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The Sudanese Catastrophe A Multidimensional Analysis of Armed Conflict, Economic Collapse, and Demographic Transformation

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Abstract
This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of Sudan's ongoing multidimensional crisis, examining the interplay between armed conflict, economic disintegration, and demographic transformation through the lenses of socioeconomic and demographic theory. Since April 2023, Sudan has experienced what the United Nations characterizes as the world's largest displacement crisis, with over 14 million people forcibly displaced and more than 33 million in need of humanitarian assistance. The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has not only devastated the nation's physical infrastructure but has also precipitated an economic collapse characterized by currency depreciation exceeding 80%, hyperinflation reaching 145%, and the fragmentation of state institutions. This paper argues that Sudan's crisis cannot be understood through any single analytical lens; rather, it represents a complex intersection of resource scarcity, institutional failure, external intervention, and deliberate demographic engineering. Drawing on resource conflict theory, political economy analysis, and demographic transition theory, the paper examines five interconnected dimensions: (1) the military fragmentation and proliferation of armed groups; (2) the political economy of fuel imports and the Aramco proposal; (3) the de facto territorial partition and emergence of parallel governance structures; (4) demographic engineering and population displacement; and (5) the erosion of state sovereignty and national security. The paper further develops four plausible future scenarios and proposes a comprehensive framework for sustainable resolution. The paper concludes that sustainable resolution requires integrated approaches addressing security sector reform, economic restructuring, and demographic reconciliation, while warning that continued inaction risks permanent state fragmentation.

Keywords: Sudan, Armed Conflict, Economic Crisis, Demographic Displacement, Resource Conflict, Political Economy, State Fragmentation, Paramilitary Forces, Humanitarian Crisis, Aramco, Fuel Imports, Scenarios

Introduction
Background
The Republic of Sudan, once the largest country in Africa, has descended into what international observers describe as the world's most severe humanitarian catastrophe. As of 2026, the nation stands at a critical juncture, having endured nearly three years of ferocious conflict that has systematically dismantled the fabric of state and society. The war, which erupted on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions both within Sudan and across its borders. The United Nations has confirmed that Sudan remains the world's largest displacement crisis, with 9.3 million people internally displaced and more than 4.3 million having fled across borders.

The conflict did not emerge from a vacuum. It represents the culmination of decades of accumulated grievances, institutional decay, and the systematic militarization of Sudanese politics. The RSF itself evolved from the Janjaweed militias mobilized during the Darfur conflict more than two decades ago, restructured in 2013 into a paramilitary force given legal status and integrated into the national security architecture. The arrangement was inherently unstable, armed groups were tolerated, resourced, and at times actively created to project force in areas where the regular army could not or would not operate. When tensions over the integration of RSF fighters into the armed forces reached a breaking point in April 2023, the fragile equilibrium collapsed into open warfare.

Statement of the Problem

Sudan's crisis presents a complex analytical challenge. It is simultaneously a military conflict, an economic catastrophe, a humanitarian emergency, and a demographic transformation. The fighting has dramatically intensified in much of the Darfur and Kordofan regions, plunging local populations into extreme danger and deprivation. The conflict has unleashed an unprecedented protection crisis, characterized by systematic atrocities, blatant disregard for international humanitarian law, and persistent impunity. Protection risks are particularly grave in the Darfur and Kordofan regions, where indiscriminate attacks, summary executions, ethnic targeting, kidnappings, and other attacks against civilians have been reported throughout 2025.

Compounding the human tragedy, Sudan's economy has experienced a catastrophic collapse. Before the war, the Sudanese pound was valued at approximately 600 pounds to the US dollar, but it has since plummeted to 2,400 pounds on the parallel market, with inflation reaching 145 percent. In October 2025, the parallel market exchange rate reached 5,595 Sudanese pounds per US dollar. The conflict could shrink the size of Sudan's economy by over 40% from 2022 levels, plunging millions more into poverty. The war economy has emerged as a complex system that is depleting the country's natural resources and fueling violence, with neither side achieving military victory or beginning earnest negotiations for a ceasefire.

Research Questions

This paper addresses the following research questions:

- How do resource scarcity and environmental pressures contribute to armed conflict in Sudan, and what theoretical frameworks best explain this relationship?
- What are the economic mechanisms through which conflict exacerbates institutional fragility, and how do proposed solutions such as the Aramco fuel agreement address or fail to address these mechanisms?
- How has the conflict transformed Sudan's demographic landscape, and what are the implications of deliberate demographic engineering for long-term stability?
- What are the prospects for state consolidation versus permanent fragmentation, and what factors will determine the outcome?

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs an integrated theoretical framework drawing on three complementary traditions:

Resource Conflict Theory examines how competition over scarce natural resources, land, water, minerals, and oil generates and sustains armed conflict. In the Sudanese context, resource competition has been a consistent driver of violence, from the Darfur conflict to the current civil war. Economic competition between the SAF and the RSF in gold mining and trade was a leading driver of the current war. Sudan's war economy encompasses the production and trade of several commodities, including gold, oil, gum arabic, livestock, and agricultural products, at increasingly subnational, localized theaters of conflict.

Political economy analysis focuses on how economic structures, incentives, and institutions shape political outcomes. This framework highlights how Sudan's fuel import system has led to the emergence of a parasitic class of intermediaries that extract enormous profits, destabilize the currency, and contribute to inflation. It also explains how the war economy has created vested interests in the continuation of the conflict.

Demographic Transition and displacement theory provide tools for understanding how conflict transforms population structures, migration patterns, and ethnic compositions. Sudan's crisis has generated massive population movements that are reshaping the demographic map of the country, with profound implications for future stability.

Methodology and Sources

This paper employs qualitative analysis of secondary sources, including United Nations reports, academic literature, policy analyses, and journalistic accounts. Key sources include the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans, reports from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as academic scholarship on Sudanese politics, economics, and demography.

Literature Review

Resource Conflict and Environmental Scarcity in Sudan

The relationship between resource scarcity and conflict in Sudan has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention. Research on the Darfur conflict has identified competition over dwindling natural resources between farmers and herders as a primary driver of violence. The official view held by the Government of Sudan that the hostilities in Darfur are primarily a local struggle over dwindling natural resources with no government involvement has been contested by scholars who emphasize the role of state policies in exacerbating resource competition.

Climate change has emerged as an important factor in Sudan's conflicts. Research examining Darfur as a case study has found that scarcity, partly induced by environmental factors, was an important driver of conflict. In the 1970s, global resource scarcity concerns were used locally to impose the vision of Sudan as an Arab-African breadbasket; in the name of development, violent evictions of local communities contributed to Sudan's second civil war and associated famines.

Modeling frameworks have identified three potential mechanisms for how the allocation and dynamics of scarce renewable resources like land might cause social conflict in vulnerable environments. Analysis suggests that effective resources per capita in the Darfur region appear to have declined by about five-sixths since the 1970s. This dramatic decline in resource availability has intensified competition and created conditions conducive to violence.

Political Economy of Conflict

The political economy literature on Sudan emphasizes how governing elites have, over the last few decades, managed to substantially misuse and misappropriate natural resources. Conflicts in Sudan have revolved around access to and distribution of land and water resources. One of the reasons why Khartoum has always resisted southern separatism is the presence of valuable resources in the south.

Sudan's vast natural resources, including oil, gold, and agricultural land, could help feed its people, but the fighting and shifting control of these resources make that impossible. Since the war began in 2023, control over gold mines and trade routes has become a critical source of funding for both sides in the conflict. According to the central bank, Sudan produced just over 80 tonnes of gold per year before the war's outbreak, exporting $2.85 billion worth of the precious metal in 2021.

The emergence of a complex war economy has been a defining feature of Sudan's conflict. This war economy encompasses the production and trade of several commodities at the level of increasingly subnational, localized theaters of conflict. Sudan's war economy both influences and is influenced by neighboring states, creating regional dynamics that complicate resolution efforts.

Demographic Dimensions of Conflict

The demographic literature on Sudan has focused on population displacement, migration patterns, and the relationship between demography and armed conflict. Studies have examined war and conflict in relation to migration and forced displacement theories, focusing on Lee's migration theory leading up to the migration-displacement nexus.

Research has documented that over 7.6 million individuals were displaced after the conflict escalated on April 15, 2023. These displacements follow patterns that show interesting correlations with risk clusters identified through multidimensional spatial analysis and participatory methodologies. Scholars have recommended more attention to post-conflict youth booms in certain areas and their associated political, social, and economic consequences.

The social implications of population displacement and resettlement have been examined through studies of Sudanese or Nubian experiences, the Lebanese civil war, the Palestinian diaspora, and relief efforts. This literature merges studies of refugee populations, victims of disasters, and relocation into a common theoretical orientation.

Gaps in the Literature

While substantial scholarship exists on each dimension of Sudan's crisis separately, there is a need for integrated analysis that examines how military fragmentation, economic collapse, and demographic transformation interact and reinforce each other. This paper aims to address this gap by providing a multidimensional analysis that connects these seemingly disparate dimensions of the crisis.

The Military Dimension: Fragmentation and the Proliferation of Armed Groups

The Evolution of Sudan's Militarized State

Sudan's contemporary crisis has its roots in the systematic militarization of the state and the proliferation of armed groups outside formal state structures. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and dominated by members of Arab tribes from central Sudan, include the Land Force, Sudanese Navy, Sudanese Air Force, SAF Military Intelligence, Border Guards, and the Central Reserve Police (CRP), also referred to as "Abu Tira." However, the SAF has not been the only armed actor in Sudan for decades.

Armed groups were tolerated, resourced, and at times actively created to project force in areas where the regular army could not or would not operate. The arrangement was transactional; the state outsourced violence to militias in exchange for their loyalty and service. The Janjaweed militias mobilized at the beginning of the conflict in Darfur more than twenty years ago were the prototype for this system.

In 2013, the Janjaweed were restructured into the Rapid Support Forces, given legal status, integrated into the national security architecture, and placed under a single commander, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as "Hemedti". This institutionalization of a paramilitary force within the state structure created a dual military establishment that was inherently unstable. The RSF grew in power and capability, eventually rivaling the regular army. When tensions over the integration of RSF fighters into the armed forces reached a breaking point, war erupted.

The Current Conflict Dynamics

As of 2026, the conflict between the SAF and the RSF has entered its fourth year. Fighting continues to intensify across multiple fronts, with simultaneous battlefield developments reported in the Blue Nile region in the southeast and the Darfur and Kordofan regions in the west. Drones have become a key tool used by both sides in recent months.

In western Sudan, concerns continue to grow over the humanitarian situation in North Darfur State. The siege and capture of El Fasher, the capital city of North Darfur state, by the RSF in September and October 2025 led to a massacre of civilians in the city. The takeover forced tens of thousands to flee and left many trapped inside the city. Attacks on displacement camps, hospitals, and other civilian areas have once again become a defining feature of this conflict.

In North Kordofan State, repeated RSF drone attacks on El Obeid have destroyed the city's main power substation, triggering widespread outages that disrupted water, health, and transport services. Continued attacks on civilian and service facilities could accelerate displacement from the city and heighten the risk of a large-scale humanitarian crisis in one of western Sudan's largest urban centers.

The Threat of Parallel Armies

The proliferation of armed groups beyond the SAF and RSF represents a fundamental threat to Sudan's future stability. Armed movements and parallel armies will not be tolerated; only the regular armed forces under the sole authority of the state should maintain arms. The previous era of lawlessness that allowed the RSF to grow led Sudan to where it is today.

The emergence of the Tasis alliance (announced February 2025) and related parallel administrations in Darfur and Kordofan risks de facto partition and has already created separate aid environments and competing access negotiations, deepening governance fragmentation. The RSF has formed a Security and Defense Council that appears to be preparing the way for a rival national army made up of rebel and militia fighters.

The integration of armed groups into the regular forces has become a central issue. Integrating the large numbers mobilized during the war into regular police and military forces would strengthen Khartoum's capacity to enforce security and maintain stability. However, armed movement leaders worry over the loss of leverage in any integration process. The challenge of demobilizing and reintegrating fighters while preventing the emergence of new armed groups is formidable.

Force	**Composition**	**Leadership**	**Territorial Control**	**Status**
Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)	Regular army, central Sudanese Arab tribes	Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan	Central Sudan, Khartoum, parts of Darfur	State military
Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	Former Janjaweed, Darfuri Arabs	Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti)	Darfur, Kordofan, parts of elsewhere	Paramilitary, in conflict with SAF
Sudan Shield Forces	Tribal and military force	Various	Various	Emerging force
Joint Forces (Darfur movements)	Darfur armed movements	Various	Darfur	Allied with SAF
SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North	Various	South Kordofan, Blue Nile	Allied with RSF in some areas
Source: Compiled from EUAA, 2026; ISPI, 2025; African Arguments, 2026				

Table 1: Armed Groups and Military Forces in Sudan

Theoretical Implications: The Security Dilemma and State Fragmentation

Sudan's experience illustrates the security dilemma in its most acute form. The creation of the RSF as a parallel military force was intended to enhance state security but ultimately undermined it. The paramilitary grew to rival the regular army, creating a dual power structure that could not be sustained. When efforts to integrate the RSF into the armed forces threatened the paramilitary's autonomy and leadership, conflict became inevitable.

This pattern is consistent with theoretical work on state formation and civil war, which emphasizes that the existence of multiple armed groups within a state creates conditions for violent competition. The fragmentation of military power, far from enhancing security, generates instability by creating multiple centers of power with competing interests and the capacity to pursue those interests through violence.

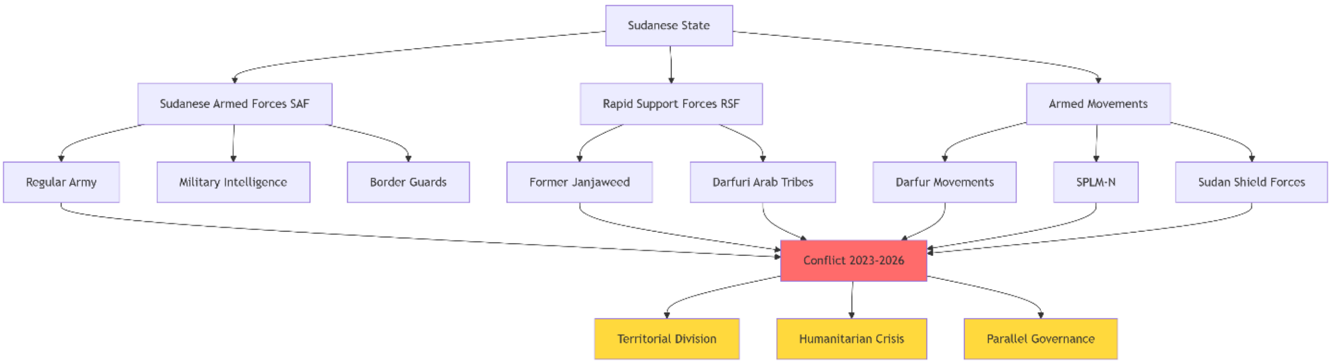

Figure 1: Military Fragmentation and Armed Group Proliferation

Figure 1. Military Fragmentation and Armed Group Proliferation in Sudan (2023-2026).

This diagram illustrates the evolution of Sudan's military fragmentation from the formal state structure (Sudanese Armed Forces) and its parallel paramilitary counterpart (Rapid Support Forces) to the proliferation of armed movements and the resulting conflict dynamics. The model demonstrates how the creation of parallel military structures generated instability and led to territorial division, humanitarian crisis, and parallel governance.

The Economic Dimension: Fuel Crisis, Currency Collapse, and the Aramco Proposal

The Structure of Sudan's Fuel Import System

Sudan's fuel import system exemplifies the pathologies that have characterized the country's political economy. The petroleum companies registered locally, 38 companies on paper, are in reality only five companies operating under multiple names and rotating roles within the quota system. These companies rely on loans from UAE banks, paying high interest rates that are directly reflected in fuel prices inside Sudan. They generate enormous profits exceeding 22% of the value of each fuel shipment while possessing virtually no real infrastructure.

Most dangerously, these companies openly speculate in the foreign currency market, driving up the dollar exchange rate and importing inflation into the economy. The system creates a parasitic class of intermediaries who extract rents while contributing nothing to the productive economy. After a long period of negligence, the government finally recognized the danger of this system, abolished it, and began searching for alternatives.

The Aramco Proposal

In this context, the Sudanese government received three major offers, most notably from Aramco, Oman, and a third party whose details have not yet been disclosed. The Aramco offer provides deferred payment terms of 180 days while accepting guarantees from the Sudanese government and the Central Bank of Sudan. Aramco is not merely a fuel supplier; it is one of the world's largest instruments of energy and financial stability.

Entering into a long-term agreement with Aramco would move Sudan from a chaotic "deal economy" to an economy based on stable supply. The agreement could also take the form of a government-to-government (G2G) arrangement. The deal could open the door to establishing large strategic fuel storage facilities, especially since the Gulf wars pushed major global companies to maintain massive reserves near critical ports.

Geographic proximity significantly reduces delivery time and transportation costs, sparing the country from the urgent need for large storage capacities that are currently unavailable. The agreement would allow fuel imports according to actual demand instead of the current chaos. At present, 23 fuel tankers are waiting at port, while the country needs only around five tankers per month. These delays generate enormous fees added to purchasing and transportation costs, which ultimately burden ordinary citizens.

The deal would provide stable prices throughout the year, insulated from market volatility, while guaranteeing supplies that meet all petroleum needs. Aramco produces around 10 million barrels per day, and 80% of its production currently passes through the Red Sea, giving it a major competitive advantage over Oman, which produces only around one million barrels per day. The government would be relieved of the daily pressure of securing dollars, helping stabilize the exchange rate, control inflation, and protect agricultural seasons from fuel crises.

Regional Comparisons: Kenya and Uganda

Two regional experiments offer valuable lessons. Kenya adopted the deferred payment agreement with Aramco for 180 days, relieving pressure on its monetary reserves (approximately $500 million per month) and contributing to the stability of the Kenyan shilling and lower fuel prices. Uganda chose the centralized import model through its national company in partnership with Vitol, generating government profits estimated between $140 million and $150 million since July 2024 and contributing to its currency's stability. Both models demonstrate that the solution lies in withdrawing imports from private companies and speculators and entrusting them to state-controlled mechanisms. The Kenyan and Ugandan experiences suggest that Sudan's fuel crisis is not technical or logistical but rather a sovereign and economic battle against the fuel mafia.

Feature	Sudan (Current)	Kenya (Aramco Model)	Uganda (Centralized Model)
Import mechanism	Private companies (5 firms under 38 names)	Deferred payment with Aramco	National company with Vitol
Payment terms	Upfront, high-interest loans	180-day deferred payment	Centralized government financing
Profits/rents	>22% of shipment value to intermediaries	Reduced intermediation	$140-150M government profits since 2024
Currency impact	Speculation drives dollar up	Reduced pressure on reserves	Currency stabilization
Infrastructure	Minimal real infrastructure	Strategic storage potential	National company infrastructure
Price stability	Volatile, market-dependent	Stable, fixed annual prices	Government-regulated
Supply reliability	Chaotic (23 tankers waiting vs. 5 needed monthly)	Reliable, demand-based	Reliable, demand-based
Source: Compiled from Sudan Events, 2026; Attaqa, 2026			

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Fuel Import Models

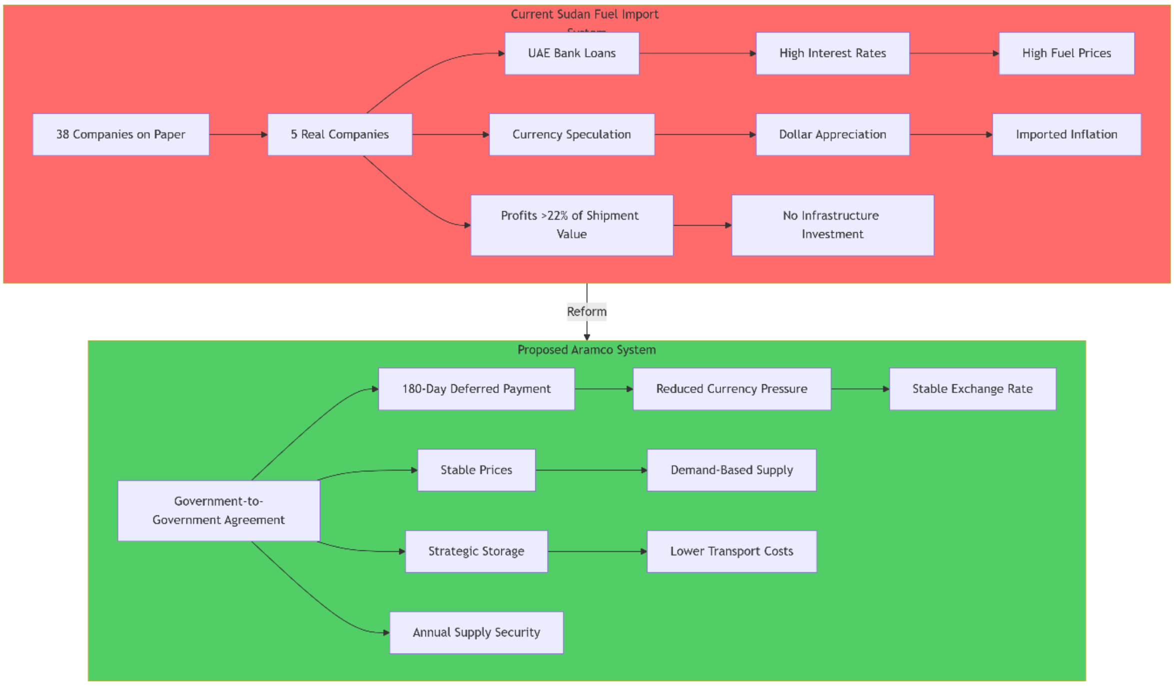

Figure 2: Current Sudan Fuel Import System vs Proposed Aramco System

Figure 2: Comparison of the Current Sudan Fuel Import System and Proposed Aramco System. This flowchart contrasts the dysfunctional current system, characterized by 38 registered companies (effectively 5 real companies), UAE bank loans, high interest rates, currency speculation, and profits exceeding 22% of shipment value, with the proposed Aramco system featuring government-to-government agreements, 180-day deferred payment, stable prices, and strategic storage capacity. The model demonstrates how structural reform could break the cycle of economic dysfunction.

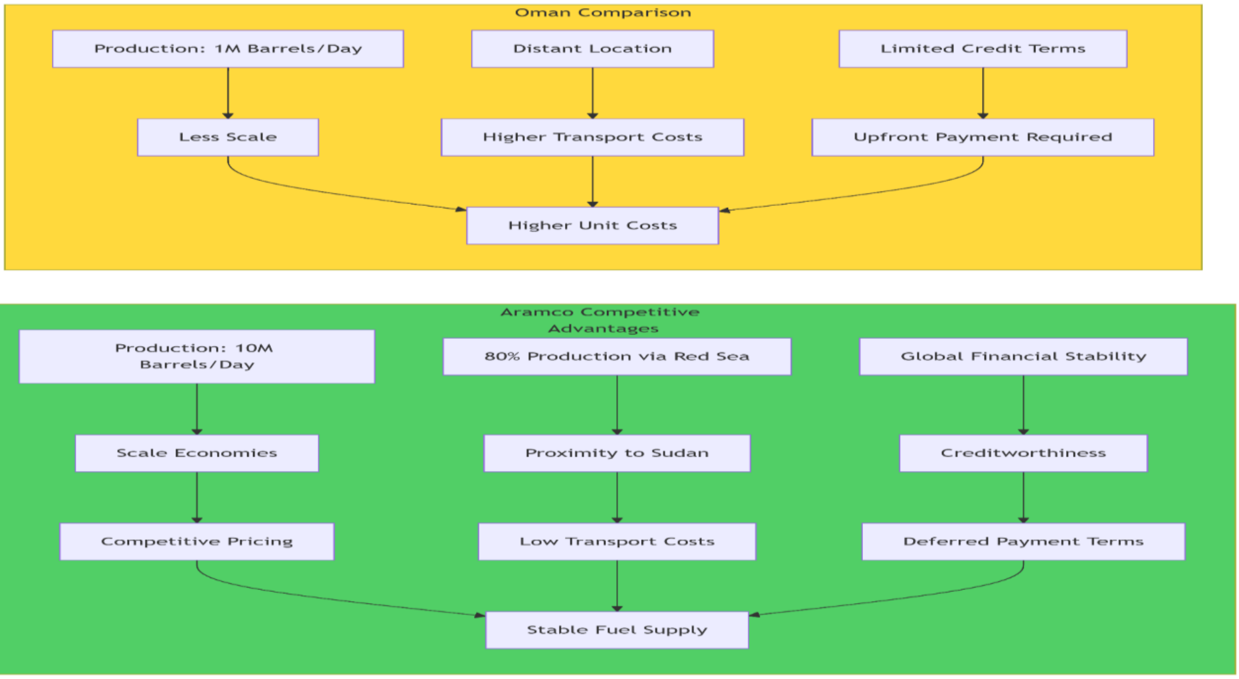

Figure 3: Aramco Competitive Advantages vs Oman Comparison

Figure 3. Comparative Analysis of Aramco and Oman as Fuel Suppliers to Sudan. This diagram illustrates Aramco's competitive advantages, including production capacity of 10 million barrels per day (compared to Oman's 1 million), 80% of production passing through the Red Sea, and global financial stability, and how these translate into competitive pricing, low transport costs, and deferred payment terms. The comparison demonstrates why the Aramco offer represents Sudan's optimal choice for fuel import restructuring.

Currency Collapse and Inflation

Sudan's currency has experienced catastrophic depreciation. The Sudanese pound depreciated by 10% on the parallel market in September 2025 alone, trading at SDG 3,250/USD, a 27% decline year-on-year. By October 2025, the parallel market rate had reached SDG 3,520/USD, a 35% year-on-year decline. Some reports indicate the parallel market exchange rate reached 5,595 SDG/USD in October 2025.

Inflation remains extremely high, with the cost of food items in the Minimum Expenditure Basket increasing by 100% between March 2024 and April 2025, while the hygiene component rose by 77%. The currency shift has devastated the economy and infrastructure, caused famine in some areas, uprooted millions of people, and seen the Sudanese pound plunge from 500 pounds to the US dollar in April 2023 to fluctuating between 2,000 and 5,500 pounds currently.

The key drivers of this economic collapse are currency depreciation, supply chain disruptions, and rising production costs, factors that continue to erode household purchasing power and threaten food security across Sudan. The primary cause of the exchange rate depreciation is damage to the oil pipeline passing through Sudan and disruptions to oil shipping routes through the Red Sea, leading to a significant reduction in oil exports and a difficult macroeconomic situation.

Indicator	**2023 (Pre-War)**	**2025**	**Change**
Sudanese pound to USD (parallel market)	~600	2,400-5,595	-75% to -89%
Inflation rate	-	145%	-
Food basket cost increase	-	+100%	-
Gold production	80+ tonnes/year	Disrupted	-
Gold exports (2021)	$2.85 billion	-	-
Projected economic contraction	-	40%+	-
Source: Compiled from WFP, 2025; IFPRI, 2025; Akhbar Al-Yawm, 2026			

Table 3: Economic Indicators, Sudan (2023-2025)

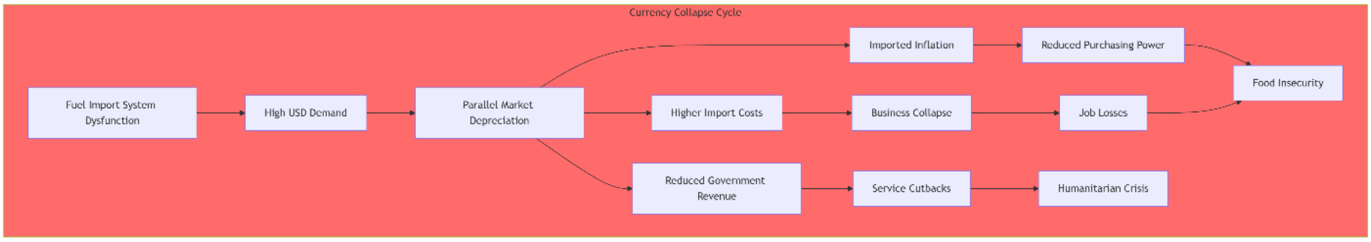

Figure 4: Currency Collapse Cycle

Figure 4. The Currency Collapse Cycle in Sudan. This diagram traces the causal chain from fuel import system dysfunction to high USD demand, parallel market depreciation, imported inflation, reduced purchasing power, and ultimately food insecurity and humanitarian crisis. The model also illustrates secondary effects, including business collapse, job losses, reduced government revenue, and service cutbacks. The diagram demonstrates how economic dysfunction reinforces humanitarian crisis in a self-perpetuating cycle.

Theoretical Implications: Rentier State and Economic Fragmentation

Sudan's economic crisis illustrates the pathologies of rentier state dynamics in a context of conflict. The fuel import system created a class of rent-seekers who extracted value from the economy without contributing to productive capacity. The currency collapse reflects the erosion of state capacity to manage economic policy and the fragmentation of monetary authority.

The emergence of parallel monetary institutions threatens to split Sudan's economy. Backed by the RSF, the Sudan Founding Alliance announced the formation of a parallel government in July 2025 and recently began setting up its own monetary institutions. This economic fragmentation mirrors the military and political fragmentation, creating conditions for permanent division.

The Political Dimension: De Facto Partition and Parallel Governance

The Reality of Territorial Division

The conflict has produced a de facto partition of Sudan. The SAF controls much of central Sudan, including Khartoum, while the RSF controls substantial territory in Darfur and Kordofan. The emergence of parallel administrations in Darfur and Kordofan risks de facto partition and has already created separate aid environments and competing access negotiations, deepening governance fragmentation.

The RSF's siege and capture of El Fasher after 500 days represents a significant territorial gain for the paramilitary forces. The takeover forced tens of thousands to flee and left many trapped inside the city. New and secondary displacement is expected to continue within North Darfur and into Chad, while intensified fighting around El Obeid in North Kordofan has triggered new movements in White Nile State, increasing the risk of further refugee flows into South Sudan.

Parallel Governance Structures

The RSF has begun constructing parallel governance structures in areas under its control. It formed a Security and Defense Council that appears to be preparing the way for a rival national army. General Dagalo issued a decree stating that the Defense and Security Council will "endorse a plan to create a new national army with a new fighting doctrine. Its nucleus will be the Rapid Support Forces, Sudan People's Liberation Army and other armed resistance groups".

This development represents a fundamental challenge to the unity of the Sudanese state. The creation of a parallel army and governance structures institutionalizes the division of the country, making reunification increasingly difficult. The international community faces a dilemma: engaging with parallel structures risks legitimizing them, while refusing engagement may allow the situation to deteriorate further.

Historical Precedents and the Danger of Permanent Division

Historical precedents suggest that de facto partition can become permanent even without international recognition. The case of Somaliland, which declared independence in 1991 and has functioned as a de facto state without international recognition, demonstrates that unrecognized states can persist and even prosper. Taiwan presents another example of a de facto state that has maintained its separate existence despite limited international recognition.

These precedents suggest that non-recognition alone will not prevent the consolidation of separate governance structures in areas under RSF control. The longer the current situation persists, the more entrenched these structures will become, and the more difficult reunification will be. The international community's failure to address the underlying dynamics of partition may inadvertently contribute to its consolidation.

Date	Event
2003	Darfur conflict begins; Janjaweed militias mobilized
2013	Janjaweed restructured into Rapid Support Forces (RSF)
April 15, 2023	War breaks out between SAF and RSF
2024	Conflict continues; humanitarian crisis deepens
January 2025	US declares RSF committing genocide in Sudan
February 2025	Tasis alliance announced; parallel administrations emerge in Darfur, Kordofan
July 2025	Sudan Founding Alliance announces parallel government
August 2025	Multi-Agency Durable Solutions Initiative launched
September-October 2025	RSF captures El Fasher after 500-day siege
October 2025	9.3 million IDPs recorded
2026	Conflict enters fourth year
June 2026	Fighting intensifies across multiple fronts
Source: Compiled from OCHA, 2026; Reuters, 2025; Madamasr, 2026	

Table 4: Chronology of Key Political and Military Events

The Return Movement and Its Implications

Despite the ongoing conflict, significant population movements have occurred. Between November 2024 and September 2025, over one million people returned to Khartoum alone, seeking to rebuild their lives after months of displacement. More than 2.2 million people returned to their areas of origin over the course of 2025.

These returns are not necessarily indicators of stability or resolution. Most return areas remain devastated, with minimal infrastructure and basic services. The returns may reflect desperation rather than confidence in the future. They also create new challenges, as returnees require housing, services, and livelihood opportunities that are largely unavailable.

The Demographic Dimension: Population Displacement and Demographic Engineering

The Scale of Displacement

Sudan currently faces the world's largest internal displacement crisis. Over 10.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes within the country, more than 8 million of them since the conflict erupted in April 2023. Another 4 million have sought refuge across borders. Children account for more than half of the displaced population, with 26% being under the age of five.

As of October 2025, 9.3 million people were internally displaced. A total of 4.4 million people have fled to neighboring countries, while Sudan hosts over 860,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, including more than 272,000 who have relocated internally, placing additional strain on already overstretched infrastructure and services. Nearly 30 percent of Sudan's population has been displaced. Almost 25 million people are now requiring assistance in Sudan.

Indicator	Value	Source
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	9.3 million	OCHA, 2026
Refugees and asylum-seekers abroad	4.4 million	OCHA, 2026
Total displaced population	14+ million	UNHCR, 2025
Population in need of humanitarian assistance	33.7 million	OCHA, 2026
Children in need	60% of PIN	OCHA, 2026
Humanitarian funding gap	73-77%	UN, 2025
Refugees hosted by Sudan	860,000+	OCHA, 2026
Returns to areas of origin (2025)	2.2 million	OCHA, 2026
Source: Compiled from OCHA, 2026; UNHCR, 2025; UN, 2025		

Table 5: Key Humanitarian Indicators, Sudan (2025-2026)

Demographic Indicator	Value	Source
Total population (2023)	50.04 million	Our World in Data
IDPs as % of population	~30%	IOM
Children among displaced	>50%	UN
Children under 5 among displaced	26%	UN

Households with child psychosocial distress	>50%	OCHA MSNA 2025
Net migration (2023)	-1.35 million	Our World in Data
Population density (2023)	28.4 people/km²	Our World in Data
Fertility rate (2023)	4.32 births/woman	Our World in Data
Life expectancy (2023)	66.3 years	Our World in Data
Source: Compiled from Our World in Data, 2026; IOM, 2025; UN, 2025		

Table 6: Demographic Impact of Conflict

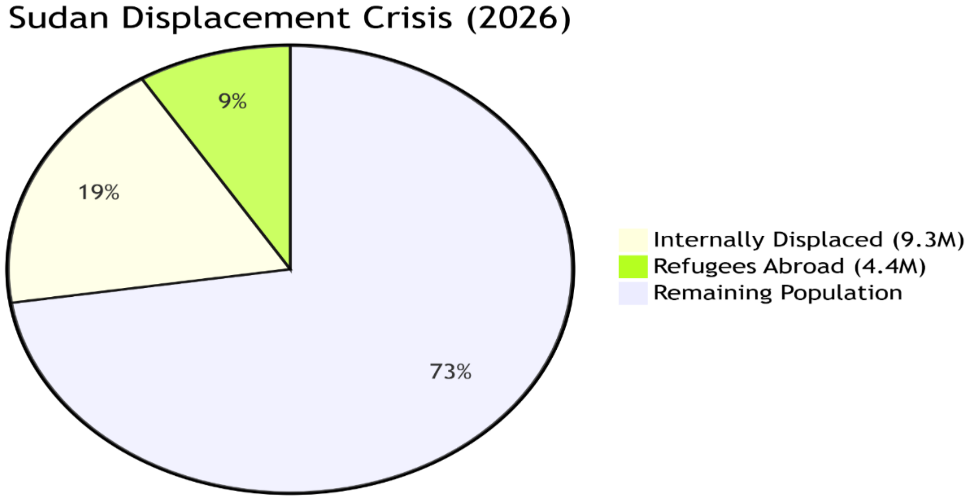

Figure 6: Displacement Patterns in Sudan

Figure 6. Population Displacement Patterns in Sudan. This diagram illustrates the scale and direction of Sudan's displacement crisis, showing the flow of 9.3 million internally displaced persons from conflict areas to safer regions, including over one million returns to Khartoum and 2.2 million returns to areas of origin in 2025. The model also shows the flow of 4.4 million refugees to neighboring countries including Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia. The diagram demonstrates the massive scale of population movement and the risk of secondary displacement in areas with devastated infrastructure.

Demographic Transformation

The massive population movements generated by the conflict are transforming Sudan's demographic landscape. Entire communities have been uprooted, and population distributions have been fundamentally altered. The displacement has affected some regions more than others, creating new demographic realities that will shape the country's future. The displacement has followed patterns that show correlations with risk clusters identified through multidimensional spatial analysis. Some areas have experienced depopulation, while others have seen significant population increases. These changes have implications for resource allocation, service provision, and political representation.

The demographic consequences extend beyond immediate displacement. The conflict has created a climate of mass trauma among children. In the Multisector Needs Assessment conducted in August 2025, more than 50 percent of households reported at least one child having shown signs of psychosocial distress in the previous three months. An entire generation has watched their childhoods and futures erode before their eyes.

Allegations of Demographic Engineering

Reports have emerged of deliberate demographic engineering in Sudan. Human rights organizations have condemned what they describe as systematic demographic change projects in the capital. Local reports indicate that the RSF is pursuing a systematic strategy of forcibly emptying cities of their original inhabitants and replacing them with components loyal to the militias. These allegations must be treated with caution, as they emerge from a highly polarized conflict environment in which both sides have incentives to accuse the other of atrocities. However, the pattern of displacement, with specific ethnic groups being targeted in specific areas, is consistent with deliberate demographic manipulation. The RSF has warned of what it describes as an "extremely dangerous racist plan" orchestrated by the Islamic Movement and the SAF aimed at displacing Sudanese citizens originating from marginalized areas as part of a systematic campaign to reshape the demographic fabric of the country along ethnic and regional lines.

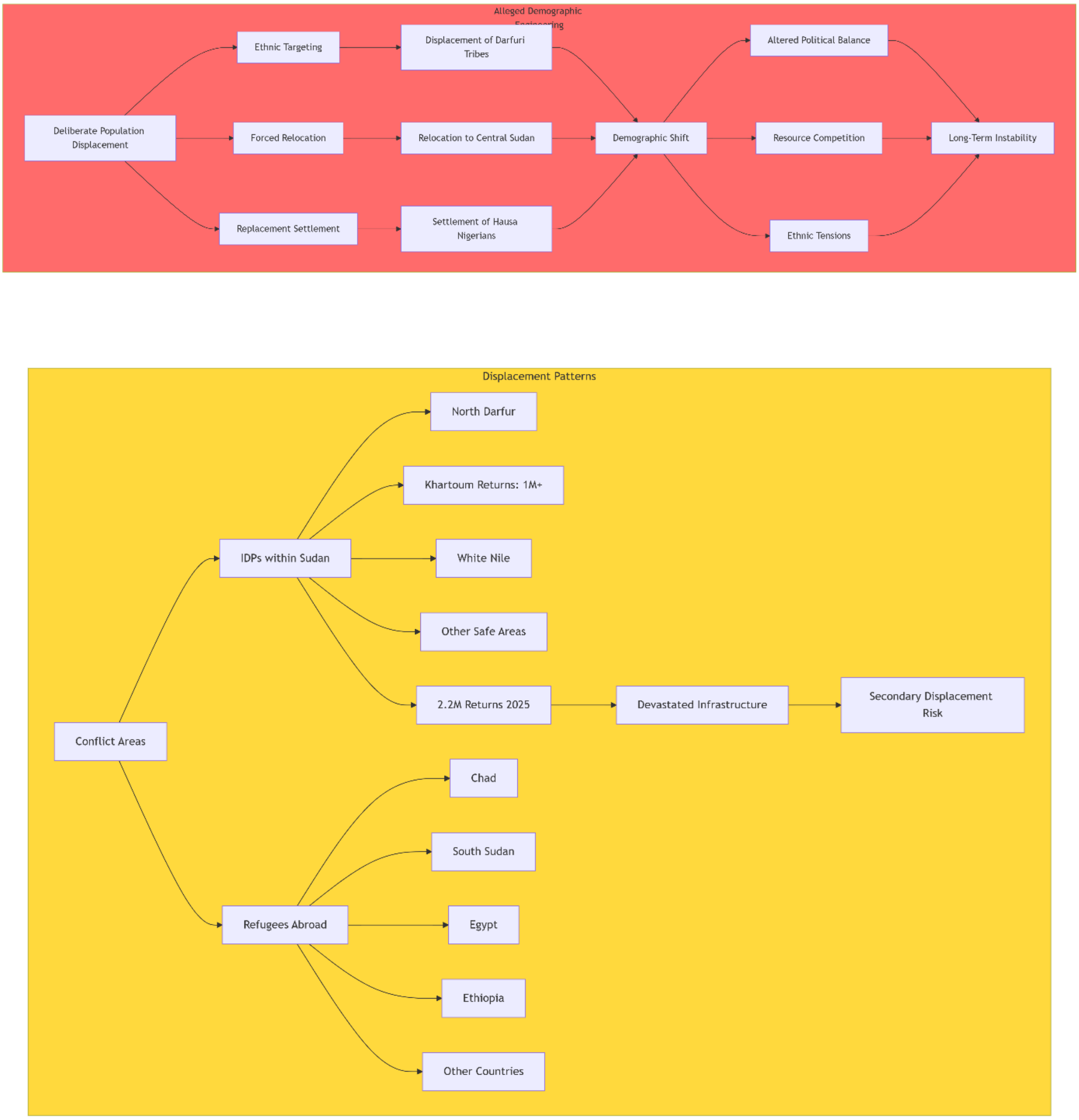

Figure 7: Alleged Demographic Engineering

Figure 7. Alleged Demographic Engineering in Sudan. This diagram illustrates the alleged demographic manipulation strategy involving deliberate population displacement, ethnic targeting, forced relocation, and replacement settlement. The model traces the chain from ethnic targeting of Darfuri tribes and settlement of Hausa Nigerians to demographic shifts, altered political balance, resource competition, ethnic tensions, and ultimately long-term instability. While these allegations remain contested, the diagram represents a framework for understanding how demographic manipulation could shape Sudan's future.

Theoretical Implications: Demographic Transition in Conflict Contexts

Sudan's demographic crisis illustrates the intersection of demographic transition theory and conflict studies. The conflict has disrupted the normal processes of demographic transition, the shift from high to low birth and death rates that typically accompanies development. Instead of gradual transition, Sudan is experiencing a demographic shock characterized by massive displacement, elevated mortality, and disrupted family structures.

The post-conflict demographic landscape will present significant challenges. The paper recommends more attention to post-conflict youth boom in certain areas and its associated political, social, and economic consequences. Areas that have experienced depopulation may face labor shortages, while areas that have received large numbers of displaced persons may face pressure on services and infrastructure.

The International Dimension: External Actors and Geopolitical Competition

The Scramble for Sudan's Resources

Sudan's natural riches have attracted the attention of external actors. Behind the civil war tearing Sudan apart lie the country's natural riches, with foreign powers vying for control of its gold, fertile farmland, and coastline. Economic competition between the SAF and the RSF in gold mining and trade was a leading driver of the current war.

Sudan has vast natural resources, including oil, gold, and agricultural land that could help feed its people. The country produced just over 80 tonnes of gold per year before the war's outbreak, exporting $2.85 billion worth of the precious metal in 2021. Since the war began, control over gold mines and trade routes has become a critical source of funding for both sides in the conflict.

Regional and Global Actors

The conflict has drawn in regional and global actors with competing interests. The UAE has been accused of heavily arming the RSF, sustaining the conflict. Saudi Arabia has been involved in mediation efforts, proposing a "three-month humanitarian truce in all Sudan" and seeking to bring the RSF and army together for talks in Jeddah. The United States has declared that the RSF and its allied militias are committing genocide in Sudan. The US has called for cutting off weapons support to the RSF. However, the effectiveness of such calls is limited by the involvement of other actors who continue to supply the warring parties.

The Humanitarian Response

The international humanitarian response to Sudan's crisis has been significantly underfunded. The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, which aims to provide urgent assistance to 21 million crisis-affected people across Sudan, was only 27 percent funded. The Sudan Situation Appeal 2025 remains critically underfunded at only 35 percent.

As of July 2025, aid agencies had only received 23 percent of the USD 4.2 billion required to deliver life-saving aid to the nearly 21 million vulnerable people inside Sudan. This funding gap has severe consequences for the humanitarian response, limiting the ability of aid agencies to reach those in need.

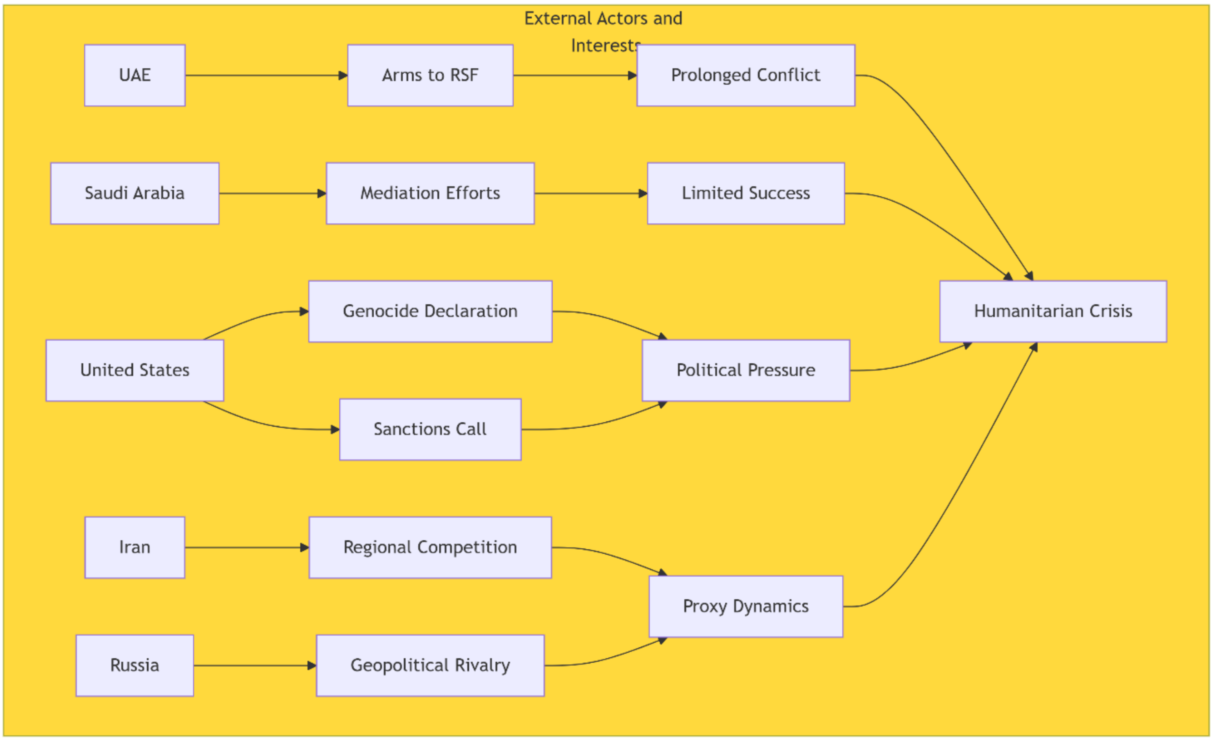

Figure 8: External Actors and Geopolitical Interests

Figure 8. External Actors and Geopolitical Interests in Sudan. This diagram maps the competing regional and global actors involved in Sudan's conflict, including UAE arms supply to the RSF, Saudi mediation efforts, US genocide declaration and sanctions calls, Iranian regional competition, and Russian geopolitical rivalry. The model demonstrates how external interests contribute to prolonged conflict, limited mediation success, political pressure dynamics, proxy dynamics, and the resulting humanitarian crisis.

Synthesis and Theoretical Integration

The Interconnectedness of Sudan's Crises

Sudan's crises are deeply interconnected. The military fragmentation has undermined the state's capacity to manage the economy, contributing to economic collapse. The economic collapse has fueled conflict by creating competition over dwindling resources. The demographic displacement has transformed the social fabric of the country, creating new grievances and tensions. External actors have exploited these dynamics for their own purposes, prolonging the conflict and complicating resolution efforts.

This interconnectedness means that piecemeal approaches to resolution are unlikely to succeed. Addressing the military dimension without addressing the economic dimension will leave the underlying causes of conflict intact. Addressing the economic dimension without addressing the demographic dimension will fail to address the social transformations that are reshaping the country. A comprehensive approach is required.

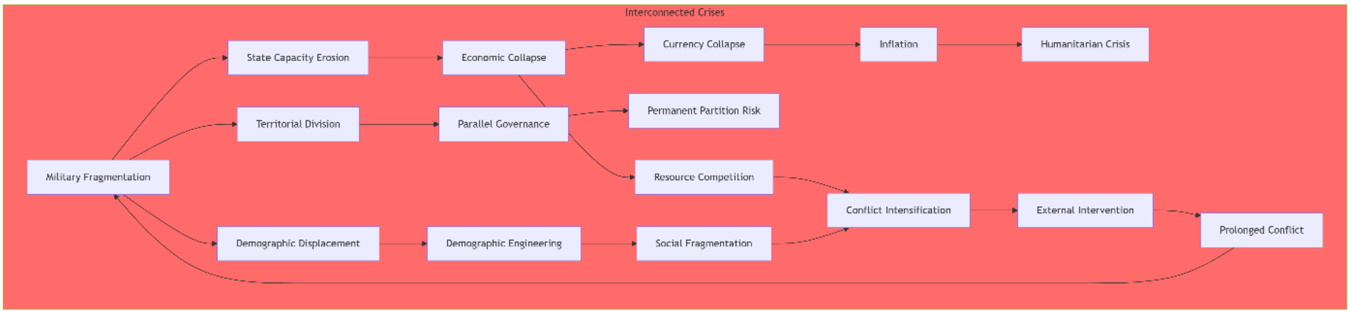

Figure 9: Interconnected Crises in Sudan

Figure 9. Interconnected Crises in Sudan. This diagram illustrates the complex causal relationships between military fragmentation, state capacity erosion, economic collapse, resource competition, territorial division, parallel governance, demographic displacement, and external intervention. The model demonstrates the self-reinforcing nature of Sudan's crises, where each dimension exacerbates the others in a cycle of mutual reinforcement. The diagram highlights why piecemeal approaches to resolution are unlikely to succeed.

Theoretical Contributions

This analysis makes several contributions to the theoretical literature:

First, it demonstrates the importance of integrating resource conflict theory, political economy analysis, and demographic theory in understanding complex crises. A multidimensional approach is necessary to adequately explain Sudan's crisis, as no single theoretical framework suffices.

Second, it illustrates how the creation of parallel military structures within a state can generate instability and conflict. The integration of the Janjaweed into the RSF and the subsequent conflict between the RSF and the SAF exemplify the dangers of creating multiple centers of armed power within a state.

Third, it shows how rent-seeking economic structures can become entrenched and resistant to reform, contributing to state fragility and conflict. The fuel import system in Sudan, dominated by a small group of companies extracting rents while contributing nothing to productive capacity, exemplifies these dynamics.

Fourth, it demonstrates how conflict can transform demographic landscapes, creating new realities that shape the possibilities for post-conflict reconstruction. The massive population displacements generated by Sudan's conflict have fundamentally altered the country's demographic map.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The analysis has several implications for policy and practice:

First, security sector reform must address the proliferation of armed groups and the creation of parallel military structures. The integration of armed groups into a single, professional national army is essential for long-term stability.

Second, economic reform must address the rent-seeking structures that have characterized Sudan's political economy. The fuel import system must be restructured to eliminate the parasitic class of intermediaries who extract rents while contributing nothing to productive capacity.

Third, the international community must address the humanitarian crisis with adequate funding and support. The current funding gap is unacceptable given the scale of suffering.

Fourth, durable solutions for displaced populations must be developed. The UN Multi-Agency Durable Solutions Initiative, launched in August 2025, represents an important step in this direction.

Future Scenarios for Sudan

Understanding the possible trajectories of Sudan's crisis is essential for strategic planning by policymakers, humanitarian actors, and the international community. Based on the analysis presented in this paper and informed by scenario planning exercises conducted by ACAPS, the UNDP, and other analytical bodies, this section outlines four plausible scenarios for Sudan's future. These scenarios are not predictions but rather analytical tools designed to illuminate the key drivers and inflection points that will shape the country's trajectory.

Scenario One: Attrition – The Protracted Conflict

Description: Under this scenario, Sudan's fragmentation deepens as the SAF entrenches its control over the east and centre under weak governance, while the RSF consolidates control over most of western Sudan, primarily through military operations and coercive control mechanisms such as extortion and checkpoints. Other armed groups, including the SPLM-N/Al Hilu in parts of Kordofan and the SLM/AW in other areas, hold pockets of control, creating multiple, separate aid environments. Front lines remain dynamic and intense in Darfur and Kordofan, requiring humanitarian responders to navigate fluid access and shifting authorities.

Key Drivers

- Neither side achieves a decisive military victory
- External actors continue to supply weapons to both parties
- War economies become increasingly entrenched
- International mediation efforts remain fragmented and ineffective

Humanitarian Consequences

- Overlapping governance systems, damaged infrastructure, insecurity, and coercive control worsen humanitarian conditions and deepen economic collapse
- Humanitarian responders navigate politicised coordination and uneven coverage
- Protection risks for civilians remain extremely high
- Food insecurity and famine conditions persist or worsen

Likelihood: High. As of mid-2026, this scenario most closely resembles the current trajectory. The UNDP projects that if conflict continues to 2030, a further 34 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty.

Key Inflection Points

- Failure to achieve a ceasefire or humanitarian truce
- Continued external arms flows to both sides
- Breakdown of mediation efforts
- Further fragmentation of armed groups

Scenario Two: Partition – The Two-State Outcome

Description: The country consolidates around two separate but functioning rival governing blocs: the RSF- and SPLM-N-backed Tasis government in western Sudan and the SAF-backed Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) Government in eastern and central Sudan. Front lines stabilise while each bloc strengthens governance, administration, and command within its territory. Two distinct aid environments emerge, with separate clearance mechanisms, taxation, and registration systems. The RSF forms a Security and Defense Council and begins constructing a parallel national army, institutionalising the division.

Key Drivers

- Military stalemate becomes permanent
- Both sides recognise the impossibility of military victory
- International community accepts de facto partition
- Each bloc develops its own economic and governance institutions

Humanitarian Consequences

- Humanitarian access improves nationwide, particularly in western Sudan, as each bloc establishes clearer administrative structures
- However, protection crises may persist within each territory
- Cross-border humanitarian operations become more complex
- Long-term displacement becomes permanent for many populations

Likelihood: Moderate to High. This scenario represents the consolidation of current de facto territorial divisions. The emergence of parallel administrations in Darfur and Kordofan and the RSF's announcement of plans for a rival national army suggest movement in this direction.

Key Inflection Points

- International recognition or tacit acceptance of parallel governance structures
- Consolidation of separate monetary and economic systems
- Formalisation of territorial boundaries between the two blocs
- Failure of political dialogue to produce a unified framework

Scenario Three: Disintegration – The Somalia Model

Description: This worst-case scenario envisions the fragmentation of Sudan into multiple spheres of influence controlled by various armed groups, rather than just two competing blocs. The rising influence of what analysts describe as "small guns", militias fighting alongside one side or the other, imposes their own agendas, limiting the ability of the central leadership of the army or the RSF to control the scene. This scenario resembles the Somali model, based on multiple areas of control among "warlords".

Key Drivers
- Further fragmentation of armed groups along tribal and regional lines
- Breakdown of command and control within both the SAF and RSF
- Proliferation of local militias pursuing their own agendas
- Collapse of any remaining state institutions

Humanitarian Consequences
- Multiple conflict zones with no central authority
- Extreme protection risks for civilians
- Collapse of humanitarian access in many areas
- Famine conditions widespread
- Massive further displacement, including across international borders

Likelihood: Moderate. While this scenario represents the most catastrophic outcome, it cannot be dismissed. The war has already led to the "fragmentation of the centre," and there is no longer a single strong centre capable of subduing armed groups. The proliferation of armed actors and the emergence of multiple centres of power create conditions conducive to this outcome.

Key Inflection Points:
- Breakdown of SAF or RSF command structures
- Emergence of new armed groups challenging both major parties
- Collapse of mediation efforts
- Withdrawal of international humanitarian presence

Scenario Four: Reassertion – The Peaceful Resolution
Description: Under this optimistic scenario, a political process succeeds in ending the conflict and restoring a unified Sudanese state. A humanitarian truce leads to a permanent ceasefire, followed by an inclusive, civilian-led political dialogue that lays the foundation for durable peace and the restoration of civilian rule. Armed groups are integrated into state institutions under clear legal frameworks, and parallel forces are eliminated. Reconstruction begins, and the country embarks on a path of economic recovery and democratic transition.

Key Drivers:
- Sustained international pressure on all parties
- Genuine commitment from both the SAF and RSF to a political settlement
- Successful civilian-led dialogue process
- Adequate funding for reconstruction and humanitarian response

Humanitarian Consequences:
- Improved humanitarian access across the country
- Beginning of returns and reconstruction
- Economic recovery and poverty reduction
- Restoration of basic services and infrastructure

The UNDP projects that under this "Sudan Rising" path, peace combined with reform and investment could lift 17 million people out of poverty and more than double GDP by 2043. However, even under the most optimistic scenario, peace in 2026, Sudan would still suffer a cumulative GDP loss of US$18.8 billion by 2043, and recovery would remain slow, with average economic growth of just 1.2 percent through 2043, well below the average for low-income African countries.

Likelihood: Low to Moderate. While there is broad international consensus that there can be no military solution to this crisis, and that a sustainable resolution must be rooted in an inclusive, civilian-led political process, significant obstacles remain. The SAF has rejected previous truce proposals, and trust between the parties remains extremely low. However, ongoing mediation efforts by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, the Quintet mechanism (comprising the AU, IGAD, the Arab League, the UN, and the EU), and other international actors offer potential pathways to peace.

Key Inflection Points:
- Agreement on a humanitarian truce followed by a permanent ceasefire
- Successful commencement of an inclusive Sudanese civilian-led dialogue process
- Integration of armed forces into state institutions
- Adequate international funding for reconstruction and humanitarian response

Scenario Comparison Matrix

Dimension	Attrition	Partition	Disintegration	Reassertion
Territorial Control	Fragmented, contested	Two rival blocs	Multiple warlord zones	Unified state
Governance	Weak, overlapping	Two separate administrations	Collapsed	Restored, civilian-led
Humanitarian Access	Constrained, politicised	Improved, two systems	Severely limited	Fully restored
Economic Impact	Deepening collapse	Divided economies	Complete collapse	Gradual recovery
Displacement	Continuing	Permanent for many	Massive further displacement	Returns begin
International Response	Fragmented	Accommodation of partition	Humanitarian catastrophe	Coordinated support
Likelihood	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	Low-Moderate
Source: Author's analysis based on ACAPS, UNDP, and OCHA scenario planning exercises				

Table 7: Scenario Comparison Matrix

Solutions to the Crisis

Addressing Sudan's multidimensional crisis requires a comprehensive, integrated approach that tackles the military, economic, political, and demographic dimensions simultaneously. Piecemeal approaches are unlikely to succeed, as each dimension of the crisis reinforces the others. This section outlines a framework for sustainable resolution, drawing on the analysis presented in this paper and informed by current policy discussions.

Security Sector Reform

Problem: The proliferation of armed groups and the existence of parallel military structures constitute the most immediate threat to Sudan's stability. The RSF has evolved from a Darfuri Arab militia into a powerful paramilitary force that rivals the regular army. The emergence of parallel armies and the fragmentation of military power have created conditions for ongoing violence.
Solutions:

Integration of Armed Groups

The integration of armed groups into a single, professional national army is essential for long-term stability. This process must:

- Establish clear legal frameworks governing the relationship between military and political activity.
- Prevent the existence of any parallel forces operating outside the state's authority
- Ensure that all armed groups are brought under unified command and control
- Provide demobilisation and reintegration programmes for fighters not absorbed into the regular forces

The alternative, allowing parallel military structures to persist, risks institutionalising the division of the country. As former Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister Ambassador Salah Halima argued, any stabilization effort must run on parallel tracks, security, humanitarian relief, political settlement, and state reconstruction, rather than treating the war as a technical ceasefire file.

Ceasefire and Confidence-Building Measures

Sustainable peace depends on building trust among all parties through concrete confidence-building measures:

- Prisoner exchanges
- The opening of humanitarian corridors
- The adoption of a short-term ceasefire to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance

Protection of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, water, and electricity facilities Civil and political forces have proposed a renewable three-month ceasefire to be monitored by local, regional, and international mechanisms. Such a ceasefire could provide the foundation for broader political dialogue.

Disarming Militias and Controlling Weapons

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been a defining feature of Sudan's conflict. Controlling weapons and informal settlements is essential for restoring security.

This requires:

- Systematic disarmament of militias and armed groups outside state control
- Strengthening of border controls to prevent the flow of weapons
- Implementation of weapons registration and tracking systems
- Community-based disarmament programmes

Economic Reform

Problem: Sudan's economy has experienced catastrophic collapse, characterised by currency depreciation exceeding 80%, hyperinflation reaching 145%, and the emergence of a war economy that depletes the country's natural resources and fuels violence. The fuel import system has been dominated by a small group of companies extracting rents while contributing nothing to productive capacity.

Solutions:

Restructuring the Fuel Import System

The fuel import system must be restructured to eliminate the parasitic class of intermediaries who extract rents while contributing nothing to productive capacity. The Aramco proposal offers a potential path to stabilisation:

- Deferred payment terms of 180 days would relieve pressure on foreign currency reserves
- Government-to-government (G2G) arrangements would reduce intermediation costs
- Stable, fixed annual prices would insulate the economy from market volatility
- Strategic storage facilities would enhance energy security

The Kenyan and Ugandan experiences demonstrate that the solution lies in withdrawing imports from private companies and speculators and entrusting them to state-controlled mechanisms. Kenya's deferred payment agreement with Aramco relieved pressure on its monetary reserves (approximately $500 million per month) and contributed to the stability of the Kenyan shilling. Uganda's centralized import model generated government profits estimated between $140 million and $150 million since July 2024.

Currency Stabilisation

Addressing the currency collapse requires coordinated action on multiple fronts:

- Reducing demand for foreign currency by restructuring the import system
- Increasing export earnings, particularly from gold and agricultural products
- Restoring oil exports through repair of damaged infrastructure
- Implementing monetary policy reforms to control inflation

The primary cause of the exchange rate depreciation is the damage to the oil pipeline passing through Sudan and the disruption of oil shipping routes through the Red Sea. Repairing this infrastructure is essential for economic recovery.

Combating the War Economy

Curbing "war economies," particularly gold-related revenues, is essential to restoring Sudan's economic viability. This requires:

- Regulation of gold mining and trade to prevent financing of armed groups
- Disruption of cross-border financial and logistical pipelines that sustain armed capacity
- Strengthening of financial oversight and anti-money laundering measures
- Reintegration of war economy participants into the legitimate economy

Energy Diversification

The conflict has disrupted traditional energy supplies, but it has also created opportunities for diversification. The destruction of the Al-Jaili refinery in Khartoum, which met over 40% of domestic fuel needs, has left Sudan heavily reliant on costly imported fuel, draining scarce foreign currency. Solar power offers a potential alternative, with UNDP analysis finding that solar power could boost incomes, food production, and economic recovery across Sudan.

Political Reconciliation

Problem: The conflict has produced a de facto partition of Sudan, with the emergence of parallel governance structures in areas under RSF control. The creation of a parallel army and governance structures institutionalises the division of the country, making reunification increasingly difficult. The international community faces a dilemma: engaging with parallel structures risks legitimising them, while refusing engagement may allow the situation to deteriorate further.

Solutions:

Civilian-Led Political Process

There is broad international consensus that there can be no military solution to this crisis, and that a sustainable resolution must be rooted in an inclusive, civilian-led political process that reflects the aspirations of the Sudanese people.

This process should:

- Bring together a broad spectrum of Sudanese civilian and political actors, including representatives of civil society, women's groups, youth, and stakeholders representing Sudan's geographic and social diversity
- Be conducted in a manner that is transparent, credible, and free from coercion
- Be structured to enable feasible and reasonable conclusion within a timely manner, ideally within six months
- Establish a clear pathway toward a transition process to an independent civilian-led government, grounded in

legitimacy, accountability, and respect for human rights.

The Quintet mechanism (comprising the AU, IGAD, the Arab League, the UN, and the EU) is leading efforts to prepare and commence a comprehensive and inclusive Sudanese civilian-led dialogue process. The Berlin Conference in April 2026 adopted the "Berlin Principles for Sudan" and a "Joint Call to End the War and Advance a Sudanese-Owned Political Process".

Preserving Sudan's Unity and Territorial Integrity

The international community has consistently affirmed its commitment to Sudan's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. Egypt has stressed its rejection of the establishment of any parallel entities and its unwavering support for Sudan's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Any political settlement must preserve Sudan's unity while addressing the grievances that have fueled conflict.

Linking Humanitarian, Security, and Political Tracks

The peace process must link the humanitarian, security, and political tracks as part of a comprehensive approach. As the Finance Minister emphasized, reconstruction represents a central pillar of the peace process, and stability cannot be consolidated without restoring public services in a manner that strengthens public confidence in the viability of peace. A cumulative, step-by-step approach based on practical and implementable measures should gradually evolve into a comprehensive and sustainable political process.

Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict

The war cannot be reduced to a fight between two armed formations; it represents the eruption of a long-standing crisis of state failure, identity, and citizenship, going back decades. Addressing these root causes requires:

- A shift from generic calls for unity to a concrete debate about the form of unity Sudan needs, including a stable civil state capable of managing diversity without reproducing old exclusions
- Full separation between politics and weapons
- Renewed bridge-building among Sudanese elites to craft solutions not dictated by external leverage

Demographic Reconciliation

Problem: The conflict has generated massive population movements that are reshaping the demographic map of the country. Over 10.5 million people have been displaced within Sudan, with another 4 million seeking refuge across borders. Allegations of deliberate demographic engineering have emerged, with reports of systematic displacement of specific ethnic groups and replacement with populations loyal to the militias.
Solutions:

Durable Solutions for Displaced Populations

The UN Multi-Agency Durable Solutions Initiative, launched in August 2025, represents an important step toward addressing displacement. Durable solutions require:

- Voluntary, safe, and dignified return for those who wish to return
- Local integration for those who cannot or do not wish to return
- Resettlement for those who cannot safely remain in Sudan

These solutions must be implemented in a manner that respects the rights of displaced populations and addresses the root causes of displacement.

Preventing Demographic Engineering

Deliberate demographic manipulation must be condemned and prevented. This requires:

- Documentation and monitoring of population movements
- Accountability for those responsible for forced displacement and demographic manipulation
- Protection of the rights of all ethnic and religious groups
- Promotion of inclusive governance that represents Sudan's diverse population

Addressing Psychosocial Needs

The conflict has created a climate of mass trauma among children. In the Multisector Needs Assessment conducted in August 2025, more than 50 percent of households reported at least one child having shown signs of psychosocial distress in the previous three months. Addressing these needs requires:

- Investment in mental health and psychosocial support services
- Support for child protection programmes
- Education and livelihood opportunities for displaced youth
- Community-based reconciliation and healing programmes

International Engagement

Problem: The conflict has drawn in regional and global actors with competing interests. The UAE has been accused of heavily arming the RSF, sustaining the conflict. The effectiveness of international calls for cutting off weapons support is limited by the involvement of other actors who continue to supply the warring parties. The humanitarian response has been significantly underfunded.

Solutions:

Coordinated International Pressure

The international community must unite in its support for peace. The Joint Statement on Sudan, issued by Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, the AU, the EU, IGAD, the League of Arab States, and the UN, reaffirms shared commitment to a peaceful, democratic, and stable future for Sudan. This unity must be translated into:

- Coordinated diplomatic pressure on all parties to the conflict
- Sanctions against those who undermine the peace process
- Cutting off weapons supplies to all parties
- Support for the Quintet's mediation efforts

Adequate Humanitarian Funding

The international humanitarian response to Sudan's crisis has been significantly underfunded. As of July 2025, aid agencies had only received 23 percent of the USD 4.2 billion required. The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, which aims to provide urgent assistance to 21 million crisis-affected people, was only 27 percent funded.

Adequate Funding is Essential for:

- Delivering life-saving aid to vulnerable populations
- Supporting the humanitarian response infrastructure
- Investing in early action and risk reduction

Support for Reconstruction

Reconstruction represents a central pillar of the peace process. The international community must be prepared to support:

- Repair of damaged infrastructure, including the oil sector and pipelines
- Restoration of basic services, including health, water, and electricity
- Economic recovery and job creation
- Institutional capacity building

Addressing Regional Dimensions

Sudan's crisis has regional dimensions that must be addressed. Prolonged instability risks producing a chronically "disturbed" state that external actors can exploit to reshape the Horn of Africa's strategic map. Regional cooperation is essential for:

- Border security and control of arms flows
- Management of refugee flows
- Regional economic integration
- Coordinated diplomatic engagement

Summary of Solutions

Dimension	Key Problems	Key Solutions
Security	Proliferation of armed groups; parallel military structures; ongoing violence	Integration of armed groups; ceasefire and confidence-building; disarmament
Economic	Currency collapse; fuel import system dysfunction; war economy	Restructure fuel imports (Aramco deal); currency stabilisation; combat war economy; energy diversification
Political	De facto partition; parallel governance; state failure	Civilian-led political process; preserve unity; link humanitarian/security/political tracks; address root causes
Demographic	Mass displacement; demographic engineering; psychosocial trauma	Durable solutions for displaced; prevent demographic manipulation; address psychosocial needs
International	Competing external actors; underfunded humanitarian response	Coordinated international pressure; adequate humanitarian funding; support for reconstruction; regional cooperation
Source: Author's analysis		

Table 8: Summary of Solutions

Conclusion

The Path Forward

Sudan stands at a crossroads. The path of continued conflict leads to further destruction, displacement, and suffering. The path of reconciliation and reconstruction is difficult but necessary. The choice is not merely technical but political; it requires the willingness of all parties to compromise and the commitment of the international community to support a comprehensive peace.

The stakes could not be higher. Sudan is the world's largest displacement crisis and one of the world's most severe humanitarian emergencies. The consequences of failure extend beyond Sudan's borders, affecting the entire region and beyond [1-25].

The Path Forward Requires:

First, an immediate humanitarian truce leading to a permanent ceasefire. This is the essential first step toward any sustainable resolution. The protection of civilians must remain central.

Second, an inclusive, civilian-led political process that reflects the aspirations of the Sudanese people. This process must bring together a broad spectrum of Sudanese civilian and political actors and establish a clear pathway toward an independent civilian-led government.

Third, comprehensive security sector reform that integrates armed groups into a single, professional national army and eliminates parallel military structures.

Fourth, economic reform that restructures the fuel import system, stabilises the currency, and combats the war economy.

Fifth, demographic reconciliation that provides durable solutions for displaced populations, prevents demographic engineering, and addresses the psychosocial needs of conflict-affected populations.

Sixth, sustained international engagement that provides coordinated diplomatic pressure, adequate humanitarian funding, and support for reconstruction.

The time for action is now. Every day of delay adds to the suffering of the Sudanese people and makes the path to peace more difficult. The international community must rise to the challenge, and the Sudanese people must find the will to forge a new future for their country.

Declaration of Ethics

This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Science and Technology, Omdurman, Khartoum. Sudan. However, the study did not require ethical approval because it used publicly available, anonymized data with no human or animal subjects.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

Declaration of AI Use

- During the preparation of this work, the author used DeepSeek to improve language and readability. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the published article.

- The author used DeepSeek to assist with code generation for data analysis. All outputs were manually verified, and no AI was used to generate conclusions or interpret results.

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Appendix: Glossary of Key Terms

Janjaweed: Arab militia groups mobilized during the Darfur conflict, later restructured into the RSF.

Rapid Support Forces (RSF): Paramilitary force evolved from the Janjaweed; currently in conflict with the SAF.

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF): Regular military forces of Sudan, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.
De Facto Partition: Actual division of territory and governance without formal recognition.

Demographic Engineering: Deliberate manipulation of population composition through displacement, resettlement, or other means.

War Economy: Economic system that emerges during conflict, often characterized by resource extraction, illicit trade, and the creation of vested interests in continued violence.
Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement: Direct contractual arrangement between national governments, bypassing private intermediaries.

Tasis Alliance: Coalition of armed groups and political actors announced in February 2025 supporting a parallel governance structure in Sudan.

Quintet Mechanism: Coordinated international mediation framework comprising the AU, IGAD, the Arab League, the UN, and the EU.

Durable Solutions: Sustainable solutions for displacement including voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement.