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THE 2023 CONFLICT IN SUDAN: HISTORY, CHALLENGES AND IMPACT.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS...



My name is Calypso Chosson. I integrated the Inspire Change Program in September 2023. This work-study program allowed me to work 9 months as a Junior Project Manager at CIVIPOL, the operator of the French Ministry of Interior in terms of international security cooperation. As a graduate in International Security and Defense studies, this position was the perfect opportunity for me. After my enterprise period, I attended the training period in New York, supervised by the CEO of the Conference of NGOs in a Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO).

I discovered the UN-system and more importantly the functioning of the Security Council. At my first SCNU meeting about the current situation in Sudan in early June, I realized that I didn't know many things about this conflict. Also, regarding the humanitarian crisis and the urgency of the situation, I decided to focus my research paper on this topic. It was convenient for my enterprise as well since it has many projects in the region (most of them including Sudan as a partner country). Then, I thought it would be interesting, not only for me but also for my enterprise, to analyse the impact of the conflict on the international security cooperation within the region. The objective of this article is to understand the origins of the conflict, to analyse what has been done and what are the new challenges, to finally imagine what could have been done to diminish and/or avoid the current consequences.

My name is Amina Ould Ali. As a master's student in Political Science, I was able to join the Inspire Change program during my gap year between my master's 1 and 2. For 9 months, I had the opportunity to work for 2AC Associés Audit et Conseil as a Junior Project Manager. The focus was on development aid projects in Africa.



During my studies, I had specialized in democratic transition issues, and when I arrived in New York, I was keen to pursue my research in this field, under the supervision of the CEO of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO). My corporate experience has given me an understanding of the complex challenges involved in implementing these projects in politically unstable contexts. Hence my interest in the current situation in Sudan, which is particularly alarming and hitherto little publicized. My aim in writing this article was to analyze the political trajectory that led Sudan to this conflict, and the impact it has had on Sudanese society, development and humanitarian aid, from an interactionist perspective where actors, issues and interests are continually intertwined and interacting. The aim is also to determine what could have been done differently, and to suggest ways of improving the situation by drawing lessons from current experience.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AML-CFT ESCAY	Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism in Eastern, Southern, Central Africa and Yemen
AML/CFT GHoA	Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism in the Greater Horn of Africa
AML/THB GHoA	Anti-Money Laundering and Trafficking in Human Beings in the Greater Horn of Africa
APS	Association of Sudanese Professionals
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
BMM	Better Migration Management
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
EAPCCO	Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation
EU	European Union
GAPW	Global Action to Prevent War and Armed Conflict
ICC	International Criminal Court
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IO	International Organization
NCP	National Congress Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service

OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
UN	United Nations
UNAMIS	United Nations' Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNGA	United Nations' General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees
ROCK	Regional Operational Centre in Khartoum
SSU	Sudanese Socialist Union
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SCNU	Security Council of the United Nations
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
TMC	Transitional Military Council
USA	United States of America
WFP	World Food Program

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Sudan is affecting directly human security in her seven components: economic security, sanitation security, personnel security, food security, environmental security, political security and security of the community¹.

Sudan is struggling to end this conflict, mostly because it is a failed state. The notion of “failed state” is “*no way to refers to a simple financial ‘bankruptcy’, but rather to a more massive [...] state ‘failure’, which for some is akin to a veritable collapse*”². The characteristics of these countries are manifold: disengagement from or non-integration into the globalization process; stagnant economies; uncontrolled demographics; conflict-ridden geography; disputed natural resources; deficient sovereign sector... Indeed, “*these countries have the greatest difficulty in assuming their sovereign responsibilities. Security, justice, education and basic healthcare are no longer guaranteed. In the end, these states find themselves in a situation of great instability [...]*”³. So, even if the number of sovereign states has risen from just 85 in 1950 to 192 by the 2000s⁴, many of them are unable to fully exercise their internal prerogatives. This is why the concept has been the subject of numerous studies⁵ and debates⁶ since its emergence in the second half of the 20th century.

¹ PNUD, Mondial report on human development, New York, 1994 [online], <<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1994frcompletefnostatpdf.pdf>>, (consulted on 08/21/2024), p. 26.

² GAULME François, ““Failed states”, “fragile states”: twin concepts of a new global thinking”, *Foreign Policy*, n°1, 2011, p. 19.

³ MICHAÏLOF Serge, « Comment sortir de l’ornière les pays « faillis » ? », *Politique étrangère*, n°1, 2011, p. 32.

⁴ The various waves of decolonization, which took place mainly in the 1960s-1970s and again in the 1990s, contributed significantly to the growing number of states on the international stage.

⁵ The Fund for Peace has established a Failed State Index, now Fragile States Index, based on twelve indicators. Sudan has a score of 106.2. The index has 11 categories, from “very sustainable” (15.1) to “very high alert” (111.7). Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index, Annual Report 2022*, pp. 1-53.

⁶ Initially, we confused easily the notions of “failed”, “weak”, “fragile” states. Even if they are connected, some nuances have been established over the years. GAULME François, ““Failed states”, “fragile states”: twin concepts of a new global thinking”, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 1-224.

The collapse of the state apparatus is an evolutionary process⁷ that can be more or less accelerated by the existence or even the accumulation of the above-mentioned risk factors. Once this process is complete, the state becomes nothing more than a chimera, having lost all the attributes that make it what it is⁸.

However, the origins of a state's intrinsic weakness can be diverse and varied: *"In many developing countries⁹, state weakness can be explained, in part, by the absence of war and external threat at the time of their creation. [...]. Conversely, a decrease in the number and/or intensity of armed conflicts and threats can lead to a crisis of statehood, with, where ethnic, linguistic and cultural tensions exist, a real disintegration of the state, with phenomena of criminalization, or "state failure". Another international process that has affected states, particularly in developing countries, is the export and import of regimes and institutions¹⁰".* Many African, South American and Asian states are in this situation.

To understand the long dictatorships that have characterized Sudan's history, it is crucial to examine the constellations of interests between the various players. These internal and external dynamics are at the root of the country's political evolution and its difficulties in undertaking a democratic transition, the process by which a state moves from an authoritarian regime to one in which democratic institutions are established, guaranteeing political participation, civil liberties and the protection of human rights.

⁷ Along this process, the country can go through a state of fragility, crumbling, disintegration... Hopefully then, this process is reversible.

⁸ For Max Weber, the state is *"a political enterprise of an institutional character whose administrative leadership successfully claims, in the enforcement of regulations, the monopoly of legitimate physical coercion", all "within a determinable geographical territory"*. Despite the Western character of this definition, the state as a form of political organization is closely linked to notions of sovereignty, power and legitimacy. These notions are largely called into question in the case of a "failed" state. WEBER Max, *Economy and society*, Collection Pocket Agora, 2003, pp. 96-100.

⁹ Since the second half of the 20th century, countries have been divided into different categories according to their level of development, mainly economic, although a country's level of development also depends on other statistical indices such as the Human Development Index (HDI), which includes life expectancy at birth, level of education, literacy rate and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Gradually, a distinction was made between countries of the South or developing countries (DCs) and countries of the North or developed countries. Today, many international institutions have abandoned this distinction, which was deemed obsolete, even degrading, because it stemmed from Western thinking rooted in a historical period. This move was also prompted by the fact that some countries could not be placed in either category, as they had characteristics specific to both. Other terms have also been used to designate developing countries, such as "Third World countries" or "underdeveloped countries". Least developed countries (LDCs) are a sub-category of developing countries. Bankrupt countries" are often also DCs.

¹⁰ BATTISTELLA Dario, PETITEVILLE Franck, SMOUTS Marie-Claude, VENNESSON Pascal, *Dictionnaire des relations internationales*, Dalloz, n°3, 2012, p. 198.

Often fraught with pitfalls, especially in crisis contexts, where factors such as ethnic divisions, regional inequalities, a poorly managed economy and geopolitical pressures make the establishment of stable democratic government complex and fragile.

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has experienced a succession of authoritarian regimes and often aborted attempts at democratization. These regimes have survived by paradoxically relying on the very dynamics that were weakening and dragging the country deeper into crisis, such as regional and economic inequalities, and external influences, which have hampered efforts to establish genuine democracy. Identity-based and religious explanations of the conflicts, although often put forward by the actors themselves, are insufficient to understand the depth of the crisis.

The current humanitarian crisis, intensified by clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023, has exacerbated the deterioration in living conditions. The fighting has led to massive population displacements, a growing humanitarian emergency, and severely disrupted international development cooperation and humanitarian aid efforts. The challenges facing international initiatives include not only the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground, but also obstacles to humanitarian access and diplomatic tensions that complicate the delivery of effective assistance.

This analysis will explore the origins and processes that led to the current conflict, and its impact on international security cooperation, development cooperation and humanitarian aid within the region. We will examine how these dynamics have shaped today's Sudan, highlighting the specific challenges faced by international and regional initiatives in responding to this complex situation. By delving deeper into internal and external dynamics, we will seek to understand why efforts to establish a democratic regime have been so difficult, and what the prospects are for Sudan's future.

For the purposes of our analysis, we have chosen to focus our study on the post-independence period up to the current crisis in Sudan. This temporal delimitation is mainly dictated by practical constraints, such as the lack of time and data available for more extensive coverage. By focusing our attention on this specific period, we aim to provide a more in-depth and nuanced analysis of the dynamics that have shaped modern Sudan and the contemporary challenges facing by the country.

Examining this period allows us to encompass key moments in Sudanese history, including the various phases of authoritarian governance, failed attempts of democratization, and the internal and external factors that have contributed to the country's political evolution, thereby providing a better understanding of how successive regimes have maintained their power, why democratization efforts have failed, and how geopolitical and economic influences have impacted the transition to a stable democracy.

For this reason, we propose to begin with an analysis of Sudan's historical dynamics from independence to the challenges of democratization, before looking at the outbreak and developments of the 2023 conflict, with an emphasis on the actions of the international community. We then examine the impact of this conflict on international security cooperation in the region, before concluding with a study of the conflict's impact on humanitarian aid and development cooperation in Sudan.

PART 1: Sudan's historical dynamics

To understand the long dictatorships that have marked Sudan's history, we need to look at the constellations of interests formed between the governed and those who govern¹¹, a history rooted in a dense network of internal and external dynamics. Identity-based and religious explanations of the Sudanese conflicts are insufficient and misleading, although they are often used by the actors themselves, to understand the path that led to the latest events. These identity-based paradigms tend to crystallize the conflicts¹² that have raged since Sudan's independence in 1956.

¹¹ DOBRY Michel, "Legitimacy and rational calculation. Remarks on some "complications" of sociology of Max Weber", in FAVRE Pierre, HAYWARD Jack et SCHEMEIL Yves (dir.), *Being governed. Studies in honor of Jean Leca*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2003, pp. 127-147.

¹² BACH Jean-Nicolas Bach, CHEVRILLON-GUIBERT Raphaëlle, FRANCK Alice, "Introduction to the theme: Sudan, the end of an authoritarian domination?", *African Policy*, 2020, 158, pp. 5-31.

I. From independence to the challenges of democratization

In addition to ethnic divisions, hopes for democratization have regularly come up against complex internal dynamics, regional inequalities, an often poorly managed economy, and a variety of external influences, from international interventions to geopolitical pressures.

This section will attempt to understand how these dictatorships lasted so long, and how Sudan's political, economic and social evolution since independence in 1956 has shaped its relationship to democratization. We also seek to understand the extent to which internal and external dynamics have impacted on the transition to a democratic regime. First, therefore, we look back at the country's colonial heritage and the first steps towards independence, before looking at the cycle of military dictatorships, attempts at democratization and the impact of foreign influence on the latter, before concluding this section with a look at the post-Bashir transition and its prospects. Although we follow the temporality of events, the plan does not follow a strictly chronological approach. Its structure has been chosen to better understand the dynamics that have shaped the evolution of Sudan since its independence. A timeline has been placed at the end of this section to provide a clear overview of key moments.

1. The colonial legacy and the first steps towards independence: the roots of democratic challenges

British and Egyptian colonial influences¹³

Sudan's history is profoundly influenced by the British and Egyptian colonial periods, whose policies shaped the administrative structure, regional disparities, ethnic tensions and divisions, and unequal policies that persist to this day. Although the country was officially an Anglo-Egyptian condominium, day-to-day management was dominated by the British¹⁴, resulting in a rigidly centralized administration aimed at maintaining strict control over the territory. This mode of government contributed profoundly to the lack of local democratic institutions, constituting a major obstacle for Sudan after independence.

¹³ WISSA WASSEF Cérès, "Sudan: twenty years of independence", *Arab World*, 1976/3 (N°73), pp. 31-41.

¹⁴ A Governor General was appointed by decree of the Khedive of Egypt on British recommendation only. He could not subsequently be dismissed by the Egyptian regime.

The colonial administration of Sudan clearly differentiated between the north and south of the country. While the north remained relatively stable under British rule, the south suffered the effects of a dual administration, British and Egyptian, which accentuated disparities, resulting in two very different realities: a north influenced by Arab culture and Islam, and a south marked by Christian and African influences. The British consciously maintained this division to prevent Sudanese nationalism in the north from threatening their control over the south and other African possessions. British colonial policies profoundly reinforced ethnic and religious divisions in Sudan, privileging northern elites while marginalizing peripheral regions such as the south and Darfur. The internal borders drawn by the British accentuated these differences, weakening national unity and exacerbating internal tensions. In the south, they isolated populations from northern Arab influences by creating “Closed Districts”, promoting Christianization and the use of English, which accentuated north-south tensions and further marginalized southern populations¹⁵. In Darfur, even though the region thrived as a commercial crossroads before colonization, British “indirect rule” led to an administrative carve-up based on tribal allegiances, aggravating tensions between communities, stagnating development and exacerbating ethnic divisions. All this culminated in the mutiny of the Equatoria Corps in 1955, which marked the start of a protracted civil war fueled by a sense of oppression and marginalization. The Anya-Nya¹⁶ movement was born, and a guerrilla war supported by Western powers, the Vatican and Israel began. After independence in 1956, the systematic Arabization imposed in the south¹⁷ led to a prolonged armed struggle for autonomy.

The colonial legacy not only divided Sudan, but also laid the foundations for post-independence conflicts, aggravating ethnic and regional tensions. Policies of domination, rather than development, left lasting traces, complicating the establishment of a unified Sudanese state after independence, and this fragmentation directly contributed to the failure of early attempts at post-independence governance, plunging the country into chronic instability.

¹⁵ The idea behind these policies was to integrate these populations into a large East African federation under British control.

¹⁶ “Anya-Nya” (or ‘Anyanya’) refers to a rebel movement and the first guerrilla army organized in southern Sudan during the First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972). The term “Anya-Nya” literally means “snake venom” in the Ma'di language, one of the languages spoken in southern Sudan, symbolizing the fierce struggle of the southern Sudanese against the central government in Khartoum.

¹⁷ Blacks were excluded from positions of responsibility and Arabic was imposed in education and administration. Christian missionary schools were nationalized, and foreign priests expelled. This policy was perceived by the southern populations as a continuation of colonization in another form.

The first post-independence political experiments: analysis of their failure and the instability of civilian governments (1956-1958)

After independence on January 1, 1956, Sudan seemed to be heading towards a Western-style democracy, but this period was soon marked by political instability. From 1956 to 1958, a succession of civilian governments failed to stabilize the country. The influential but minority Umma Party tried to hold on to power through fragile coalitions, while the Communist Party, supported by the trade unions, called for radical reforms. Economic crises, such as the fall in cotton sales, and ideological tensions paralyzed Parliament. Faced with this impasse, on November 17, 1958, the army, under the leadership of General Ibrahim Abboud, seized power in a coup, suspending the Constitution, dissolving Parliament and banning political parties. This coup not only put an end to democratic processes, but also eroded popular confidence in civilian governments, establishing a tradition of military intervention in Sudanese politics. The repression that followed drove the Communist Party underground, where it became a major opposition force.

In 1964, a popular uprising triggered by violence at Khartoum University led to the overthrow of the military regime, putting an end to the Abboud dictatorship. Unfortunately, these early years of independence not only retarded Sudan's democratic development, but also established a cycle of instability and mistrust of civil institutions that continues to this day¹⁸.

The root causes of the North-South civil war

Sudan has seen the richness of its cultural and religious diversity exploited by political elites to divide the population: instead of being a unifying force, diversity has become a tool of domination. The predominantly Muslim and Arab North tried to impose its hegemony on the South, where Christian and animist communities resisted. Khartoum's Arabization and Islamization policies alienated southerners, creating a strong sense of exclusion¹⁹.

¹⁸ WISSA WASSEF Cérès, "Sudan: twenty years of independence", Op. Cit., pp. 31-41.

¹⁹ This resentment has its roots in the history of slavery, where Southerners were trafficked by Northern merchants. The British colonial administration exacerbated these divisions by deliberately isolating the South from northern influences, resulting in an already fragmented Sudan at independence in 1956.

Natural resources, particularly oil, have played a central role in the conflicts between northern and southern Sudan. Discovered mainly in the South, they have been exploited by the central government in Khartoum without the benefits being redistributed to local populations. This asymmetry has fueled a feeling of dispossession among southerners, exacerbating already existing tensions. This center-periphery opposition is therefore not limited to simple North-South opposition, but constitutes a struggle between a rich, developed center and neglected, impoverished peripheries²⁰. The wars in the South, Darfur, the East, Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains illustrate this violence exerted by the center against marginalized regions. These regions, integrated into Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian colonial era, have been systematically neglected in terms of socio-economic development. The conflict in Darfur is a striking example of the violence born of this marginalization. Recurrent droughts and pressure on land have exacerbated tensions, particularly between farmers and pastoralists. The terms “Zourga” and “Arab” in Darfur, initially linked to ways of life, have evolved into politically instrumentalized ethnic identities²¹. The Khartoum government has manipulated these divisions by supporting the Janjaweed militias, responsible for numerous atrocities. Identity- and religion-based explanations for Sudan's conflicts are therefore inadequate and often misleading, despite their frequent use by the actors involved. These identity-based paradigms tend to freeze and crystallize conflicts by reinforcing divisions²².

Added to this is international influence: the Anya-Nya rebel movement, fighting against the Khartoum government, has received significant support from various international players. Israel has provided weapons and military training as part of its strategy to limit Arab influence in Africa. Uganda offered training bases and logistical support, while Ethiopia provided assistance due to its own conflicts with Sudan. Charities and churches, mainly European and North American, supported Anya-Nya for humanitarian reasons and in response to religious persecution. Some Western governments and anti-communist groups saw Anya-Nya as a potential ally against Soviet or communist influence in the region.

²⁰ LAVERGNE Marc, “Chapter 15 – The Sudanese conflicts, or the failure of a secular, unitary nation-state project”, Béatrice Giblin ed., *The conflicts in the world. Geopolitical Approach*, Armand Colin, 2011, pp. 209-222.

²¹ MARCHAL Roland, “The conflict in Darfur, the blind spot in North-South negotiations in Sudan”, *African Policy*, vol. 95, no. 3, 2004, pp. 125-146.

²² BACH Jean-Nicolas, CHEVRILLON-GUIBERT Raphaëlle, FRANCK Alice, “Introduction to the theme: Sudan, the end of an authoritarian domination?”, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 5-31.

This international support was crucial to the rebel movement's survival, but it also helped to internationalize the conflict, drawing more external actors into the civil war, leading to a complexification of the movement's internal dynamics, introducing external agendas into a struggle that was first and foremost a rebellion against marginalization and exclusion.

These conflicts, whether the North-South civil war or the conflict in Darfur, reveal the complex dynamics of marginalization, economic exploitation and the manipulation of identities. They underline the challenges Sudan has faced in its quest for unity and democratization. On the eve of the Darfur war in 2002, the situation in the outlying regions was disastrous. Most of Darfur's 9,000 villages had no teachers, despite the high population density²³. These inequalities fueled armed conflict, with rebel movements demanding socio-spatial justice and an equitable sharing of wealth and power. This dynamic is similar to the one that led the South to rebel against Khartoum, illustrating the importance of regional marginalization in triggering conflict and international influence.

2. The cycle of military dictatorship and attempts at democratization

The military regimes of Abdoulaye Mohamed Nimeiry (1969-1985) and Omar al-Bashir (1989-2019)

The military regimes of Gaafar al-Nimeiry (1969-1985) and Omar al-Bashir (1989-2019) offer a glimpse of two approaches to governance marked by similarities, notably in their tendency to centralize power and repress opposition, but also marked by notable differences in their diplomatic and ideological dynamics.

Gaafar al-Nimeiry came to power in 1969 in a military coup that put an end to parliamentary rule. Inspired by the Nasserite model, he dissolved the political parties and set up a “democratic republic” dominated by the Revolutionary Council. Nimeiry initially adopted a socialist line, nationalizing numerous companies. But the inefficiency of these state-controlled enterprises and a cumbersome bureaucracy led to an economic crisis that prompted him to revise his alliances and seek new economic partners.

²³ At the time, 88% of the population lived in rural areas. WISSA WASSEF Cérès, “Sudan: twenty years of independence”, Op. Cit., pp. 31-41.

First, he aligned himself with the Soviet Union, hoping that their help would stabilize his regime. However, the disappointing results of this alliance prompted him to turn to the West. In 1971, he narrowly escaped a Communist coup d'état, which prompted him to strengthen his personal power by relying more on strategic alliances: the attempt by Communists and pro-Communist officers to overthrow him on July 19 was a failure, as in less than 48 hours, military aid from Egypt and Libya enabled him to regain control, launching a violent crackdown on the insurgents (the leaders of the movement were brought to justice and executed). He was immediately elected President of the Republic.

This episode led him to reorient his international alliances: from 1977 onwards, Nimeiry drew closer to the United States and West Germany, gradually abandoning socialist principles in favor of a market economy, marking the first stage in the de-ideologization of his regime. The Addis Ababa Agreement signed in 1972, granting limited autonomy to Southern Sudan, illustrates this strategic flexibility: it was an attempt at internal stabilization to avoid a complete collapse of the regime.

In a further attempt to stabilize the country, he dissolved the Revolutionary Council and created the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) in 1971 to fill the political vacuum left by the dissolution of the parties and avoid the instability associated with Western-style parliamentary democracy. Although in theory it has the power to question ministers and even demand their resignation through the Political Bureau (of which the most important members are members), in reality its influence is very limited due to conflicts of interest: many ministers are themselves members of this bureau. In addition, the limited financial resources available meant that the initial ambitions of the rural development and decentralization movement failed to materialize, especially as some of the most influential ministers were given the task of directly supervising the administration of the provinces, thus reinforcing de-concentration. In the end, these various apparatuses served more as tools to legitimize Nimeiry's autocratic control over the country. In the end, the impact of his regime on Sudanese democracy was mixed: although it tamped down the chronic instability of the early post-independence years, by stifling opposition voices and reinforcing its authority, it greatly contributed to limiting the possibility of a genuine pluralist democracy²⁴.

²⁴ WISSA WASSEF Cérés, "Sudan: twenty years of independence", Op. Cit., pp. 31-41.

Omar al-Bashir came to power in 1989 in a coup supported by the National Islamic Front (NIF)²⁵, with the aim of re-Islamizing Sudanese society and profoundly transforming the country by promoting a new national identity based on strict Islam: *“This project applies not only to the individual but also to political society. The aim is unanimity, the institutional reflection of which would be the system of popular congresses and a federal administrative system, as shaped at a major conference held in Khartoum in 1990”*²⁶.

However, this project met with strong resistance, particularly in the Christian and animist south, leading to an intensification of the conflict. Unlike Nimeiry, al-Bashir adopted a more pragmatic approach over time, adjusting his policies in line with economic challenges and international pressures; hence the fact that the first phase of al-Bashir's regime was marked by strict application of Sharia law and a foreign policy of defiance towards the West. But by the late 1990s, he had become an international pariah, not least because of his alleged support for terrorism. He moderated his Islamist discourse and distanced himself from radical figures such as Hassan al-Tourabi. This marked the beginning of a process of de-ideologization, in which Islamist ideology took a back seat to the survival of the regime. Jean-Nicolas Bach explains that the Islamist experience in Sudan, as elsewhere, reveals that the discourse, economic ambitions and ideological framework of Islamists once in power are transformed by their lack of “professionalization” and by local and international circumstances and dynamics. Thus, the structures of state domination adjust with the adaptations necessary to maintain the regime in place and its elites²⁷.

Economically, al-Bashir benefited from the oil windfall of the 2000s to finance his regime and contain internal tensions. However, the independence of South Sudan in 2011, which deprived Sudan of its oil revenues, precipitated a major economic crisis²⁸.

²⁵ The NIF is a Sudanese Islamist political movement. Founded by Hassan al-Tourabi, it played a central role in Sudan's 1989 coup led by Omar al-Bashir. The NIF sought to establish an Islamist regime in Sudan, promoting an ideology based on a strict interpretation of Islam. The movement was influential in the reorganization of the Sudanese state and society along Islamist lines and had a significant impact on the country's domestic and foreign policy during the 1990s.

²⁶ LAVERGNE Marc, MARCHAL Roland, Sudan, “The failure of the Islamic experience?”, *African Policy*, 1997, n° 66, pp. 3-12.

²⁷ BACH Jean-Nicolas, CHEVRILLON-GUIBERT Raphaëlle, FRANCK Alice, “Introduction to the theme: Sudan, the end of an authoritarian domination?”, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 5-31.

²⁸ DESHAYES Clément, “Urban struggle in Sudan. Political ethnography of two protest movements: Girifna and Sudan Change Now”, Doctoral thesis in anthropology, Saint-Denis, Université Paris 8, 2019.

Faced with this new reality, al-Bashir intensified his cooperation with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while seeking to diversify the economy through gold mining. Despite these efforts, the crisis worsened, exacerbated by galloping inflation and food shortages. Successive constitutional amendments (2011, 2016, 2017) strengthened his powers, enabling him to remain in power despite the economic crises. The regime, although mixed parliamentary-presidential in theory, was in reality dominated by the executive, with a parliament devoid of real powers. Omar al-Bashir relied on the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)²⁹ and militias such as the RSF³⁰ to maintain his authority. By 2010, the NISS had been authorized to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions, reinforcing state violence. This repression, combined with the post-independence economic crisis, led to an upsurge in protest movements and ultimately to the ousting of al-Bashir.

Abortive periods of democratization

Sudan's transition to democracy following the popular uprising of 1985, which overthrew Gaafar Nimeiry, was brief and fraught with failure. Between 1986 and 1989, the civilian government of Sadiq al-Mahdi attempted to reform the structures inherited from the military regime but came up against a failing and corrupt system. The rise of Islamist factions and the intensification of internal conflicts, notably in Darfur and Southern Sudan, exacerbated the divisions. Ethnic and religious tensions, manipulated by successive regimes, fueled these conflicts. In 1989, these fragilities culminated in a military coup led by Omar al-Bashir, putting an end to this short-lived democratic experiment and plunging Sudan into a new era of authoritarian rule and political fragmentation. The lack of international support and the absence of national consensus also weakened this attempt at democratization.

²⁹ The NISS is the Sudan's security intelligence agency, set up to monitor and repress all forms of opposition to the government.

³⁰ Created in 2013, the RSF are a Sudanese paramilitary force descended from the Janjawid. Officially created to fight the rebels, they played a key role in the repression of the 2019 protests and are at the heart of the current conflict.

The role of international stakeholders

In October 2017, the partial lifting of US sanctions, after more than 20 years of embargo, had raised hopes of a recovery for the Sudanese economy, weakened in particular by the loss of oil revenues following South Sudan's independence in 2011. But the economy, still hampered by limited industrialization, endemic corruption and excessive security spending, has failed to stabilize. Despite a shift towards gold mining, the collapse of the Sudanese pound and galloping inflation of around 35% continued to plague the situation³¹. Financial aid from the Gulf States and the lifting of sanctions have not prevented the dollar from skyrocketing on the parallel market, nor the cost of consumer goods from rising. In January 2018, numerous protests broke out in several major cities, including Khartoum, against the high cost of living, exacerbated by the devaluation of the currency and the removal of subsidies on basic necessities. They reveal the vulnerability of an urban population often below the poverty line. In response, Omar al-Bashir's regime has tightened its policies, drawing on its economic and political supporters. Repression intensified, while measures against the black market, such as raising the official exchange rate and limiting cash withdrawals, paradoxically worsened the economic situation, reducing the economy to those who benefited from proximity to the regime. This economic suffocation led to the closure of many factories, unable to cope with the high cost of imports, while petrol shortages signaled the extent of the difficulties. This disastrous economic situation was obviously exacerbated by the internal conflicts in Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile, which took up an increasing share of the state budget, already largely devoted to the armed and security forces (over 70%).

The government's reluctance to reform its economic and security policies in depth seemed to condemn the country to persistent difficulties. Hence its diplomatic attempts and various economic alliances. In reality, the various foreign relations only exacerbated internal tensions and weakened the country's political structures, even as they contributed to the strengthening and concentration of power in the hands of Sudanese elites, limiting the scope for genuine democratic reform. Foreign support enabled Nimeiry to maintain his authority without responding to growing democratic demands³².

³¹ FRANCK Alice, "Sudan", François Bost ed., *Economical pictures of the world 2019. Geopolitics. Geoeconomics*, Armand Colin, 2018, pp. 270-271.

³² Egypt and Libya decided to intervene to support Nimeiry during the pro-communist state coup of 1971.

Among the various alliances forged, a complex relationship with China has emerged: China has been a key player in the Sudanese oil industry since the mid-1990s. Anxious to secure energy resources for its growth, China has invested massively in Sudan's oil fields and infrastructure. In 2008, Sudanese oil imports by China reached \$6.33 billion, consolidating Beijing as Sudan's main trading partner. In addition to oil, China has financed infrastructure projects such as the El-Gaili power plant, the Merowe dam for over 2 billion dollars, which has doubled Sudan's electricity capacity to around 1,250 megawatts and improved irrigation, the installation of 1,745 km of power lines for 466 million dollars and the Kaidar dam. These projects, although useful for the country's development, led to the displacement of 40,000 villagers, resulting in brutal repression and suffering. As a result, this alliance has attracted a great deal of international criticism, not least because of China's sale of arms to Sudan for use in the Darfur conflict. Although Beijing ceased deliveries after the embargo of December 2005, China is seen as a key supporter of the Sudanese regime, placing its economic interests above humanitarian considerations³³.

However, it should be remembered that Russian arms sales exceeded \$700 million during the same period, and that the United States was by far the main supplier of arms to Sudan³⁴. China has often rejected these criticisms, seeing them as motivated by domestic political interests, particularly American, rather than objective facts. Whether in the Middle East, Africa or Sudan, many are convinced that the United States' insistence on sanctions against Sudan, and China's participation in the embargo, is designed to weaken the regime and eliminate Chinese influence in Africa³⁵.

This “scramble for Africa” is also reflected in Russia's expansion on the continent. Military-technical cooperation” agreements, the involvement of private military companies and access to mining resources are the main manifestations of this trend. Russian African relations date back to the post-Cold War era, but they have taken on a new dimension with players such as M Invest, linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, which secured mining concessions in Sudan in 2017.

³³ China has supplied arms to Sudan since 1981, reaching a total value of 480 million dollars in 2008.

³⁴ SHICHOR Yitzhak, “Influence without interference: China’s relations with Sudan”, *Les Temps Modernes*, vol. 657, no. 1, 2010, pp. 52-72.

³⁵ Ali Muniib of the Eastern Sudan Front, *Khartoum Monitor*, June 8th, 2007.

In 2018, Russia became Sudan's second-largest trading partner, and mercenaries from the Wagner Group were deployed to support Omar al-Bashir's regime. After the latter's fall in 2019, Russian-Sudanese cooperation continued all the same: generals Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dogolo took diplomatic steps to obtain Russian support after the military coup of October 2021, which ousted civilians from power. Hemedti's trip to Moscow in February 2022, shortly after the invasion of Ukraine, testifies to this desire to strengthen ties with Russia. Unlike Western powers, Sudan favors security support from Moscow without political conditions. This approach strengthens authoritarian regimes in times of fragility but does not promote stability or democratization³⁶. For example, Russian intervention in Mozambique failed, and the presence of the Wagner group in Mali drew criticism for human rights violations³⁷.

Nor do relations with regional states facilitate the establishment of a political system conducive to democratization. The conflict in Darfur has been directly linked to Chadian tensions since the 1980s: the influx of Chadian groups fleeing drought and political instability during the Zaghawa revolt in 1988, and Idriss Déby's seizure of power in Chad in 1990, supported by the Sudanese Zaghawa, exacerbated tensions³⁸. The XX^e century saw Darfur's population grow from 300,000 to 6 million, but without any improvement in infrastructure or agro-pastoral resources. Investment was concentrated elsewhere, leaving Darfur neglected, with little infrastructure except for the extension of the railway from El-Obeid to Nyala in 1960³⁹. This lack of development led to a famine in 1984-1985, and tensions between nomads and sedentary people over access to resources turned into open conflict, supported by the central state.

In the end, international relations reinforced the power of the Sudanese elites while limiting the prospects for profound political transformation. The regime, supported by these external alliances, has shown a reluctance to engage in the reforms necessary to meet the democratic aspirations of its population, condemning the country to prolonged instability.

³⁶ Russia's failed intervention in Mozambique, and the Wagner Group's presence in Mali, which drew criticism for human rights violations, are perfect examples.

³⁷ MAHE Anne-Laure and RICARD Maxime, “Local dynamics, global strategies: Russian support for Malian and Sudanese military powers”, *National Defense Review*, vol. 852, no. 7, 2022, pp. 131-137.

³⁸ MARCHAL Roland, “The conflict in Darfur, the blind spot in North-South negotiations in Sudan”, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 125-146.

³⁹ LAVERGNE Marc, “Chapter 15 – The Sudanese conflicts, or the failure of a secular, unitary nation-state project”, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 209-222.

The internationalization of the conflict has added a further layer of complexity. The agendas of external actors, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have often prioritized regional stability and the fight against terrorism, downplaying the specific needs of Darfur's local communities. Similarly, the interventions of the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have sometimes been perceived as disconnected from local realities, introducing solutions that have not always taken into account the aspirations of local populations⁴⁰. This view is echoed by Dr Robert Zuber, institutional executive director of the Global Action to Prevent War and Armed Conflict (GAPW)⁴¹ : *“We have no interest in being known as Sudan “experts” but in giving voice to Africans who have much more talent than visibility. This is true for us across the board – using our access and platforms to magnify good ideas and practices elsewhere, along with keeping a fairly robust policy audience aware of what the UN is doing and not doing. African communities have too many external players – including NGOs -- in their business already. We have done our best not to be another of those”*.

All this has contributed to an environment where violence and repression have taken precedence over political dialogue and inclusive participation. The consequences of this conflict continue to weigh on democratization efforts, making the transition to true democracy in Sudan still uncertain and complex.

3. The post-Bahir transition: challenges and prospects for democratization

The dynamics of the 2019 revolution

Sudan's 2019 revolution was a landmark in the struggle for democratic change, catalyzed by unprecedented popular mobilization. The protest, fueled by a growing economic crisis, began with demonstrations in 2013 and 2016, but gained significant momentum in 2018.

⁴⁰ AMBROSETTI David, “Managerial emergencies and formalities in the face of “other people's” violence: the UN and Sudan”, *Acts of social science research*, vol. 174, no. 4, 2008, pp. 80-99.

⁴¹ According to their website, GAPW was developed as an “UN-based, transnational network of civil society, academic and diplomatic partners dedicated to practical measures for reducing levels of global conflict and to removing institutional and ideological impediments to addressing armed violence, mass atrocities and severe human rights violations at the earliest possible stages”.

Rising prices for essential products, following the end of subsidies on them, have exacerbated the population's difficulties. Initially in Damazin and Darfur, the protests eventually intensified in Atbara with the burning of a National Congress Party (NCP) office. This popular uprising was characterized by a massive mobilization of young people and women. Neighborhood Resistance Committees, made up mainly of young people, played a crucial role in organizing the demonstrations. The Association of Sudanese Professionals (APS) coordinated the actions with powerful slogans such as “Fall is everything!” and “Freedom, peace and justice!”. The Khartoum sit-in, which began on April 6, 2019, became the symbol of the revolt. This mass gathering persisted until June 3, 2019. Among the emblematic slogans chanted during the demonstrations was “Sagatat sagatat yakizan” (“They have fallen, they have fallen, the kayzan (Islamists)”), which shows how much the Islamists were perceived as the symbol of the authoritarian power that had oppressed the population for decades⁴².

Numerous methods of expressing protest have emerged, such as street art, used by artists as a tool of protest on city walls to those of official buildings (such as the Parliament in Omdurman): “*After the first protests, there was the gigantic sit-in for several months in Al Qeyada Square. It was an artistic explosion. Stages were set up for poetry readings and theatrical performances. Concerts were organized. And we were able to paint everywhere. It was like living in utopia*”, explains Tanzil Adam, a member of the street art collective Al Hal Fi El Fan (“Salvation through Art”). Their determination, despite intimidation from the military, is expressed by Maab Tajuldeen, who tells Antoine Pecqueur: “*But we warned the military: you can erase, we'll always start again*”, and by Mazin, a member of the Burri resistance committee who, through his fresco depicting a tank facing peaceful demonstrators, wanted to “*show that revolutionaries here are ready to die*”. He added a poem: “*Light comes from the morning. The military will not stop it*”⁴³. It's important to understand that these artists are defending the unity of the country, regardless of ethnic or religious considerations.

⁴² BACH Jean-Nicolas, CHEVRILLON-GUIBERT Raphaëlle, FRANCK Alice, “Introduction to the theme: Sudan, the end of an authoritarian domination?”, Op. Cit., pp. 5-31.

⁴³ PECQUEUR Antoine, “In Sudan, revolution through street art. Images of the uprising”, *Crier's magazine*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2022, pp. 130-143.

On April 11, 2019, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan replaced General Ibn Auf, who had been announced as the new leader after the fall of Omar al-Bashir. The ousting of Ibn Auf, who was rejected by the demonstrators, highlighted the need for the new authorities to gain popular trust in order to acquire legitimacy. The Transitional Military Council (TMC) was quickly perceived as a continuation of the military regime, exacerbating tensions between civilians and the military. Despite hopes of far-reaching reforms, limitations imposed by the former military leadership and international pressure curbed democratic progress, underlining the continuing challenges of the post-Bashir transition.

The January 13, 2022, march through central Khartoum took place in a tense atmosphere, as the UN initiated negotiations with the military and political parties, upsetting many Sudanese demonstrators who don't see how it's possible to talk to those who are shooting at them. The anonymous testimony of a former UN representative, reported by Antoine Pecqueur, explains the disarray of workers in this conflict: *“This mission gives legitimacy to the military. But the fundamental issue is: who will govern Sudan in the future? The democrats or the Islamists?”*. The question of the relevance of foreign intervention is once again raised, insofar as the country's stability takes precedence over the protesters' expectations of freedom and democratization.

Added to this was the fact that civilian groups, though committed to the revolution, found it difficult to unite under a single coherent entity. The absence of a lasting consensus among the stakeholders hampered the implementation of crucial reforms. Power-sharing between the CMT and the Sovereign Council, created to manage the transition, was often a source of friction, with institutional reforms limited by the lingering influence of former military cadres. Robert Zuber explains: *“Democratization is an issue, certainly in South Sudan and surrounding states. And elections which are credible remain important though the credible piece of it is often lacking (see Venezuela at present). Elections or no, public trust in the governments of Sudan and South Sudan are not high at all and will need to be pulled up from the mud if the conflicts which rage are finally ended. I'm sure you have heard that Darfur has now been formally designated to be in "famine status." Assuming that some of this grave food insecurity can be prevented, how do the people of Darfur come to trust a government in Khartoum which itself is illegitimate, which fails to protect civilians, which is drowning in corruption, and which has no remedy for the alternate drought and flooding characteristic of severe climate change”*.

While the revolution shows the determination of civil society and the younger generation to transform their country, it has also revealed the complexity of a transition to a stable democracy in a context of deep divisions and authoritarian legacies. All these elements are obstacles to democratic transition.

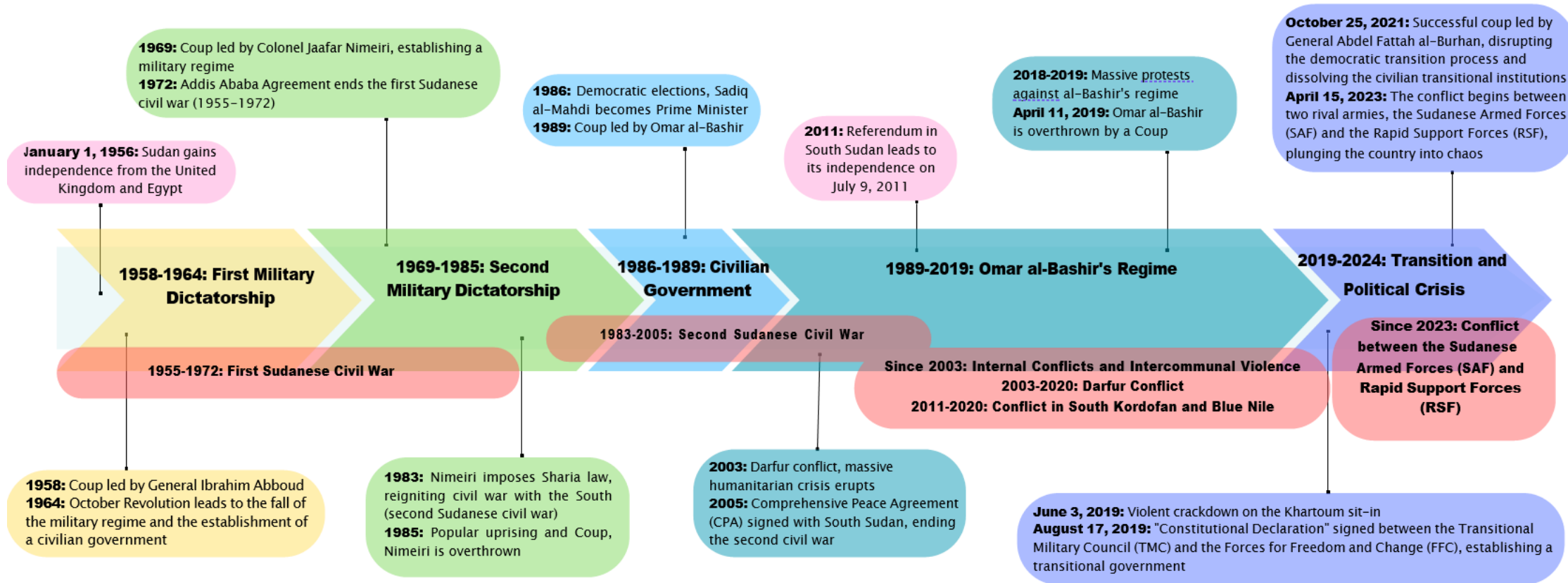
About prospects

It is undeniable that the future prospects for democratization in Sudan face significant challenges that must be overcome to ensure a successful and sustainable transition. The reform of political and security structures is essential to establish a functioning democracy. The army and security services, which have long held sway over politics, require far-reaching reform to reduce their influence and promote a framework in which civilian institutions can operate independently. At the same time, strengthening democratic institutions, by creating a truly independent judiciary and establishing a robust legal framework to protect civil and political rights, is crucial.

Targeted economic reforms are also a key aspect of sustaining democratic transition. Persistent poverty and regional inequalities, exacerbated by decades of economic mismanagement, require significant measures. The development of inclusive policies to promote employment and economic growth is crucial to stabilizing the country, while international aid has a role to play in providing financial and technical support to accompany these reforms and reinforce regional stability, while ensuring that national sovereignty is respected.

Social movements, especially youth and women who were at the heart of the 2019 revolution, will continue to be key players in Sudan's political transformation. Their commitment is essential to move the transition forward. However, it is imperative that Sudan's leaders overcome the internal divisions that have plagued democratic movements, for whom power struggles have been exacerbated by the conflict in Darfur. Sudan is now at a crucial turning point in its history, and its future will depend on the authorities' ability to meet the population's expectations for the rule of law, social justice and lasting peace.

Timeline since Sudan's Independence



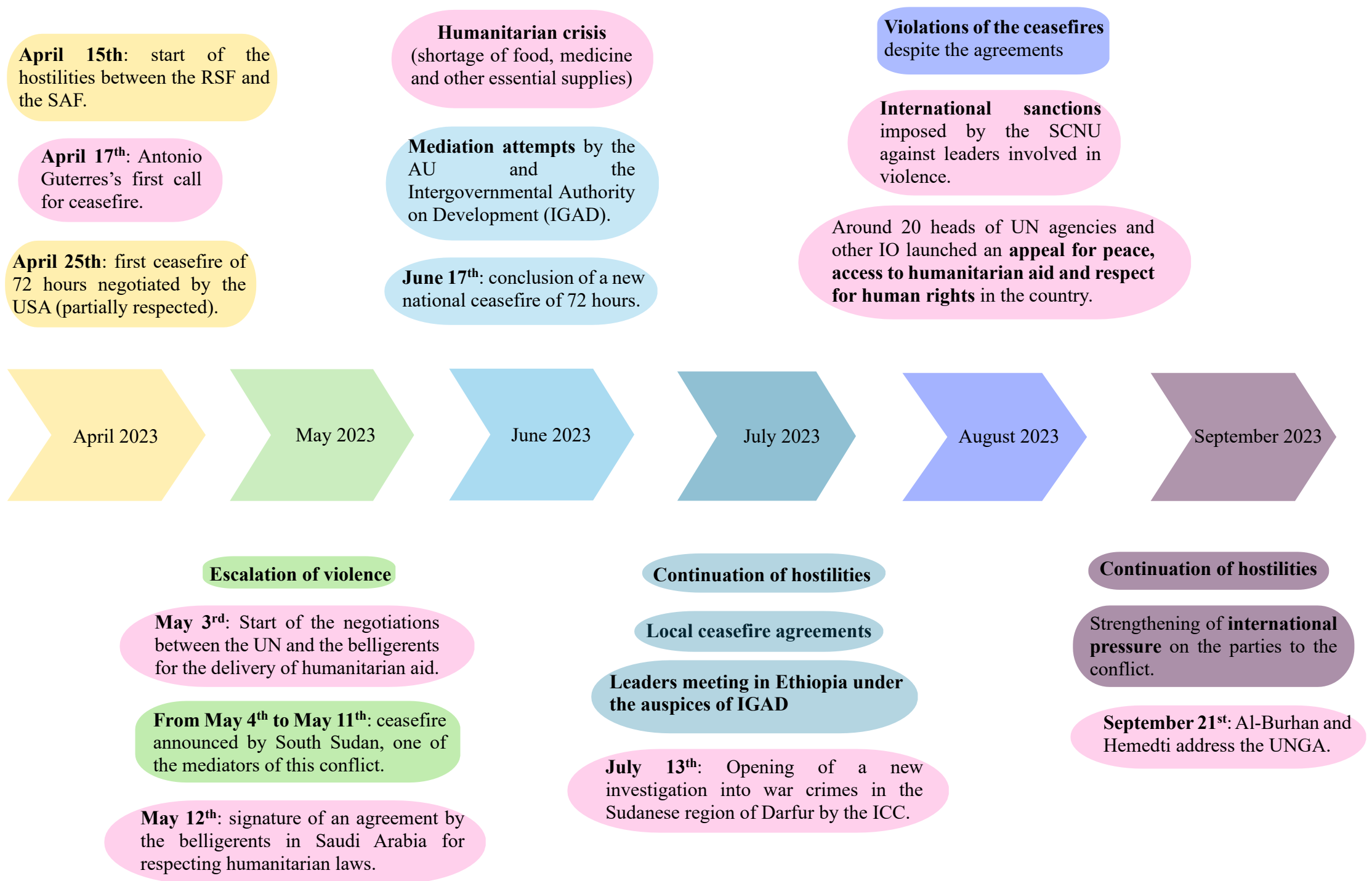
II. Outbreak and progress of the 2023 conflict in Sudan: focus on the international community actions

Since April 15th, 2023, the General Abdul Fattah al-Burhan, who is at the head of the SAF, and the Lieutenant-General Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, also known as Hemedti, who is at the head of the RSF, are fighting to take control over the country. *“Since their 2021 coup, the two generals have ruled Sudan, but their union was more of a “loveless marriage”, [...]. Their conflict is, among other things, “the result of a disagreement over the integration of paramilitary forces into the army”, [...]. This measure is an important condition for the return to democratic transition. An agreement to resume this path towards civilian power was signed in December 2022 between political parties and the army. But al-Burhan and Hemedti were unable to agree on the conditions of this integration⁴⁴”*. It followed the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history after only a little over a year of war. The country is affected on every level (political, economic, security, sanitarian, environmental, structural...). A large number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and International Organisations (IO) tried and are still trying to diminish the consequences of this conflict on the civilians, especially the vulnerable groups, but they are facing many challenges.

To better understand the progress of this conflict and to highlight the actions taken principally by the UN, the following historical frieze intends to resume the main events which occurred within the framework of the conflict as well as the main reactions of the international community to it⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ PASQUESOONE Valentine, “The article to read to understand the crisis in Sudan, in the grip of violent clashes”, *France info*, May 2023.

⁴⁵ The events will be visible in yellow, green, sky blue, turquoise blue, lilac or purple, according to the month they occurred, while the reactions of the international community will appear in pink.



Continuation of hostilities

The RSF are on the verge of completing their control of Darfur.

Signature of a preliminary agreement by the belligerents to reduce the violence and facilitate humanitarian access.

October 11th: creation of an independent international fact-finding mission for Sudan by the UNHCR.

October 29th: resumption of talks in Saudi Arabia to end the conflict.

Signature of an interim peace agreement, providing for a comprehensive ceasefire and the opening of talks for a lasting political solution.

December 1st: adoption of a resolution by the SCNU ending the mandate of the UNAMIS.

December 9th: discussion about the situation in Sudan during the Extraordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government of IGAD.

December 18th: resumption and continuation of clashes between the RSF and the SAF.

February 29th: official end of the UNAMIS' mandate.

Failure of the ceasefire attempted by the UN

Continuation of hostilities

October 2023

November 2023

December 2023

January 2024

February 2024

March 2024

Relative reduction of violence

Facilitating of the delivery of humanitarian aid

November 8th: adoption of a declaration of commitment by the belligerents on the protection of civilians and unimpeded humanitarian access.

November 16th: the Sudanese government terminates with immediate effect the UNAMIS.

Relative reduction of violence

IOs are closely monitoring the implementation of the interim peace agreement and supporting national reconciliation efforts.

January 18th: start of work of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan.

Deterioration of the humanitarian situation

March 8th: adoption of a resolution by the SCNU calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities during the month of Ramadan.

April 15th: holding of the international humanitarian conference for Sudan and its neighbors in Paris.

New economic and military sanctions imposed by the international community against the belligerents.

June 13th: adoption of a resolution by the SCNU calling the RSF to end the siege of Al-Fashir.

Repeated **denunciations** of violences based on gender and ethnicity.

Increasing of humanitarian intervention

Intensification of fighting in the Khartoum region and Darfur

April 2024

May 2024

June 2024

July 2023

August 2024

Escalation of violence in Darfur

Renewed calls for peace by several IOs and neighboring countries.

Weakening of both camps and internal dissensions

July 12th: meeting of delegations of both parties in conflict in Geneva under UN auspices to talk about possible local ceasefires to facilitate humanitarian aid and protect civilians.

Since the beginning of the conflict, many characteristics and consequences have appeared⁴⁶:

- Large number of dead, internally displaced and refugees⁴⁷
- Large amount of war crimes (especially gender-based and conflict related sexual violence⁴⁸)
- Food and medicine shortages⁴⁹
- Upsurge in diseases (poliomyelitis, measles, etc.) and epidemic risk⁵⁰
- Political repression
- Increase of organized crime
- Disruption of the education system
- Destruction of civil and military infrastructures⁵¹
- Scorched earth policy
- Obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid despite the agreements
- Interference and/or support from countries, allies and foreign actors
- Quest for popularity on an international and regional scale by the two leaders
- Focus of the medias and the fundings (and so the attention) on other conflicts⁵²

Those elements contribute to reinforce the idea that this conflict provoked one of the worst humanitarian crises ever seen. It is also the opinion of the two experts we had the chance to interview on this topic.

⁴⁶ This list is not exhaustive nor ranked by the importance of the characteristics or consequences.

⁴⁷ In April 2024, the number of deaths was estimated at nearly 15 000 (<https://news.un.org/fr/story/2024/04/1144801>). In August 2024, the number of internally displaced people since April 15th is estimated at 7,9 million and, the number of people who crossed the border since April 15th is estimated at 2,1 million (<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/>).

⁴⁸ The number of victims of gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) keeps increasing. For numerous reasons, we don't have yet (and we will probably never have the exact numbers) exact statistics on the matter. For an example of a documented report, see the one of Insecurity Insight on CRSV in Sudan from 15th April to 30th September 2023 (<https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Conflict-Related-Sexual-Violence-in-Sudan-October-2023.pdf>).

⁴⁹ "About 25,6 million people – over half of the population of Sudan – face acute hunger, including more than 755,000 people on the brink of famine, according to latest analysis". OCHA, Sudan, Situation report, 08/19/2024 [online], <<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/>>, (consulted on 08/21/2024).

⁵⁰ "Disease outbreaks are increasing in the face of disruptions of basic public health services, including vaccination, disease surveillance, functions of public health laboratories and rapid response teams. In addition, insecurity, displacement, limited access to medicines, medical supplies, electricity, and water continue to pose enormous challenges to delivering health care across the country. Outbreaks are ongoing in several states, including cholera, measles, malaria, poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) and dengue fever". Relief web, Sudan conflict: Public health situation analysis, 04/03/2024 [online], <<https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-conflict-public-health-situation-analysis-phsa-03-april-2024>>, (consulted on 08/21/2024).

⁵¹ The population is facing "the destruction of essential infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals, medical facilities, and schools, as well as power, water, and communication services". Relief web, Sudan conflict: Public health situation analysis, 04/03/2024, Op. Cit.

⁵² The conflict in Ukraine as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are occupying most of the medias, the fundings and the attention of the international community, making the conflict in Sudan staying in the background.

Indai SAJOR, Senior Gender advisor for Humanitarian and Emergency Response at the Norwegian Refugee Council

Women (and men) are raped in war time as well as in peace time. The perpetrators are the same (neighbors, family relatives, family members, rebels...). In Sudan, the use of gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence has widespread. However, the gender approach is very recent and needs to be deeper integrated in international laws and humanitarian aid. Even if most of the UN agencies is now phrasing the gender approach, the problem remains the implementation. The majority of the UN people working on the field does not understand what gender is. They are still trying to navigate the best way possible to understand and integrate the gender issue in the work they are doing. These violences can only be avoided if the perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted, which cannot be done if the violences are not identified and documented.

Robert ZUBER, Director of Global Action to Prevent War and Armed Conflict

I don't recall an armed conflict with this many humanitarian crisis nor disaster (since I am alive). The international community is not taking it as seriously as it should. There have been generations of conflict, and a lot of manipulation from the outside (USA, China, and Russia at some extent). People in Darfur have been through hell many times. The UN can't do much in the current circumstances except trying to facilitate negotiations or monitoring the Khartoum process. For now, the international community is not able to put it into a stop, even the African diplomats. There is actually no effective nor efficient mechanism to stop the violence. The crimes committed during the previous war in Sudan have not even been prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) yet, while we now have to deal with a new conflict with new crimes. The borders are getting more porous, which encourages people with bad intentions to take advantage of this situation to pursue criminal purposes. The climate change is also going to affect negatively the country and the population; because of the scorched earth policy, a lot of farmlands and civil infrastructures have been destroyed. Today, we are trying to ease the suffering but there should have been no suffering in the first place. The key to all of this is conflict prevention. The international system is currently failing to anticipate and prevent conflict. Sudan is no exception.

The origins of the 2023 conflict in Sudan are deep and complex. We have to take into account all sorts of considerations to understand it, such as religion, ethnicity, geography, demography, economy, history, politic, security, geopolitics, resources, etc. All the conflicts which occurred since the independence of Sudan are different, but they all have had direct and indirect repercussions on the Sudanese population. Sudan was still fragile when the conflict outbreaks in April 2023. The population is now paying the full price of the battle over power of the two opponents.

Despite the multiple attempts of negotiations and peace initiated by the parties in conflict, the mediators' countries or other actors, the conflict is still ongoing and making victims. The only thing that can release those victims for the moment is the help they can get from the outside, provided by the cooperation processes and/or the humanitarian aid. However, the conflict in Sudan is also affecting the way the cooperation was originally working in the country and even within the region.

PART 2: The impact of the 2023 conflict in Sudan in terms of cooperation

Before the 2023 conflict in Sudan, the country was already part of different cooperation process, as well as it was receiving humanitarian aid from different organisations. With the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023, the local, national and regional cooperation has been challenged on many levels.

Since our enterprises are respectively working in international security cooperation, and in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, this part aims to highlight the various obstacles faced by cooperation's implementation in Sudan in particular, and within the region in general.

I. The impact of the 2023 conflict in Sudan on the international security cooperation in the region

International security cooperation is a very specific angle of international cooperation which aims to resolve shared security issues between two or more countries. For example, the mandate of CIVIPOL is to “*build cooperation with partner states on subjects of common interest with a view to returning internal security to the national territory and the European area*”⁵³. International security cooperation can therefore treat all kind of phenomenon such as smuggling and trafficking (human beings, migrants, gold, weapons...), terrorism and counterterrorism, money laundering, corruption, etc. The Greater Horn of Africa has always been a favorable place for criminal networks, which can mostly be explain by the fact that a lot of African countries appear to be failed states. As a result, countries in a state of default are fertile ground for the emergence of activities that would normally have to be suppressed by the state through its regalian powers. Failed states that have to deal with transnational organized crime have limited room for maneuvers: on the one hand, the few state institutions that are still effective are often riddled with corruption; on the other hand, the police and judiciary do not have, or no longer have, the necessary means to combat this type of activity.

Consequently, restoring or even establishing a regalian apparatus in the states concerned appears to be an absolute priority to combat it on a long-term basis. This process undoubtedly harks back to Francis Fukuyama's idea of state-building, which he defines as “*the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones*”⁵⁴.

On a more practical level, we had the opportunity to interview three actors working in international security cooperation within the region. The following reports of the interviews are highlighting impacts of the Sudanese conflict on their respective projects.

⁵³ CIVIPOL, The operator, Our missions and values [online], <<https://www.civipol.fr/fr/civipol/operateur>>, (consulted on 08/21/2024).

⁵⁴ FUKUYAMA Francis, *State building, Governance and world order in the 21st century*, Table ronde, 2005.

Hervé JAMET, Technical Director on the ROCK Project⁵⁵



The current conflict in Sudan firstly impacted the project on a structural level because it was supposed to be based in Khartoum. After the 2021 coup, the European Union decided to temporarily base the project in Nairobi, waiting for the situation in Sudan to be more stable and safer. The administrative process to transfer the project from Sudan to Kenya was long and fastidious. The Sudanese authorities are really looking for the return of the project in Khartoum, even if the premises have been looted. The Sudanese liaison officer of the project is still in place and continues to produce intelligence reports despite the political situation. The exclusion of Sudan from the African Union and the Khartoum process constitutes another challenge, especially concerning the retrocession of the Regional Operational Centre to the AU. On a more practical matter, the conflict has had an immediate impact on the statistics related to criminal networks, particularly regarding trafficking in human beings. Sudan actually appears to be a failed state, and the criminals are taking advantage of this situation. For example, since the war between Sudan and South Sudan, the 2000 kilometers border between the two States has no more communication devices. The whole region is destabilized.

⁵⁵ The “Regional Operational Centre in Khartoum (ROCK) in support of the Khartoum Process, the African Union Horn of Africa initiative and the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (EAPCCO)” Project has begun his second phase in May 2022. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to reduce the number of incidents of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants in East Africa and enhance victims’ protection. An information exchange platform has been set up in Khartoum, called the ROCK, to help strengthen the police cooperation in the Horn of Africa, thanks to the presence within the Center of Liaison Officers from each the project’s beneficiary countries (Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Tchad, Republic Democratic of Congo and Yemen). The specific objective of the second phase is to consolidate and perpetuate the current model of cooperation between law enforcement agencies in the fight against criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and human trafficking, but also to strengthen the criminal chain against suspected traffickers and smugglers, and to facilitate the transition from the ROCK. For more information (<https://civipol.fr/fr/projets/regional-operational-centre-khartoum-rock-support-khartoum-process-african-union-horn>).



Frédéric BAYARD, Team Leader on the AML-CFT ESCAY Project⁵⁶

Since the resumption of the conflict in April 2023, Sudan became fragile and dangerous. The situation is gradually getting worse on all levels, and the borders are nearly unmonitored, which was already a serious problem in terms of trafficking and smuggling of migrants generating increasing threats on populations. In fact, this could cause a long-term migration crisis (for the record, 1/3 of the population of neighboring South Sudan has already been displaced by crossing into Sudan) and the now well-known porosity of Sudan's borders endangers all neighboring countries. The risk of spread has never been so high.

Transnational Organized Crime networks are taking advantage of the disintegration of the police services, especially since they know they are busy elsewhere. The European Union (EU) is powerless in this situation because it has no means of coercion.

No wealth has been created for ages in this country, there is no development, which leads to an infernal cycle already set in other countries like Somalia or the Yemen: poverty, unemployment, economic instability and discontent among the population.

This infernal pattern creates fertile ground for communitarianism and “in fine” radicalism. In other words, criminal groups are using the desperate mindset of the population to recruit and incite them to join profitable criminal networks much more rewarding. At the moment, most of the terrorist groups in the region (Al-Shabaab, AQIM, Boko Haram...) are busy with other conflicts but when this will no longer be the case, they might consider the Sudanese as good recruits and even consider the country as a nice place to live due to the disappearance of the rule of law. The current conflict in Sudan is also impacting trade and trade routes in the region as the attention of the international community (and most of the media), as well as funding, is directed to other conflicts.

⁵⁶ The “Anti Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism in Eastern, Southern, Central Africa and Yemen (AML-CFT ESCAY)” Project aims to reduce the incidence of transnational organized crimes and terrorism in 33 African countries, and Yemen. The project will achieve this by improving national response capacities and inter regional cooperation in targeting Illicit Financial Flows generated by transnational organized crimes. This project is a third follow up phase of two previous EU-funded projects namely: AML/CFT GHoA (2015-2018) and AML-THB in GHoA (2019-2022). It will be followed by a fourth phase (2024-2028) which this time will be implemented at the African continental level minus the Maghreb countries. For more information (https://civipol.fr/fr/projets/aml-cft-escay#:~:text=Le%20projet%20%22Anti%20Money%20laundersing,africains%2C%20ainsi%20que%20le%20Y%C3%A9men.)).



Marco BUFO, CIVIPOL Regional Coordinator and Team Leader on the BMM Project⁵⁷

It is quite remarkable to have a program still in place in Sudan giving the situation and the difficulties to implement activities. Because Sudan has now a separate envelope regarding this program, we are waiting to know what we can do in the field with the Sudanese authorities and the local level, depending on the geographical areas we will have access to. The program has been reorganized as a whole, considering the situation with a more humanitarian approach.

Since the beginning of the conflict, all the routes have changed, even airplanes routes are not the same. It provokes flows of refugees in most of the neighboring countries. These people, which includes among them vulnerable groups, are exposed to different kinds of risks, including human trafficking but also gender-based violence, health risks, malnutrition... On another hand, we have to consider the flow of returnees to Ethiopia crossing the Sudanese border in precarious conditions. Human trafficking was already taking place in Sudan before the conflict, it certainly has increased but it's not a new phenomenon. We don't have enough recent data to measure this increase. The population might be forced to join armed groups for different purposes (sexual services, fighting, hiding of people or weapons...). All countries in the region have their own internal issues, their own burden, so the conflict in Sudan is just making things worse at the regional level.

⁵⁷ The “Better Migration Management (BMM)” Project aims to build a comprehensive and holistic approach to migration management. Launched in 2015 in the Horn of Africa, this project has four components: policy harmonization, building capacity, protection of vulnerable migrants and awareness-raising. The BMM Sudan has been detached for the Phase III of the BMM Project. The overall objective of the BMM Sudan is for national stakeholders to be able to facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration and to effectively combat and reduce human trafficking and smuggling of migrants into and from Sudan through a human rights-based approach. For more information (<https://www.civipol.fr/en/projects/bmm-better-migration-management>).

IMPACT OF THE 2023 CONFLICT IN SUDAN ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION⁵⁸

Short-term	- Relocation of project which led to the loss of funds originally invested and reinvested in the new hosting country - Reorganization of project as a whole with a separate envelope for Sudan - Temporary stop of any activities organized in Sudan - Destabilization of the neighboring countries, especially because of the flow of refugees - Overwhelming Sudanese security forces, therefore occupied to deal with the consequences of the conflict and not the overall security of the population or the monitoring of the borders - Exclusion of Sudan from the AU and the Khartoum process - Increase of criminal activities such as trafficking in human beings - High propagation risk to the neighboring countries
Medium-term	- More porous borders - More political instability - Poverty, unemployment, insecurity, food and medicine shortages, unstable economy, discontent of the population... - Increase of forced or voluntary intern displacement - Different interests of foreign countries and/or allies in the conflict
Long-term	- Attractivity of Sudan and his population for criminal and terrorist organisations - Risk of long-lasting conflict - Migratory crisis on an international level (Africa for transit and Europe for destination) - Complete disappearance of the rule of law

⁵⁸ The following impacts are uncertain. We based our reflection regarding the current situation and the testimony we had the opportunity to have on the topic.

As we have seen, the conflict in Sudan had and still have repercussions at local, national, regional and international levels regarding international security cooperation. However, it also has other kind of impacts on the development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

II. The impact of the 2023 conflict in Sudan on development cooperation and humanitarian aid in the region

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan has reached alarming proportions, particularly with the intensification of internal conflict since April 2023. The clash between the SAF and the RSF has exacerbated the deterioration in living conditions, leading to massive population displacements and a growing humanitarian emergency, significantly disrupting international development cooperation and humanitarian aid efforts. The complex challenges facing international initiatives can be seen in the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground, the obstacles to humanitarian access, and the diplomatic tensions that further complicate efforts to provide effective assistance. This part of our research is aimed at understanding how the conflict in Sudan, exacerbated by persistent fighting and humanitarian crisis, affects development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and what challenges international initiatives face in responding effectively to this complex situation.

Challenges for development cooperation

“You should focus on the failure of humanitarian aid, honestly there are big problems emanating from it. It's a real crisis and the situation is indeed catastrophic. Development aid seems to me to be completely suspended because of the humanitarian emergency, and I doubt there are any projects underway at the moment because the crisis is so severe”, Indai SAJOR advised us during our research. That's what we found out very quickly.

The rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Sudan has significantly disrupted development efforts. The escalation of hostilities, particularly after the start of the conflict between the SAF and RSF in April 2023, incessant violence and massive population displacements (of over 10 million people) have complicated the implementation of development projects.

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has documented a shocking increase in grave violations against children, including murder, mutilation, sexual violence and forced recruitment. These violations have been exacerbated by the war, which has also led to a situation of imminent famine, with some 14 million children in need of emergency humanitarian aid. This humanitarian crisis has diverted resources and attention from long-term development objectives to immediate and vital needs. The destruction of infrastructure and restrictions on access have severely limited the ability of international organizations to carry out their development projects.

Impact on humanitarian aid

Humanitarian access in Sudan has been a major concern in recent international discussions. The Geneva talks held between July 11 and 19, 2024, orchestrated by Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, focused on improving humanitarian access and protecting civilians. The Geneva talks held between July 11 and 19, 2024, orchestrated by Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, focused on improving humanitarian access and protecting civilians. The unilateral commitments made by the RSF and the SAF to facilitate humanitarian access are important steps, but follow-up and implementation remain crucial. Security Council resolution 2736 (2024) highlights the need to ensure unimpeded distribution of humanitarian aid, but the realities on the ground further complicate this task: according to the report by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the situation is catastrophic, with serious violations affecting children (recruitment, murder, mutilation, sexual violence, etc.). The situation has been exacerbated by inter-community violence and restrictions imposed by the parties to the conflict, further complicating the distribution of humanitarian aid. The report stresses that child protection mechanisms have been severely compromised, and that the end of the UNITAMS mission has left a gap in the monitoring of violations and the protection of children. The loss of these resources has hampered efforts to document violations and respond to the urgent needs of affected children⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Security Council, United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan, S/2024/443, 06/07/2024.

At the Security Council meeting on July 29, members expressed their deep concern at the dire humanitarian situation. Incidents of denial of humanitarian access have been frequent, with attacks on humanitarian personnel and hijacking of supplies. These obstacles have led to a situation where almost 1.7 million people have been unable to receive essential aid, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Member States have stressed the need for the Sudanese authorities to allow the use of Adré to facilitate cross-border aid, although cross-border operations remain impossible without the full consent of local authorities. The international community responded by increasing support, with the United States announcing an additional \$203 million in humanitarian aid⁶⁰.

The Security Council meeting of August 06, 2024, reported the same findings: The Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stressed the gravity of the situation, denouncing the blocking by RSF fighters of three trucks carrying vital therapeutic treatments. She insisted on the urgent need to guarantee access to essential routes for delivering humanitarian aid, notably through Port Sudan, while calling for security guarantees for transport operations. The central message was clear: rapid intervention is needed to prevent the loss of civilian lives and put an end to the growing suffering. The deputy director of the World Food Program (WFP) reinforced this request, highlighting the obstacles created by the belligerents, which are hindering humanitarian access. He underlined the failure of the parties to the conflict to respect the commitments made, limiting the areas available for humanitarian aid.

Multilateral responses and coordination⁶¹

Multilateral initiatives have been crucial in coordinating peace and humanitarian aid efforts. The Second Consultative Meeting on Sudan, held in Djibouti on July 24, 2024, discussed coordination mechanisms and strengthened mediation initiatives. The meetings highlighted the need for a coordinated approach and increased collaboration between States, multilateral organizations and regional players to respond effectively to the crisis.

⁶⁰ This information has been obtained from Sudan Desk, DPPA-DPO.

⁶¹ AMBROSETTI David, “Managerial emergencies and formalities in the face of “other people's” violence: the UN and Sudan”, Op. Cit., pp. 80-99.

However, at the Security Council meeting held on August 06, 2024, both Algeria (on behalf of the A3+ group⁶²) and Sudan reiterated that humanitarian access must be accompanied by increased mobilization of financial resources. Algeria noted that less than 35% of the humanitarian plan was financed and called on the international community to step up its efforts to improve humanitarian funding. The Sudanese government representative asserted that only 16% of promised aid had been delivered, and that only humanitarian aid approved by the Sudanese government was acceptable. Still, the discussions underlined the importance of maintaining a high level of commitment to peace, with mediation efforts such as the Mediators' Planning Retreat in Djibouti on July 25-26, 2024.

However, history has already shown us otherwise: since 2003, Darfur has been in the grip of a rebellion that illustrates the complexity of internal conflicts in Sudan. This violence is not spontaneous, but the result of meticulously planned social projects, in which the violent actors adjust their strategies according to external interventions, such as those of the UN. International interventions, particularly those of the UN and the AU, often have ambivalent effects, exacerbating rather than containing violence.

The Rwandan genocide in 1994 is an excellent example of this, insofar as it shows how the organizers of violence learned from the ineffectiveness of international forces. A similar dynamic can be observed in Darfur: the international response was perceived as insufficient or inadequate. In 2004, heterogeneous alliances in the United States, including elected members of Congress, evangelical groups and human rights organizations, succeeded in mobilizing public opinion against the crimes in Darfur, leading to the recognition of genocide by the US Congress. However, this mobilization did not lead to direct military intervention, as Western diplomats were cautious about the risks of increased instability in Sudan. Internationally, the Bush administration found itself isolated, especially after the UN Commission of Inquiry on Darfur did not describe the crimes as genocide, but rather as war crimes and crimes against humanity. This difference in interpretation fueled diplomatic tensions, with some states accusing the United States of preparing a new offensive against a Muslim country allied with China. The AU remained divided on the issue, and the negative images of the war in Iraq weakened international support for intervention in Darfur.

⁶² The A3+ group includes the following countries: Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Guyana and Algeria.

Hence the fact that during the peace negotiations for Southern Sudan, concluded with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, the Darfur question was left on the back burner. Jan Pronk, UN Special Representative for Sudan, had attempted to prioritize Darfur, but his expulsion highlighted the challenges of managing the balance between appeasing American demands and maintaining international support for increased involvement in Sudan, while trying to overcome the Sudanese regime's delaying tactics.

The question of Sudan's integrity and sovereignty cannot be evaded. As the representative of the Sudanese government pointed out at the Security Council meeting on August 06, the unauthorized use of crossing points, including for the delivery of humanitarian aid, is not only an infringement of the country's sovereignty, but is also unconscionable, insofar as certain donors have in the past tried to pass arms and fuel to the militias via the crossing points. His concern is heightened by the fact that, although many of the states taking part called for the condemnation of countries supplying arms to the rebels, no concrete resolution or provision was made to formally prevent this. China and Russia, although both motivated by their own interests, were moving in precisely this direction: the Russian delegation urged that the situation should not be instrumentalized, but rather that agriculture should be resumed through the implementation of flexible humanitarian aid schemes in collaboration with the Sudanese authorities. China, for its part, warned against politicizing humanitarian aid, which it believes should not be used to exert political pressure. Humanitarian aid played a central role in the conflict in Sudan as early as 1989, after Hassan al-Tourabi's coup d'état, with the UN-sponsored Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). It was set up to coordinate aid to Southern Sudan. Although initially intended to support civilians, it quickly turned into a pressure tool against Khartoum, allowing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to concentrate on the war without having to worry about the needs of civilians. The USA used this operation to wage a low-intensity war against the Islamist regime in Khartoum, despite the fact that Egypt and other Arab-Muslim countries refused to support self-determination for southern Sudan. Even so, this aid drained Khartoum's finances and hampered its ambitions to federate global Islamism⁶³.

⁶³ LAVERGNE Marc, "Chapter 15 – The Sudanese conflicts, or the failure of a secular, unitary nation-state project", *Op. Cit.*, pp. 209-222.

Added to this were more individual interests: in New York, some UN officials hoped that leading such an important mission in Sudan would be a springboard for their careers. However, tensions rose between the UN and the AU as the UN mission was seen as competition to the AU mission, weakened by financial difficulties. Ultimately, the fragmentation of international organizations and the proliferation of independent mediators enabled the Sudanese regime to maintain its influence while continuing repression against the Four, Massalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups.

Challenges and prospects

The conflict has highlighted the importance of an integrated approach combining humanitarian assistance and development efforts. The current challenges require not only immediate responses to the humanitarian crisis, but also a long-term vision for the reconstruction and stabilization of the country. Humanitarian assistance, while essential to meet immediate needs such as the provision of food, water, medical care and shelter, cannot address the underlying causes of the conflict, nor the devastated infrastructure that hinders sustainable development. This is where the integration of development efforts comes in. A long-term vision must be adopted to ensure not only the survival of populations, but also their ability to rebuild their lives in a stable environment. This dynamic is often observed in situations of protracted crisis, where resources and attention are massively directed towards the immediate response, to the detriment of development efforts. It is therefore essential that the international community manages to balance the urgency of the humanitarian crisis with continued efforts to enable Sudan to achieve the democratic and peaceful goals it has set itself.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this analysis, it is clear that Sudan is at a crucial crossroads in its history. An examination of the long dictatorships that have punctuated the country's history reveals complex constellations of interests between rulers and ruled, and between different power groups within the country, enabling us to go beyond simplistic identity-based or religious explanations, and grasp the political, economic and social dynamics that have shaped Sudanese governance since independence. Sudan's democratic transition faces significant but concrete obstacles. For example, to establish a functioning democracy in Sudan, it is essential to carry out a thorough reform of political and security structures. The army and security services, which have long controlled the country's politics, must see their influence reduced, to allow the emergence and smooth running of independent civilian institutions. Social movements, especially youth and women, play an essential role in the country's political transformation.

In the same vein, it is crucial to build solid democratic institutions by establishing a truly independent judiciary and putting in place a robust legal framework to protect civil and political rights. Economic reforms also play a key role in supporting democratic transition. Persistent poverty and regional inequalities, exacerbated by decades of economic mismanagement, require targeted measures to stimulate growth and reduce poverty. This is why the development of inclusive policies to promote employment and economic growth is essential to stabilize the country. International aid can play a crucial role here, providing financial and technical support to accompany these reforms and reinforce regional stability, notably by establishing emergency funds for the reconstruction of areas directly affected, with monitoring mechanisms to ensure their effectiveness. Regional integration is also a major driver of democratic consolidation (as is the case with the EU, which has a powerful institutional framework and relies on Community law that induces a form of democratic consolidation on member states), but for this to happen, African countries must be enabled to free themselves from neo-colonialism, an ambition still too often thwarted by major powers that continue to exploit the region's resources to their own advantage.

Sudan is at a crucial turning point, and its future will depend on the authorities' ability to meet the expectations of its people. These must not be extinguished or downplayed by the international scene on the pretext of regional stability. The current challenges require not only immediate responses to the humanitarian crisis, such as the provision of food, water, medical care and shelter, but also a long-term vision for the reconstruction and stabilization of the country. The conflict reveals the importance of an integrated approach that combines humanitarian assistance and development efforts, without which the crisis will only be contained for a time, but not resolved. Yes, international intervention can be positive, but only if it is carried out after in-depth analysis of local contexts, avoiding a Western-centric and self-interested perspective, to ensure that it truly responds to the needs and realities of the populations concerned.

By adopting these recommendations, the international community could better support Sudan in its efforts to overcome its current crises and move towards a successful democratic transition, thus ensuring the country's long-term stability.

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