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Unravelling Sudan's war: actors and future trajectories

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Introduction

This paper outlines the key takeaways from a closed-door roundtable convened by CeSPI on February 5, 2025, with support from Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo. The event focused on identifying Sudan's principal political actors and assessing the potential trajectories of their engagement within the country's evolving political landscape. It brought together a diverse cohort of Sudan experts – including individuals from political, humanitarian, civil society, and international sectors – and was tailored for participants with deep expertise in Sudanese political dynamics, humanitarian affairs, development, and media.

The session examined Sudan's deepening humanitarian crisis while providing context for understanding the key political actors, including their priorities, modes of engagement, and prospective roles. It also explored the interrelationships among these actors and maps their alliances. The discussion further addressed the conflict's impact on displacement and migration and assessed both the risks and opportunities shaping Sudan's democratic transition.

Drawing on insights from the roundtable, this brief and analysis offers a comprehensive examination of the political, military, and societal dynamics that ignited Sudan's ongoing conflict and continue to influence its trajectory. It also assesses potential future pathways and the key actors likely to determine the country's political course.

State of the conflict: military landscape

When armed conflict erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the RSF quickly asserted control over large parts of Khartoum and extended its presence across central and western Sudan, leveraging urban warfare tactics and pre-positioned assets. Initially confined to fortified positions and slow to respond, the SAF gradually reorganized its command structures and launched a sustained counteroffensive. By early 2025, after securing advanced external military support, the SAF regained momentum and succeeded in recapturing Khartoum, Al Jazira, and other strategically vital areas, pushing RSF units out of multiple urban centres.

Despite these setbacks, the RSF retains entrenched control over large portions of Darfur and parts of Kordofan, where it continues to consolidate its authority by strengthening both its political apparatus and military infrastructure. On April 15, 2025, the RSF declared the formation of a 'Government of Peace and Unity' to administer its territories, effectively establishing a de facto governance structure. As a result, both factions have solidified control within their respective strongholds. The SAF, leveraging alliances with armed groups operating in Darfur and Kordofan, has continued its efforts to retake RSF-held areas and reassert territorial control.

Humanitarian situation overview

Sudan is facing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe —the world's largest displacement and hunger emergency— with over 30.4 million people¹—more than half the population—in need of assistance as of 2025. With 12.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)²—surpassing the entire population of Sweden and amounting to five times that of Gaza— and more than 3.3 million people who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries including Chad, Egypt, and South Sudan³, the war in Sudan fuelled the largest and fastest-growing displacement crisis globally.

Compounding the displacement emergency, food insecurity has reached catastrophic levels, with 25.6 million people experiencing acute hunger. Several regions, including North Darfur and the Western Nuba Mountains, are facing famine-like conditions. The collapse of Sudan's banking sector has further exacerbated the situation, causing severe cash shortages and soaring inflation, render even basic necessities unaffordable⁴.

The education system is also in turmoil, with 19 million children unable to attend school and over 10,400 schools closed due to conflict and displacement. Even in relatively stable areas, 5.5 million children remain uncertain about returning to school, as many educational facilities have been repurposed to shelter internally displaced persons (IDPs). Local communities have attempted to fill the gap through Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) services, but without long-term solutions, the country faces the grave risk of producing a lost generation.

Meanwhile, Sudan's healthcare system is on the brink of collapse. More than 70% of health facilities are non-operational or severely overwhelmed⁵, leaving 11 million people in urgent need of medical care. The deteriorating situation has been further exacerbated by outbreaks of cholera, dengue fever, measles, and malaria. In early 2025 alone, a cholera outbreak spread across 11 states, resulting in more than 51,300 cases and 1,359 deaths.

Despite overwhelming need, humanitarian operations have been gravely hindered by funding shortfalls, access restrictions, and escalating security threats. Violence has made it nearly impossible for aid organizations to operate, forcing groups like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to suspend critical medical services in areas such as the Zamzam camp in North Darfur, leaving approximately 500,000 displaced people without essential healthcare. As the

¹ "Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan: Statement by the Humanitarian Coordination Forum (HCF)." March 4, 2025. Accessed May 13, 2025. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/humanitarian-crisis-sudan-statement-humanitarian-coordination-forum-hcf>.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Sudan Situation Weekly Update Mapping – 12 May 2025. Internal document. Accessed May 13, 2025. [file:///C:/Users/eshra/Downloads/Sudan%20Situation%20Weekly%20Update%20Mapping-%2012%20May%202025%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/eshra/Downloads/Sudan%20Situation%20Weekly%20Update%20Mapping-%2012%20May%202025%20(1).pdf).

³ USA for UNHCR. "Sudan Crisis Explained." Last modified 2024. Accessed May 13, 2025. https://www.unrefugees.org/news/sudan-crisis-explained/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁴ World Food Programme. "Sudan Emergency." Accessed May 13, 2025. <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/sudan-emergency>.

⁵ World Health Organization. *Sudan and Sudan Refugee Response: WHO Health Emergency Appeal 2025*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2025. Accessed May 13, 2025. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/sudan--who-health-emergency-appeal-2025>.

emergency worsens, urgent and coordinated international intervention is imperative to avert further devastation⁶.

The political landscape and the Islamists' enduring influence

In recent narratives surrounding Sudanese political actors, attention often focuses on the framing of the two generals leading the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). However, this framing overlooks the broader political landscape, where multiple actors play significant roles – including the Islamist camp⁷, which remains a central and influential force in Sudanese politics, not only as enduring political actors, but also as instigators in the lead-up to the current war.

Following the ouster of their leadership in April 2019 through a popular uprising, Sudan's Islamists have remained a persistent force within the political and institutional landscape. Far from being sidelined, they have been engaged in an existential struggle to reclaim formal authority and re-establish their dominant role in national governance. Their enduring leverage is rooted in the extensive influence they cultivated over three decades in power, during which they embedded themselves deeply within the state apparatus – including the military, the security services, the public administration, and the judiciary – effectively consolidating control over the machinery of governance. Throughout their rule, the Islamists operated both as an independent political force and as the ideological incubator of the Sudanese army and state, shaping strategic doctrines, defining institutional mandates, and establishing durable channels of influence that continue to shape Sudan's governance landscape and future trajectories.

The Islamist regime was founded by Hassan al-Turabi in the 1980s as the National Islamic Front (NIF), which orchestrated the 1989 coup that brought Omar al-Bashir to power for the following three decades. During their rule, the Islamists transformed Sudan into an authoritarian theocratic state, embedding their ideology into the very fabric of state institutions. The regime implemented Sharia law not only as a legal framework but also as a political tool to consolidate power, suppress dissent, and enforce a rigid ideological order that permeated all aspects of Sudanese society.

Sudan faced heavy and detrimental international sanctions, beginning with its designation as a state sponsor of terrorism by the United States in 1993. This designation was a direct consequence of the regime's alliances with Islamist organizations and entities in the region and around the world, and its cultivation of ties with jihadist groups. Between 1991 and 1996, Sudan hosted Osama bin Laden, allowing him to establish businesses, training camps, and networks that facilitated the expansion of global jihadist operations. Under al-Bashir's leadership, the Sudanese security apparatus engaged in terrorist activities, including an attempt

⁶ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). "Sudan: MSF Forced to Halt Activities as Violence Engulfs Zamzam Camp." Last modified February 24, 2025. Accessed May 13, 2025. <https://msf.org.uk/article/sudan-msf-forced-halt-activities-violence-engulfs-zamzam-camp>.

⁷ Sidahmed, Abdel Salam. *Politics and Islam in Contemporary Sudan*. London: Routledge, 1997. <https://www.routledge.com/Politics-and-Islam-in-Contemporary-Sudan/Sidahmed/p/book/9781138978935>.

to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995⁸. These actions further deepened Sudan's international isolation and compounded its economic hardships.

Internally, the Islamists consolidated power by systematically marginalizing, politically excluding, and violently repressing opposition groups, effectively transforming Sudan into a de facto party-state, marked by deliberately weakened political opposition. Instead of addressing historical inequalities, the regime deepened existing social cleavages, further entrenching divisions within society by favouring specific groups and repressing others—particularly privileging Arab-Islamist elites from central and northern Sudan over marginalized communities in the south and west, such as those in South Sudan, Darfur, and the Nuba Mountains. In doing so, they reinforced patterns of exclusion and left behind a deeply fractured political order.

The rapid support force (RSF)

In 2009, then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that “the six-year-old conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, which the United Nations estimates has killed 300,000 people, is an example where environmental pressures morphed into war⁹”. In Darfur specifically, environmental degradation and widespread poverty served as underlying drivers of conflict. Long-term desertification, declining rainfall, and competition over shrinking arable land intensified tensions between nomadic Arab pastoralists and sedentary non-Arab farming communities. Rather than mediating these disputes equitably, the regime armed Arab militias – most notoriously the Janjaweed, a term derived from Arabic roughly meaning “devils on horseback” – to suppress other rebel movements in Darfur. It was in this context that the RSF began committing the core atrocities of the Darfur war — acts of ethnic cleansing and war crimes targeting non-Arab civilian populations — marking the beginning of a broader trajectory of violence that would later extend beyond the region. From there, the group steadily grew in size, influence, and operational capacity. Over time, it evolved into a powerful and increasingly autonomous actor, ultimately turning against the Islamist regime and SAF as its influence outgrew the control of its original state sponsors.

Owing to a sustained pattern of atrocities, beginning in Darfur and extending across Sudan, the RSF is widely regarded within Sudanese society as a brutal and predatory force, its record includes grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, most notably the systematic use of sexual violence as a tool of terror and control.

This distinction is critical in understanding the divergent perceptions of the RSF and the SAF within Sudan. While the SAF is widely regarded — particularly at the grassroots level — as less egregious in its conduct and as maintaining a more credible military doctrine, the RSF is

⁸ UNREDACTED: The National Security Archive Blog. *Document Friday: Mubarak, al-Bashir, al-Zawahiri, and bin Laden. The 1995 Assassination Attempt in Addis Ababa*. February 4, 2011. Accessed May 13, 2025. <https://unredacted.com/2011/02/04/document-friday-mubarak-al-bashir-al-zawahiriand-bin-laden-the-1995-assassination-attempt-in-addis-ababa/>.

⁹ Kofi Annan Foundation. *Global Warming Is a Security Threat*. May 2009. Accessed May 22, 2025. <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/publication/global-warming-is-a-security-threat-kofi-annan/>.

broadly viewed as a violent and ruthless force. However, among political elites and international observers, this contrast appears less pronounced, as their assessments often account for broader structural considerations, including the SAF's longstanding role in obstructing democratic reform and entrenching military dominance.

Militarily, the RSF has evolved from a loosely organized militia into a heavily armed and numerically significant force, though it remains poorly trained in terms of military doctrine — relying on mass recruitment, including of child soldiers, and indiscriminate violence rather than strategic military planning.

Beyond its military operations, the RSF has cultivated extensive political ambitions, seeking formal regional and international recognition through alliances forged opportunistically in response to shifting political conditions accompanying its ascent, and leveraging its coercive power to negotiate political concessions and consolidate its authority.

Economically, the RSF has established a vast and diversified network, controlling lucrative sectors such as gold mining, cross-border trade, and mercenary operations. These resources have enabled the group to sustain military expansion, engage in political bargaining, and forge regional alliances—most notably with the United Arab Emirates—as well as with armed actors and political factions in neighbouring countries including Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Kenya¹⁰.

When former president Omar al-Bashir first created the RSF, it was not merely a tool to suppress opposition and outsource state violence, but also a calculated counterbalance to the conventional military and intelligence services. By institutionalizing the RSF, al-Bashir aimed to fragment Sudan's security apparatus and ensure that no single body could amass enough power to threaten his authority. The result was a paramilitary force personally loyal to him and his regime—until April 2019, when, in the wake of the popular uprising, the RSF moved decisively to sever ties with al-Bashir as his authority crumbled under mounting public pressure.

The military's grip on power and political alliances

The Sudanese military, on the other hand, has been the bedrock of power for approximately 54 of Sudan's 69 years of independence, consistently aligning itself with at least one political incubator throughout its rule. Many characterize this as the military's instrumentalization by various political actors in their pursuit of authority. While the SAF is neither blameless nor devoid of agency, Sudan's modern history shows that the military has always secured ideological and institutional cover, facilitated governance, and enabled impunity at times — most notably the Islamists, who have been the most adept at leveraging this dynamic to entrench their influence. Yet this dependency also presents a strategic opening: the military's need for political allies compels it to tolerate a degree of civilian participation to maintain domestic and international legitimacy. For instance, the African Union does not admit

¹⁰ Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker. *Fueling Sudan's War: How Gold Exports and Smuggling Are Prolonging Sudan's War*. October 2024. Accessed May 13, 2025. <https://sudantransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GoldSectorEN.pdf>.

governments that seize power through military coups, and the broader international community is generally reluctant to directly endorse generals, prompting the military to seek political partnerships that can confer recognition and contain unrest.

The Sudanese Army's long-standing grip on power is marked by its engagement in some of the longest civil wars in modern history. Sudan has witnessed two protracted civil wars in the South: the first (1955–1972) lasted over 17 years, while the second (1983–2005) spanned 22 years, resulting in approximately two million deaths — primarily due to violence, famine, and disease — and the displacement of four million people¹¹, ultimately culminating in South Sudan's secession in 2011. In Darfur, the war persisted for 16 years, beginning in 2003 and concluding in 2019 with the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) following the civil uprising. These conflicts share a common pattern: rather than fostering national unity through inclusivity, the military's actions consistently reinforced marginalization and instability, often by arming rival ethnic groups to suppress rebellion. In South Sudan, the military backed Nuer, Shilluk, and other groups against the Dinka. In Darfur, it armed Arab militias, such as the Baggara and Rizeigat, against non-Arab rebel groups from the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit communities.

Beyond its involvement in armed conflicts, the military has systematically undermined democracy and civilian rule through over 17 military coups— the highest recorded number on the African continent—making military dominance a defining feature of the country's political landscape. This has persisted despite repeated mass uprisings against military rule, as Sudanese citizens have revolted three times, successfully toppling three dictatorships. The most recent, the 2019 Sudanese uprising, led to the ousting of longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir, underscoring the public's enduring rejection of military governance.

The force of grassroots resistance: Sudan's legacy of nonviolent struggle

The Sudanese people have a long history of resisting military rule and authoritarianism, with grassroots movements playing a crucial role in shaping the country's political trajectory. From the October Revolution in 1964 to the April Uprising in 1985 and the December Revolution in 2018–2019, popular resistance has repeatedly brought down authoritarian regimes.

Sudan's 2019 civil uprising marked a pivotal chapter in the country's legacy of civic resistance, distinguished by its nationwide reach, disciplined mobilization, and steadfast commitment to nonviolence. Protesters organized mass demonstrations, civil disobedience campaigns, and a landmark sit-in outside the military headquarters that lasted for two months. This encampment became the revolution's epicentre — a civic forum where youth from across Sudan convened to debate, deliberate, and articulate their vision for a democratic and pluralistic nation. Women played an exceptionally prominent role in the uprising, constituting nearly 70 percent of the demonstrators according to a BBC analysis of protest footage¹² — underscoring not only their numerical dominance, but also a profound collective determination to redefine their political

¹¹ PBS Frontline. *Sudan — Facts at a Glance*. Accessed May 22, 2025. <https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/sudan/facts.html>

¹² BBC News. "Sudan Protests: The Women Leading the Protests." *BBC*, April 2, 2019. Accessed May 25, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47738155>

and social status. Despite the brutal dismantling of the sit-in during the June 3rd, 2019 massacre — as an effort to crush the movement and suppress demands for civilian rule—protesters nonetheless upheld their commitment to peaceful resistance in the aftermath of the crackdown.

At the outset of the movement, Sudan’s Resistance Committees emerged as decentralized grassroots formations that became key engines of local mobilization and civic engagement. Their structure and tactics rendered them essential to sustaining momentum in the uprising against the al-Bashir regime, ultimately contributing to his ouster. Yet their role did not end with the fall of the regime; rather, they evolved into political, humanitarian, and service-oriented actors, adapting to the shifting political, socio-economic, and security landscape.

During the transitional period (2019–2021), the Resistance Committees expanded their role beyond protest coordination, emerging as a driving force in political advocacy. They acted as grassroots watchdogs — holding transitional authorities accountable and advocating for revolutionary demands. In parallel, they also contributed to the provision of basic services in support of the transitional government, reinforcing their role as both political and civic actors.

Their influence grew further after the October 2021 military coup, as they undertook the task of articulating their political vision through the production of constitutional drafts and political proposals. They also strengthened their organizational structures, along with their internal decision-making and coordination mechanisms. Through this process, they coalesced around a clear position: a categorical rejection of any form of power-sharing with the military establishment in the post-coup period.

At the onset of the conflict between the SAF and the RSF on April 15, 2023, most international organizations evacuated their staff, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis. In response, grassroots initiatives rapidly evolved into frontline humanitarian actors, stepping in to fill the critical gap left by the near-total withdrawal of international assistance. Central to this response was the formation of Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), which became the country’s primary first-response mechanism. These ERRs operated across both conflict-affected areas — delivering aid to impacted populations — and safer regions where they supported displaced people and host communities by coordinating medical assistance, distributing food supplies, facilitating evacuations, and maintaining essential infrastructure such as electricity and water.

In the absence of international aid, ERRs have been indispensable in coordinating and delivering humanitarian support, with over 700 operating across Sudan. They have redefined humanitarian action by emphasizing local agency, operational efficiency, and resource localization — reducing dependency on external actors, lowering costs, and maximizing the use of available assets. Among their many initiatives, ERRs established community kitchens that relied on local resources to provide food for displaced and vulnerable populations.

Their pivotal role in the humanitarian response has been acknowledged both domestically and internationally. Prior to suspending its support in January 2025, USAID provided targeted assistance to several ERRs. UN agencies — including OCHA and WHO — and international NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) have also formally recognized and, in some cases, supported their efforts.

Politically, and despite the unfavourable outlook and their current situational support to the Sudanese army, resistance committees remained committed to civilian governance, demonstrating resilience amid ongoing repression and acute resource constraints. Their

continued evolution reflects remarkable intelligence, adaptability, and organizational capacity, underscoring their enduring centrality in Sudan's democratic struggle. In 2024, ERRs were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their impact¹³, and in May 2025, ERRs were awarded the European Union's Human Rights Prize¹⁴.

Conventional political parties

Other significant actors in Sudan's political landscape are political parties, traditionally categorized as either ideological — such as the Umma Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and the Communist Party — or more modern, programmatic parties, some of which rose to greater prominence during the 2019 uprising. After the April 2023 war, several of these parties, alongside various civilian actors — including trade unions, civil society organizations, and professional associations — coordinated efforts to advocate for peace and democratic governance, culminating in the formation of the Taqaddum coalition (the Civil Front to Stop the War and Restore Democracy). However, internal disagreements emerged over a proposal to form a parallel government in RSF-controlled areas, leading to a formal split within Taqaddum in February 2025 and its eventual dissolution. Two factions subsequently emerged: one, Sumoud (Civil Democratic Alliance of the Revolutionary Forces), which retained most of the coalition's original constituency and remained committed to its foundational agenda of establishing a unified democratic front within Sudan; the other, aligning itself with the RSF under the banner of a "government of peace and unity." This fragmentation has further deepened political divisions and heightened the risk of Sudan's second territorial disintegration — this time in western Sudan.

By most measures, the Sumoud coalition appears to be the actor best positioned to lead a democratic transition in the country. However, it has been stripped of much — if not most — of the revolutionary legitimacy it once held during and after the civil uprising. This erosion stems primarily from growing disillusionment among broad segments of the public aligned with the revolutionary movement, particularly over the coalition's choices and policies during the transitional period — and even more so after the 2021 military coup and the outbreak of the April 2023 war. While the coalition has acknowledged some of its shortcomings, it has yet to demonstrate a sufficient degree of accountability or meaningful change in its political orientation.

One of the coalition's most significant recent missteps has been its tendency to place the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on an equal footing — a stance that has been widely rejected by the broader public. While the RSF is viewed by most Sudanese as a brutal and predatory militia, the army is generally perceived as possessing greater institutional legitimacy, a stronger code of conduct, and a more established doctrine. Many believe that, with meaningful security sector reform, the army could be brought in line with

¹³ Radio Dabanga. "Sudan Emergency Rooms Endorsed for Nobel Peace Prize." *Radio Dabanga*, May 21, 2024. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-emergency-rooms-endorsed-for-nobel-peace-prize>.

¹⁴ European External Action Service. "European Union in Sudan Human Rights Prize 2025." *European External Action Service*, May 15, 2025. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sudan/european-union-sudan-human-rights-prize-2025_en.

public expectations. The SAF's entrenched societal presence — reflected in the fact that nearly every family is said to have a relative or neighbour within its ranks — further amplifies the contrast between the two forces in the eyes of the public.

Nevertheless, many argue that such political misjudgements are, at least in part, a product of the political parties' prolonged marginalization from decision-making processes. From this perspective, their shortcomings should be seen as the growing pains of reintegration into political life and, as such, should be met with measured criticism and sustained support, rather than outright dismissal, as they attempt to navigate the complexities of the transition.

In parallel, several other coalitions have emerged since the outbreak of the April 2023 war, differing widely in composition — from civil society alliances to armed group formations. While each has articulated its own vision and roadmap for Sudan's post-conflict political trajectory, they have, nevertheless, largely failed to offer a coherent and actionable framework for the conduct of the peace process.

Armed groups and their alliances

Sudan is home to a substantial number of influential armed groups whose leverage derives from their control over territory and their representation of specific social constituencies. These groups have historically adopted fluid alliances based on shifting interests and are now divided in their support between the SAF and the RSF, in accordance with evolving strategic considerations. Malik Agar, Minni Minnawi, Jibril Ibrahim, and Sayed Tirik — leaders of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North (SPLM-N), the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the High Council of Beja Nazirs, respectively — have aligned themselves with the SAF, despite longstanding rivalries. Together with other factions, they maintain distinct zones of influence across the Blue Nile, Darfur, and eastern Sudan, while politically and militarily aligned with the SAF.

Conversely, Abdelaziz Adam al-Hilu, leader of the SPLM–North (al-Hilu faction) and a long-standing proponent of secular governance, recently signed onto the RSF's parallel government initiative following their endorsement of his key demand for a secular state. However, he has explicitly clarified that this alliance does not entail a merger of forces; rather, the SPLM-N (al-Hilu) and the RSF will remain distinct entities, with the arrangement constituting a tactical alignment around shared short-term objectives.

Meanwhile, Abdul Wahid Mohamed al-Nur, leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), maintains control over parts of the Jebel Marra region. Al-Nur, who has long refrained from formal peace talks, has shown increasing alignment with the RSF, while stopping short of formally endorsing its governance project.

Conclusion

Despite immense adversity, Sudan continues to demonstrate remarkable societal resilience and political potential. The sustained engagement of grassroots actors — particularly the Resistance Committees, youth-led initiatives, women’s groups, political parties, and professional associations — reflects a deep-rooted commitment to democratic transformation. The country possesses the structural foundations for prosperity: an active political landscape, mobilized civic movements advocating for democratic change, abundant natural resources, and a series of agreements that have integrated several armed groups into peace and political processes. Sudan also holds a crucial strategic position at the intersection of multiple regions, including the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and the Arab world. Yet the military stands at a crossroads, facing a fundamental choice: align with popular democratic aspirations or revert to authoritarianism and Islamist alliances — a path whose consequences will be felt not only domestically, through continued instability and repression, but also regionally and internationally, as it threatens to undermine broader security and stability. The international community likewise finds itself at a crossroads: either it supports Sudan and the aspirations of its people for peace, stability, and accountable governance, or it allows the region to descend further into protracted conflict, with far-reaching humanitarian and geopolitical repercussions.

Sudan’s path to stability remains obstructed by deep internal divisions and insufficient regional and international support, perpetuating its political volatility and humanitarian crisis.

Despite a series of mediation efforts — including the Jeddah Peace Talks co-facilitated by the United States and Saudi Arabia, Egypt’s Neighboring Countries Initiative, and the African Union’s High-Level Panel — no unified or sustained peace process has taken root. These initiatives have been hampered by fragmented and, at times, competing regional tracks, a lack of strategic coordination, and the unwillingness of mediators to exert meaningful leverage over the warring parties. Mediating actors have consistently failed to dedicate the time, political capital, or continuity of engagement required to build trust and momentum, often approaching Sudan as a peripheral concern addressed intermittently. If meaningful outcomes are to be achieved, these shortcomings must be directly addressed.

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