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Security Council (SC)

Research Report

Topic 1: Aiming to end the conflict in Sudan and facilitate the transition to a civilian government.



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Introduction

On April 15, 2023, fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) led by General al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by General Dagalo, also referred to as General Hemedti¹. In an effort to secure influence in the attempt at Sudanese democracy, the Transitional Sovereignty Council, the two parties have engaged in fighting across Sudan, but especially in al-Fashir, located in the regions of Darfur, al-Jazirah and the capitol area of Khartoum². Figure 1 shows these central locations on the map of Sudan:



Figure 1: A map³ showing the primary locations of fighting between the RSF and SAF. al-Fashir is the last large city in the Darfur regions still occupied by the SAF and has come under heavy attack by RSF forces.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dcm_k8Vooc8

² <https://acleddata.com/2024/11/18/defection-and-violence-against-civilians-in-sudans-al-jazirah-state-november-2024/>

³ <https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/sudan>

Figure 2 shows a map of the areas controlled by SAF, RSF and other rebel groups as of February 2024. Much has happened since, however, such as the SAF having apparently pushed back RSF fighters in the Khartoum, paving a way to limit its presence to the outer suburbs of Khartoum. RSF has further experienced the loss of its top lieutenant in al-Jazirah state, Major-General Abu Aaqla Keykal, having left for the SAF. This state is described as the ‘breadbasket’ of Sudan. Furthermore, SAF backed rebel forces have distracted the RSF from its assault on the al-Fashir stronghold⁴:

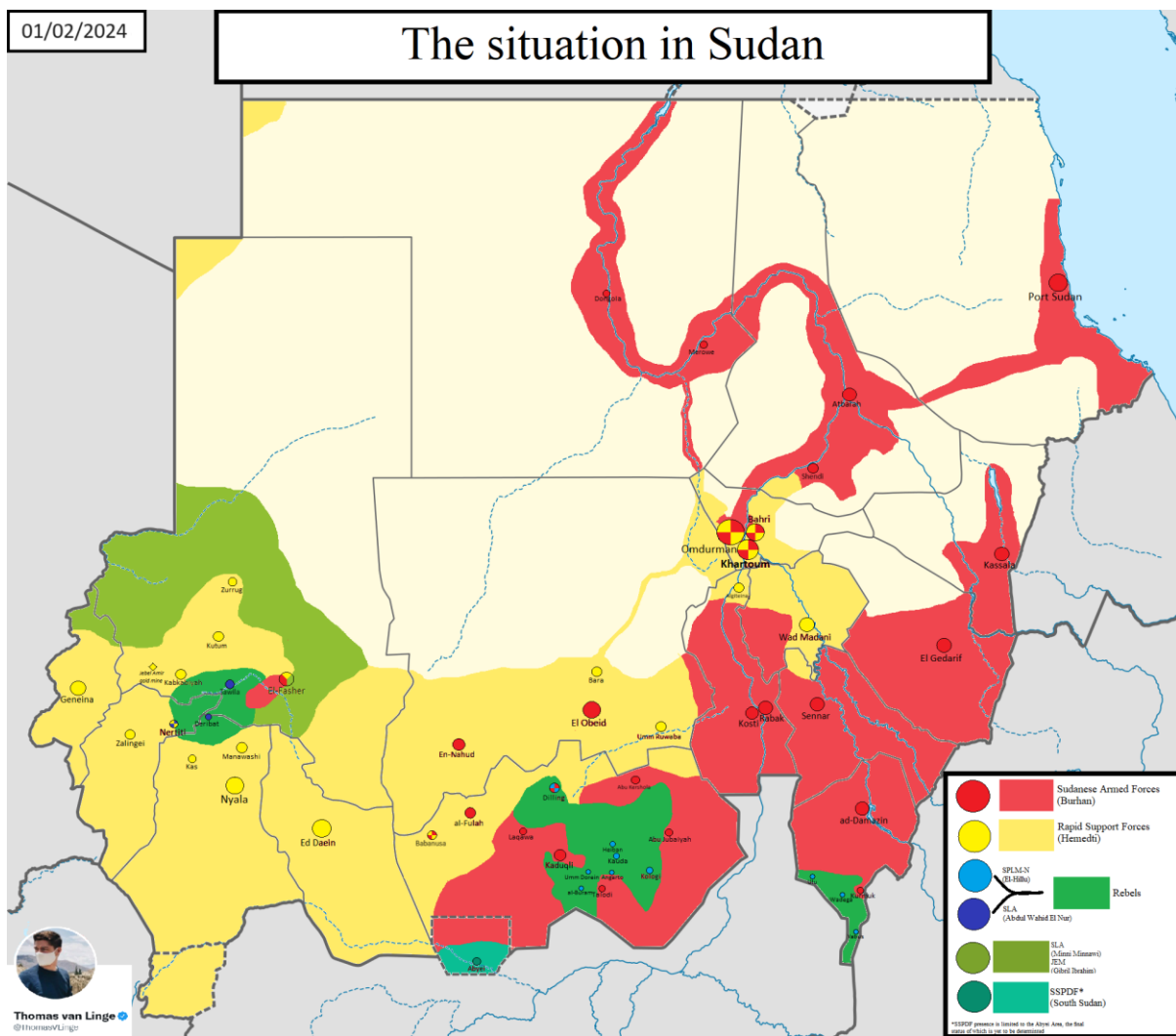


Figure 2: Map of Sudan coloured with territory occupied by the RSF, SAF and rebel groups. Notice that near the red al-Fashir stronghold in the East, there is a presence of rebels.

⁴ <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/has-sudans-conflict-reached-turning-point>

The humanitarian consequences of the civil war have been severe. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)⁵, around 8 million Sudanese are internally displaced, while around 3 million have fled to neighbouring countries. 25 million Sudanese, out of the population of 48 million, need humanitarian assistance. This is in the form of food, water, healthcare and hygienic facilities. A famine in the region of North Darfur has further worsened humanitarian conditions. Lack of proper hygiene and sanitation in camps has caused an outbreak of cholera, which, combined with the fact that 60% of the population do not have access to healthcare services, poses a significant threat to the health of already malnourished refugees. The UNHCR has only received around 40% of the funding required to cover its efforts to provide humanitarian aid in Sudan.

Definition of Key Terms

A **coup d'état** or a **coup** is defined as "*the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group.*"⁶ Coups can only occur if an individual wishing to seize power and overthrow the government is backed by a significant army or militia. From within the government, for instance, a general can divert the loyalty to himself from the head of state and overthrow the head of state. A coup can also be committed by an armed militia, that seizes control of the government, the army and the police. Coups rarely dramatically restructure governments, since it is mostly the top-level officials that are exchanged. There is a tendency for orchestrators of coups to eventually adopt similar characteristics of the heads of state they replace. For instance, a militia general might pose himself as the opposer of an authoritarian leader, or as the voice of the people. The sudden rise to power following a coup will often lead said leader to turn away from the principles of change that motivated the coup in the first place. This leads to more unrest and more coups – creating a vicious cycle of coups.

A coup is often followed by a **military rule**, which is defined as a "*a political regime in which the military as an organization holds a preponderance of power.*"⁷ In a civil government, the government is separate from its army, meaning the head of state will pass on orders to the military which has its own leaders in the form of generals. In a military rule, however, the military *is* the government. In the book *Elements of Civil Government*⁸, it is

⁵ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/sudan-situation>

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat>

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/military-rule>

⁸ <https://www.loc.gov/item/12017499/>

stated that “*governing*” derives from a Latin word meaning “*to steer the ship*”. This helps distinguish between a military rule and a civil government. Where the army of a civil government is created to protect its people from foreign powers, the army of a military rule primarily protects its leader. A civil government can be temporarily replaced by **martial law** where civil leadership is replaced by military rule in an effort to combat unrest or natural disasters⁹.

Background Information

Economic Consequences

Both parties involved in the conflict continue to capitalize on goods such as gold and oil to finance the ongoing civil war. An investigation published on the Sudan Human Rights Hub¹⁰ even suggests that the Russian militant group, the Wagner group, has smuggled gold out of Sudan, effectively supporting the RSF while helping the Kremlin mitigate international sanctions. Meanwhile, the war has slowed expansion of the gold mining industry, partly due to rising fuel prices and security issues related to RSF fighters leaving their posts protecting gold mines to fight the SAF. Oil continues to account for a large proportion of Sudanese gross domestic product (GDP), making up 41.6% in 2022¹¹. Sabotage and other war related damage has led to a slowing of the oil industry. Oil fields on the border with South Sudan have especially been subject to sabotage, with one engineer explaining how his pumping station had to shut down due to sabotage from “*local gunmen*”¹². A shortage of diesel in the state-owned Bashayer Pipeline Company has also led to issues such as clogging, which prevents oil from being transported by pipes. Sabotage against an oil refinery in the capitol of Khartoum alone has destroyed oil that would otherwise account for 40% of Sudan’s domestic oil needs. These two factors are a toll on Sudan’s already pressured economy.

Historic Context of Civil War

To understand the current civil war, it is crucial to understand Sudan’s history of military coups and distrust in the people in power. The Republic of Sudan was just 2 years young when it experienced its first military coup d’état. Since then, it has endured 35 attempts with six being successful. Coups are rooted in distrust and desperation in a population. If the

⁹ <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/martial-law-times-civil-disorder>

¹⁰ <https://sudanhrh.org/en/articles/gold-mines>

¹¹ <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/south-sudan/south-sudan-economic-outlook>

¹² <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-oil-fields-crippled-by-large-scale-sabotage>

people do not trust their leaders to serve the best interest of the nation, discontent quickly arises¹³. The timeline below gives an overview of the events leading up to the 2023 civil war:

The **democratic elections of 1986** resulted in the government lead by President Ahmed al-Mirghani from the Democratic Unionist Party and Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi from the Umma party. The elections were the result of a **military rule** from **1985 to 1986** following the deposition of **General Gaafar Nimeiry**¹⁴. The leader of said military rule subsided after the election results. This is a rare example of how a coup led to a stronger Sudanese democracy. This government would fail to end the civil war with South-Sudanese separatist groups that were ignited when the **Addis-Ababa Agreement** was broken under Gaafar Nimeiry. This agreement made peace between the Any Anya of South Sudan and the Sudanese army by promising autonomy in the territory that is now South Sudan¹⁵. Gaafar Nimeiry would later break this agreement by breaking up South Sudan into separate regions, effectively weakening South Sudanese independence. He would also promise to make Sudan an Islamic republic and planned to enforce this in South Sudan, as well as making Arabic the official language, threatening the primarily Christian and English-speaking South. Furthermore, Gaafar Nimeiry began appropriating farmland that was previously recognized as part of South Sudan, showing how the fight for resources is a central element of understand civil war in Sudan. These factors combined reignited the civil war in Sudan, with the Southern rebel groups fighting the centralized government lead by Gaafar Nimeiry. At the time of the elections in 1986, the war was still ongoing, and would continue from **1983 to 2003**, whereafter **South Sudan gained independence** through democratic elections¹⁶. The democratically elected government would be overthrown in a coup lead by **Omar al-Bashir** in **1989**. The increasingly unpopular government had failed to create peace in Sudan, and Omar al-Bashir saw this as his chance to gain power, stating that he would “*save the country from rotten political parties*”¹⁷. His government enforced strict Sharia law and established morality police to enforce it. At this time, **General al-Burhan** was a high-ranking military general under Omar al-Bashir. He was in charge of the Sudanese Armed Forces. This army, as well as Janjaweed, a militant group that later turned into the Rapid Support Forces would fight non-Arab rebel groups in 2003 in what would later be recognized as a genocide

¹³ <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/mta-joint-futures-05-coups-in-africa>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_government_of_Sudan

¹⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Addis-Ababa-Agreement>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt8IAsh6XXc>

¹⁷ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230630-remembering-the-1989-coup-in-sudan/>

against the indigenous, non-Arab population residing there¹⁸. Janjaweed would seize goldmines from indigenous owners, which would later be used to fund the RSF. Omar al-Bashir's methods of war were brutal, and he was charged in the International Crime Court with a long list of crimes committed between **2003 and 2008** in Darfur: *“five counts of crimes against humanity: murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture, and rape; two counts of war crimes: intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking part in hostilities, and pillaging; three counts of genocide: by killing, by causing serious bodily or mental harm, and by deliberately inflicting on each target group conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction [...]”* Civil unrest and protests calling for democracy soon followed. Janjaweed in **2013** organized itself into what is now the RSF, having previously simply been a large group of unorganized fighters. Even though it was backed by Omar al-Bashir, it was still a large military force independent of the Government. This was believed to be a risk¹⁹.

Together, the SAF and RSF organized a plot in **2019** to overthrow Omar al-Bashir, whom they had previously supported. This is similar to how Gaafar Nimeiry was overthrown by his own general commander. Protests ensued after the coup, because protesters feared that parts of Omar al-Bashir's government were still intact. The RSF would attack such a protest held in **Khartoum in 2019**, killing about a hundred civilians. The coup, however, did create significant progress. The Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) was established to facilitate the transition between a military rule to a civil government. Peace was made between the Government and rebel groups from Darfur, ending years of hostilities. The TSC was headed by General al-Burhan and aimed to hold democratic elections in 2023. The SAF would jointly govern Sudan with RSF until then. In **2019**, **Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok**, an economist with 40 years of experience in African development²⁰, was instated as a civil head of state. However, he was overthrown by the SAF and RSF in 2021, and later reinstated, albeit having ceded some of his power to the SAF and RSF. General al-Burhan had a vision to integrate the RSF into the SAF, creating a larger army under his control. One could reason that this was unpopular with the leader of the RSF, General Hemedti. It might also have been

¹⁸ <https://folkedrab.dk/eksempler-paa-folkedrab/darfur/konflikten-darfur-forsog-paa-fred-humanitaer-operation/folkedrab-konflikten-darfur>

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dcm_k8Vooc8

²⁰ <https://www.berlinmoot.org/people/abdalla-hamdok>

the reason as to why fighting broke out in April of 2023. The civil war is a war for influence between two previous allies.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Sudan Armed Forces (SAF): Lead by the General al-Burhan, who is also the leader of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, effectively acting as the head of state. SAF receives weapons from **Egypt** and the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and receives training in the neighbouring country **Eritrea**. In exchange for delivering weapons to **Ukraine**, Ukrainian special forces are fighting the RSF and Russian mercenaries in Khartoum. The Russian **Wagner group** is affiliated with the RSF and seeks to benefit from the gold industry in the country. Recently, **Russia** has diverted its support from RSF to SAF in order to align its support with its ally Iran and in an effort to “*dampen [SAF’s] cooperation with Ukraine*”²¹.

Rapid Support Forces (RSF): Lead by General Hemedti, the RSF receives weapons from the **United Arab Emirates** via **Chad** and is provided with fuel from **Libya** and **South Sudan**.

Saudi Arabia: There has been speculation whether Saudi Arabia was giving support to the SAF, however there has been no evidence that this is the case. In fact, it would jeopardize its role as a mediator between the SAF and RSF, having facilitated decrees such as the Jeddah Declaration²².

Israel: The Israeli Mossad and the Israeli Defence Force played a key role in Any Anya’s fight against the government of Sudan during the First Civil War of Sudan²³. This ranges from weapons shipments to aiding in sabotage. Today, Israel presents itself as a mediator in the conflict between the SAF and RSF, supporting neither side, and is willing to have diplomatic relations with either side²⁴.

²¹ <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-switches-sides-in-sudan-war/>

²² <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/mta-spotlight-30-how-not-to-talk-about-the-war-in-sudan>

²³ <https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/intelligence-report-sudan-saga-435715>

²⁴ <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/us-and-israeli-role-sudans-path-war>

Relevant UN Resolutions

Security Council Resolution 2736²⁵: Adopted on June 13, 2024, this resolution demanded that the RSF stop its assault on al-Fashir (El Fashir), and that all parties involved in the conflict “ensure the protection of civilians”. This resolution also reiterates the **Jeddah Declaration**²⁶, which was signed by the SAF and RSF declaring that both parties will protect civilians and secure that civilians can evacuate from combat zones.

Security Council Resolution 2676²⁷: This resolution, adopted on March 8, 2023, reiterated the Juba agreement²⁸, which is a peace plan signed by the Transitional Sovereignty Council and other Sudanese factions agreeing on a 39-month transition period leading to democratic, internationally monitored elections after the return of Sudanese refugees.

Security Council Resolution 2724²⁹: Adopted on March 8, 2024, this resolution calls for a cease of hostilities to honour the holy month of Ramadan and reiterates that all parties involved should seek a peaceful solution to the civil war.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The RSF officially rejected negotiations with SAF in September of 2024, pursuing instead a “military solution” to the conflict. Meanwhile, the SAF accuses the RSF of breaking the Jeddah Declaration that both parties signed. The United States together with Saudi Arabia had attempted to set up negotiations in Switzerland in August of 2024 between the RSF and SAF, however this was rejected by the SAF³⁰.

On May 8, 2010, the Sudan Consultative Forum was established³¹, which later became the Sudan South Sudan Consultative Forum (SSSCF). This became a forum for presidents of both countries to reach agreements that would work towards ending cross-border hostilities. On September 27, 2012, the parties signed Nine Agreements³² that, although perhaps vague, were an important attempt at securing peace. Diplomacy also ended the First Sudanese Civil

²⁵ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4051915?ln=en&v=pdf#files>

²⁶ <https://www.state.gov/jeddah-declaration-of-commitment-to-protect-the-civilians-of-sudan/>

²⁷ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/071/04/pdf/n2307104.pdf>

²⁸ <https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Juba%20Agreement%20for%20Peace%20in%20Sudan%20-%20Official%20ENGLISH.PDF>

²⁹ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4040187?v=pdf>

³⁰ <https://sudantribune.com/article291482/>

³¹ <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-sixth-meeting-of-sudan-south-sudan-consultative-forum-at-united-nations-headquarters-new-york-27-september-2013>

³² <http://www.sudanoslo.no/the-nine-agreements-between-s-ii.html>

War, namely with the Addis Ababa Agreement, which gave South Sudan autonomy while remaining part of the Democratic Republic of Sudan³³. However, such peace agreements are fragile, and Gaafar Nimeiry's change of policies sparked a new civil war because the agreement was broken.

Possible Solutions

On the matter of establishing a civil government, it is crucial to limit competing armies. What prevented the Juba Agreement from proceeding was the distrust and tension between the RSF and SAF, which led to armed conflict, instead of integrating both factions into a common army. One article suggests that Member Nations must reconsider their indirect or direct participation in regional conflicts such as the one in Sudan. Specifically, they must ensure that the overall goal remains to secure stability, and not to pursue short term gains³⁴, such as the mining of gold. There is a need for a forum similar to the SSSCF, in which both parties involved in the conflict can negotiate terms to end the war, and where foreign actors can coordinate their efforts to support stability. This might also end the proxy characteristics of the current war, with Russia shifting support in order to serve its own foreign policy interest.

³³

<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/sd720312addis20ababa20agreement20on20the20problem20of20south20sudan.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/mta-joint-futures-05-coups-in-africa>

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