hands of the RSF.”¹¹⁹ A few days after the Sudan Liberation Army, led by Minni Minawi, abandoned neutrality and joined the army, the Rapid Support Forces attacked Minawi’s home villages near el-Fasher in April 2024. They “targeted the villages of Darmaa, Azbani, Karo, Jarof, Hilla Mohamed Ali, and Hilla Abdallah. Many residents fled after their homes were burned.”¹²⁰ El-Fasher finally fell to the Rapid Support Forces on October 26, 2025 and “thousands of civilians”¹²¹ were massacred.

Along with much of Darfur, several towns in Kordofan also fell under the RSF. The Sudan People’s Liberation Army-North, led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu, which controls territories in the Nuba Mountains along the border with the Republic of South Sudan, also made an alliance with the RSF that contributed to RSF’s takeover of several Kordofan towns.¹²²

It is important to note that Darfur’s sorrow has continued from the 1980s to present. Civilians have been killed, displaced, and raped, and have gone without justice for decades. Many were frustrated by lack of action from elsewhere. During International Criminal Court Prosecutor Fatou

115 “West Darfur Governor abducted, killed as war in Sudan Spreads,” *Aljazeera*, June 15, 2023.

116 Human Rights Watch, “Sudan: Ethnic Cleansing in West Darfur,” May, 2024.

117 United Nations, “Sudan: Under Siege El Fasher teeters on brink of Famine,” May 2, 2024.

118 “Over one million displaced from El Fasher, IOM reports,” *The Sudan Times*, July 7, 2025.

119 Alex de Waal, “Sudan in danger of self-destructing as conflict and famine reign,” *BBC News*, June 16, 2025.

120 “RSF attacks Zaghawa villages in North Darfur, raises fears of ethnic clashes,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 6, 2024.

121 “Burhan’s leadership in question after Darfur retreat,” *Africa Confidential*, November 7, 2025.

122 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, *Sudan Conflict Monitor* # 21, July 1, 2025.

Bensouda's visit to Sudan in October 2020, many Darfurians were disappointed that she did not visit them. They cried in despair: "We don't know what Fatou Bensouda did during her visit. Many questions remain. Will the suspects be tried in Sudan? If so, based on which laws?"¹²³ Many Darfurians want genuine justice and lasting peace, having suffered more than enough. The West Darfur governor "lamented the proliferation of weapons in Darfur and South Kordofan. He called for comprehensive disarmament campaigns, describing former campaigns as "ceremonial."¹²⁴ The governor "also seeks the deportation of thousands of settlers from Chad, Niger and Mali, who occupied land that the displaced had to leave." Thousands of migrants were allowed, encouraged, and defended to live on lands previously occupied by Darfuri farmers under the al-Bashir rule. The Janjaweed, and later, the Rapid Support Forces, protected these recent immigrants for years.¹²⁵ The Rapid Support Forces "members have taken the lands of farmers by force, ambushed citizens, disrespected police and judicial forces and so on, without serious consequences."¹²⁶

There were several eyewitness reports of non-Sudanese taking control of deserted villages. For example, in 2015 "A witness in East Jebel Marra told Radio Dabanga that the settlers occupied Wadi Marra, Tayarat and Tabeldiyat villages in the area this week."¹²⁷ In addition, "On 19 June, *Radio Dabanga* reported that up to ten thousand settlers have taken plots in deserted areas in East Jebel Marra. The newcomers were identified by local pastoralists as members of Arab militias and migrants from Chad, Mali and Niger."¹²⁸ It is worthy of note that since 2003, Darfuri refugees still have not returned due to continued wars and general insecurity. The new settlers were armed and protected by local Janjaweed militias while the Darfur rebels were away in the mountains. The new immigrants were also large in number and easily overwhelmed some returning refugees. Many settled villagers "urged newly appointed governor of West Darfur, Khalil Abdallah, to 'speed up deterring the repeated assaults by new settlers.'"¹²⁹ According to *Radio Dabanga*, Villagers "spotted paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by the Sudanese security apparatus, roaming around to protect the newcomers. Militant settlers also torched a number of villages, left by their residents during widespread attacks by the RSF during the first months of this year."¹³⁰

123 "West Darfur governor urges justice for atrocities," *Radio Dabanga*, December 2, 2020.

124 Partly quoted in "West Darfur governor urges justice for atrocities," *Radio Dabanga*, December 2, 2020.

125 "West Darfur governor urges justice for atrocities," *Radio Dabanga*, December 2, 2020.

126 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, "Conflict Dynamics in South Darfur," December 28, 2023.

127 "Foreign settlers continue to torch Darfur villages," *Radio Dabanga*, July 3, 2015.

128 "Foreign settlers continue to torch Darfur villages," *Radio Dabanga*, July 3, 2015.

129 Partly quoted in "New settlers evict West Darfuri farmers from their lands in Sirba," *Radio Dabanga*, July 8, 2015.

130 "New settlers evict West Darfuri farmers from their lands in Sirba," *Radio Dabanga*, July 8, 2015.

As previously stated, al-Bashir created the Rapid Support Forces to help fight rebel groups in the country and protect him against potential coup plotters in the armed forces. As a result, the Rapid Support Forces played a key role in suppressing Darfurian rebel armed forces. Al-Bashir was pleased and full of praise for them, particularly the leader Hemedti, “saying that he did not let him down and mobilized thousands of troops to confront the rebellion and was able to end it in the battle of (Goz Dango) in South Darfur.” Al-Bashir continued: “I testify that the Rapid Support Forces did not budge and I am proud that I have men to lean on and they ended the rebellion.”¹³¹ Hemedti’s brother Abdul Rahim Dagalo is also active in the Rapid Support Forces. He is the second in command. It is interesting to note that the Khalifa Abdullah of the Mahdiyya also gave key positions to his own people of the Ta’aisha tribe and his brother Ya’qub was appointed commander of the army and director of its military affairs.¹³²

With the separation of South Sudan, Darfur became the epicenter of war, but there were insurgencies in the East and the Blue Nile regions of Sudan as well. Marginalization and domination of the country by a minority from the Nile Valley Arabs have forced many to take up arms elsewhere, threatening the very unity of the country. Even the architect of the 1989 coup, Dr. Hassan al-Turabi, stated on June 10, 2013, that he did not rule out the possibility of the separation of Darfur as well as the East and Blue Nile regions of Sudan.¹³³ Since the fall of al-Bashir, the various alliances and divisions within the political landscape show how divided the country has become. The civilian political forces “are in disarray. Different groupings are aligned with Burhan, with Hemedti, or trying to stake out a neutral position. They are all active on social media, polarised, acrimonious and fragmented.”¹³⁴ Professor Bakry Eljak Elmedni also stated that polarization “has taken hold in the last two years” in the country.¹³⁵ The polarization within the political process during the transition contributed to the war.¹³⁶

Arabs of the Nile Valley have always considered themselves entitled to govern Sudan; as a result, “there is a vast social divide” in the country. Although Muslims and Arabs, many Darfurians were not welcomed on the same level as the rest of Arabs of the Nile Valley. The Rapid Support Forces and their

131 Partly quoted in “June Came: The month of the death of the Prophet, the killing of Osman, Al-Bashir Coup, Al Turabi’s lie, and Ali Osman conspiracy,” *Alrakoba Sudan News*, June 6, 2025 (from Arabic translation).

132 “June Came: The month of the death of the Prophet, the killing of Osman, Al-Bashir Coup, Al Turabi’s lie, and Ali Osman conspiracy,” *Alrakoba Sudan News*, June 6, 2025.

133 “June Came: The month of the death of the Prophet, the killing of Osman, Al-Bashir Coup, Al Turabi’s lie, and Ali Osman conspiracy,” *Alrakoba Sudan News*, June 6, 2025.

134 de Waal, “Sudan in danger of self-destructing.”

135 Bakry Eljak Elmedni, “To end Sudan’s wars, a comprehensive response is needed. Can the US broker a deal? *Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker*, July 2025.

136 Munzoul A.M. Assal, “Dividing the Divided: The April 15 War and Social Polarization in Sudan,” *Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker*, May 2023.

commander Hemedti were faced with stiff opposition in the capital because of their background, in addition to their having committed brutal crimes. Indeed, “Hemedti and his men are feared and ridiculed as illiterate, ill-spoken hoodlums.” It is important to note that not all Rapid Support Forces soldiers are Arabs. Members of several tribes of Darfur joined it “united in their conviction that they have been deprived of the spoils of state” and “they are enraged subjects of the Sudanese imperium.”¹³⁷

Since the outbreak of the war, both the Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces were able to forge alliances with other armed groups in the country. In addition to the Darfur Rebel forces of Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi, Justice and Equality Movement-Gibril Ibrahim, Sudan Liberation Army led by Mustafa Tambour, and a faction of the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces, the army was able to make an alliance with the Sudan Shield Forces led by Abu Aqla Keikel, which was at some point allied with the RSF and then switched back to the army. Keikel’s forces played a key role in defeating the Rapid Support Forces from Eastern Sudan and the recapture of Khartoum. Al-Burhan “also revived previously dismantled SAF paramilitaries—like the Popular Defense Forces (PDF), al-Baraa Ibn Malik Brigade, and the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) combat troops.”¹³⁸ The al-Baraa Ibn Malik Brigade was believed to be the offshoot of the Popular Defense Force established to fight the Sudan People’s Liberation Army of South Sudan. After being disbanded following the fall of al-Bashir, it was revived in 2023 to fight the Rapid Support Forces.¹³⁹ These forces played a key role in reversing the fortunes of the army after initial heavy losses. A faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement – Transitional Council led by Salah al-Din Adam Tur, better called Rasas, was also allied with the army and active in Darfur. Salah al-Din Adam Tur supported the army soon after the war broke out and al-Burhan appointed him to the Sovereign Council, replacing Al Hadi Idris, who was the leader of the Movement and who declared neutrality at the time.¹⁴⁰ Later, the Al Hadi Idris faction abandoned neutrality and joined the Rapid Support Forces.

The dissolving of militias in the country was one of the key demands of the December Revolution, but the al-Burhan regime expanded use of militias even more. Similar to the creation of the Rapid Support Forces by the al-Bashir government to confront rebels, the al-Burhan regime continued to do

137 de Waal, “The Revolution no one wanted.”

138 Ali Mahmoud Ali, Jalale Getachew Birru and Nohad Eltyeb, “Two Years of War in Sudan: How the SAF is gaining the Upper Hand,” *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project* (April, 2025).

139 Mohammed Amin, “Sudan’s biggest self-described ‘jihadi’ group says it will disband once RSF defeated,” *Middle East Eye*, March 12, 2025.

140 “Government-allied Darfur faction arrests two journalists in El Fasher,” *Sudan Tribune*, July 7, 2025; “Al-Burhan appoints a defector from the ‘Transitional Council’ as a replacement for Hadi Idris in the Sovereignty Council,” *Darfur 24*, June 13, 2024.

the same by creating more militias to fight the militia the government created to protect itself. Over two years after the start of the war, there is hardly any region of Sudan devoid of regional or community-based militias.¹⁴¹

The Rapid Support Forces also made alliances with several armed groups, including the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces; the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North led by Abdulaziz al-Hilu; the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army – Transitional Council led by Dr Al Hadi Idris; the Justice and Equality Movement led by Suleiman Sanda; Tamazuj; and community-based militias such as the Rezeigat.¹⁴² Some suggest that the Rapid Support Forces created the largest military alliance in the country's history.¹⁴³ Tamazuj was believed to have been formed during the 2020 Juba Peace Talks; it is led by Mohamed Ali Qureshi.¹⁴⁴ It is remarkable to note that the Sudan Liberation Army, led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur, remained neutral.¹⁴⁵ Abdel Wahid al-Nur never joined the 2020 Peace Talks in Juba, South Sudan, in the wake of the fall of the al-Bashir regime, insisting that the root cause of the issues in Darfur needs to be addressed first. The group dismissed the peace talks as a power sharing deal. Al-Nur forces control Tawila town in Darfur, which became a refuge for thousands fleeing from el-Fasher.¹⁴⁶

Even the major political parties were divided, some taking sides with either force. The historic Umma party, for example, was divided: a faction led by Fadlallah Burma Nasir supported the Rapid Support Forces' Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasis), others supported the Sudan Armed Forces, and still others joined the civilian opposition Sumoud.¹⁴⁷ The civilian pro-democracy opposition Sumoud (Steadfastness in Arabic) itself is also facing "a widening rift."¹⁴⁸ Since the war began, the country "has faced severe internal conflict and division."¹⁴⁹ The country "witnessed sharp polarization," which was "accompanied by the spread of hate speech, from which civil components and political forces have not been immune, raising concerns about the future of peaceful coexistence."¹⁵⁰ Communities and families were divided. Even brothers ended up fighting on opposite sides.¹⁵¹ These alliances, divisions, and

141 "Karama?' Dissolving the militias or reproducing them," *Alrakoba Sudan News*, July 8, 2025.

142 Ali Mahmoud Ali, Jalale Getachew Birru, and Nohad Eltyeb, "Two Years of War in Sudan: How the SAF is gaining the Upper Hand," *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project* (April, 2025).

143 "RSF's military alliances reshape the map of Sudan's war," *Ayin Network*, March 21, 2025.

144 "RSF-allied Tamazuj movement warns against sidelining in Sudan's planned parallel government," *Sudan Tribune*, May 13, 2025.

145 Mahmoud Ali, et al, "Two Years of War in Sudan."

146 Mohamed Jamal Alasmer and Ahmed Gouja, "As RSF attacks escalate, a Darfur town struggles to shelter the displaced," *The New Humanitarian*, June 2, 2025.

147 "Deep divisions in Sudan's historic Umma Party erupt over talks with the PM," *Sudan Tribune*, July 8, 2025.

148 "SPLM-RDC suspends participation in Somoud's executive bodies, exposing internal rifts," *Sudan Tribune*, July 14, 2025.

149 "Sudanese party condemns church demolition in Khartoum," *Sudan Tribune*, July 12, 2025.

150 "Sudan's PM urges political parties to combat hate speech amidst transitional talks," *Sudan Tribune*, July 9, 2025.

151 Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, "Conflict Dynamics in South Darfur," December 28, 2023.

the motives of the former regime groups show that the war in Sudan cannot be simply stated as a power struggle between al-Burhan and Hemedti; rather, the fate of the entire country is at stake.

Hemedti was able to organize a civilian-oriented governance alliance at the beginning of this year, the *Taḥāluf al-Sudān al-Ta'sīsī*, Arabic for The Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasis), which includes professional association members. Tasis created a governing council with Hemedti as its chairman and al-Hilu as its deputy. The council was founded in February 2025 during a meeting at the Kenyatta International Convention Center in Nairobi, Kenya. After a series of discussions on the administrative structure, several federal regions were created and on July 1, 2025, it was formally established in Nyala as the Government of Peace and Unity.¹⁵² After Khartoum, Nyala was the largest city in the country in terms of economic resources and population.¹⁵³ Since the Rapid Support Forces captured it in October 2023, the city has served as its headquarters. Each side is plotting how to further strengthen its internal and external alliances, economy, diplomatic relations, and acquiring modern weapons. The al-Burhan regime accuses the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of supporting the Rapid Support Forces despite the UAE's official denial of involvement.¹⁵⁴ The Rapid Support Forces, on its part, accused Egypt of supporting the army.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

The war has led to unprecedented polarization across Sudan both among armed groups and civilians. Despite divisions and a lack of unified international support (including the African Union) for peace talks, there is hope, however. In a sign similar to Musa Madibbu, the leader of the Baqqara Arabs who refused al-Bashir to join the army against the Darfur rebels in 2003, the Dinka and some Misseriya traditional authorities have refused to join the current war and have remained neutral. Mohamed Saed, a representative of the Misseriya traditional chief Mutar Babo Nimir, stated, "What is currently going on in Sudan is a meaningless war, and as leaders, we do not support any side because war, as you can see here in this Amiet Market, is all but suffering, more tension, and restrictions of movements of goods and services." The Deputy Paramount Chief of the Nine Ngok chiefdoms, Agal Manyiel Chol, "stated that the war in Sudan served neither the interests of the Sudanese people nor the region." He continued, "If you examine the causes of the fighting in Sudan and those involved, you conclude it is all about hegemonic power, prestige, and influence over resources. So,

152 "Sudan's TASIS Alliance: What it is, who leads it, what comes next?" *The Sudan Times*, July 2, 2025.

153 "What happens next after RSF capture Sudan's Nyala," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, October 29, 2023.

154 Vibhu Mishra, "World Court begins hearing Sudan's case accusing United Arab Emirates of 'complicity in genocide'," *United Nations News*, April 10, 2025.

155 "Head of Sudan's RSF accuses Egypt of being involved in airstrikes on group's troops," *Reuters*, October 9, 2024.

must people join a war that does not benefit them?” “Neighbours,” he added, “must learn how to treat themselves well and be helpful to each other during such trying moments.”¹⁵⁶ Such internal opposition by traditional leaders and political parties could prove worthy for lasting peace.

International pressure should be consistent. Former Sudan advisor to the US government Cameron Hudson says that US sanctions on Sudan’s rival generals could have averted the war.¹⁵⁷ Sustained international pressure similar to that carried out during the 1990s could force the two to agree to a peace deal, followed by a civilian Sudanese discussion on the road map to democratic rule. After the military option was exhausted with South Sudan in the late 1990s, al-Bashir accepted a peace deal in 2002 that eventually materialized in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. During the 2002 peace deal with South Sudan, the al-Bashir government realized that a military option was not viable anymore. Especially since September 11, 2001, al-Bashir has feared that the US could take military action against Sudan for harboring international terrorists. The ongoing war could also be solved through negotiated political means. Currently, neither of the major armed groups in Sudan are pushing for outright independence. Also, four key countries—the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates—are working together to broker peace and stability.¹⁵⁸

A credible ceasefire would help the people of Sudan work toward a unifying national agenda. *Radio Dabanga* states that ‘the biggest challenge in Sudan remains the absence of an inclusive national actor. The political scene after the revolution, then the coup, and then the war produced conflicting and dispersed forces, some of which compete for legitimacy and lack an integrated strategic vision for the next state.’¹⁵⁹ The war made it clear that there “is a deep structural crisis that affects the idea of the state itself: how is it built? And to whom is it built? Who has the right to represent it, shape its contours, and protect its internal and external borders?”¹⁶⁰

A clear national pathway headed by a new coalition of civilians is needed “that redefines the state not as a center that subjugates the periphery, but as a participatory space that expresses pluralism and does not suppress it. Sudan needs more than a ceasefire, it needs reconciliation with itself, with its history, with its margins, and with its citizens, for whom the state has become either a weapon in their faces, or a distant shadow that does not protect from heat or

156 Partly quoted in “Ngok Dinka, Misseriya leaders reject involvement in Sudan’s war,” *Sudan Tribune*, March 12, 2025.

157 “Former Sudan advisor to US government Cameron Hudson says US sanctions on Sudan’s rival generals could have averted conflict,” *Al-Monitor* Audio Interview with Hudson, April 2023.

158 Zaelnoon Suliman, “Sudan between War and Truce: An Analysis of U.S. Diplomatic Efforts,” *Progress Center for Policies*, November 3, 2025.

159 “Sudan without a Centre: State disintegration amid war and the absence of sovereignty,” *Radio Dabanga*, May 10, 2025.

160 “Sudan without a Centre: State disintegration amid war and the absence of sovereignty,” *Radio Dabanga*, May 10, 2025.

cold.”¹⁶¹ Local elders, traditional leaders, women, religious leaders, the youth, artists, human rights activists, the wider civil society groups, and historically tested indigenous mechanisms need to be included in any pathway for the future of Sudan.

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¹⁶¹ “Sudan without a Centre: State disintegration amid war and the absence of sovereignty,” *Radio Dabanga*, May 10, 2025.

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