

Restructuring state power in Sudan

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Abstract

Developing post-conflict economic policies in Sudan remains a significant challenge for the Sudanese transitional government and the international community. This article argues that understanding the conflict, its costs and the progress made during the current peace agreement are essential for advancing policy reforms in Sudan. The Sudanese transitional government has attempted to implement reforms, but little progress has been made because the civilian elements operate outside of the existing state power. The previous regimes policies sustained conflict(s) through both passive and active enablement of the Sudanese security forces, which means that the restructuring of state power is essential to place Sudan on the right course towards sustained democracy. This article posits that addressing structural reforms in Sudan means establishing control over the economy, defense, and security sectors.

Developing post-conflict economic policies in Sudan remains a significant challenge to the international community. The failures of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's generic structural adjustment programs in post-conflict situations have led to the recognition of the complexity of the processes involved. As such, it has become clear that developing successful post-conflict policies requires a better understanding of the nature and uniqueness of each conflict, including their context and root causes.¹ Research about conflicts that have ended since 1989 has also shown that peace accords supported by the United Nations, and generous development assistance, produce better outcomes than military victories alone.² Case studies of individual conflicts, therefore, make an important contribution to the existing literature.

This article considers the protracted conflict in Sudan, which offers both an interesting and timely exploration of a country emerging out of years of bitter conflict. Sudan has signed two peace agreements with Darfur: the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in 2006 and the Doha Peace Agreement in 2011. More recently, in 2020, the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) was signed in Juba (South Sudan) between the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)—an alliance of nine political and armed groups from Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and East and North Sudan. The agreement was primarily reached because of the desire of the northern elites (based in Khartoum) to redeem themselves from the atrocities and crimes committed under successive governments since independence.

The article is organized into three main sections. First, it explores the economic cost of the protracted conflicts in Sudan with a focus on the evolution of peace agreements in Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile. Second, it explores how the previous regime under Omar al-Bashir restructured state power and helped to sustain many of Sudan's conflicts but also crippled the Sudanese economy. Third, it briefly looks at how some security forces are still plundering resources and how this pillage is crippling the transitional government's efforts to maintain peace, create

¹ Brauer and Dunne (2011).

² Brauer and Dunne (2012).

economic freedom, and meet the expectations of the Sudanese. Finally, it presents a few concluding thoughts on what is next for Sudan and how Sudan can restructure state power.

The cost of unresolved conflict

The Darfur region is comprised of five states: North, West, Central, East, and South Darfur; these cover about 510,888 km², an area the size of France and represented one-fifth of Sudan's surface area before South Sudan separated in 2011. The Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM) rebels operating in this region had demanded a package of around USD 60 million from the government to provide modest support for local economic development and creation of employment opportunities in Darfur.³ However, many of these modest demands were not met. In February 2003, the SLM attacked the military garrison in Darfur at the town of Golu in East Jebel Mara and then slowly emerged as a recognized fighting force against the government.⁴ The rebels' political manifesto was not initially enunciated, with the central government and outside observers perceiving their agenda as a local protest against economic marginalization.

Attempts to end the conflict led to three negotiated agreements. The first, in April 2004, between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Darfur rebel movements—the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). This N'Djamena Ceasefire Agreement was never fully implemented. The talks were co-mediated by Chad and the African Union (AU) in Abuja. At the Oslo Donor's Conference on Sudan in 2005, a total of USD 611.3 million was pledged for Multi-Donor Trust Funds (MDTF) between 2005 and 2007.⁵ However, donor payments failed to meet the agreed amounts, with USD 149.6 million paid in 2005 and USD 132.2 million in 2006. In addition, concerns about rearming, corruption, and infighting between parties to the conflict discouraged donors from contributing to economic development projects.⁶

In July 2005, the second agreement saw the parties adopt the Declaration of Principles defining the core principles for the Darfur conflict settlement; the agreement was signed on 5 May 2006.⁷ This was imposed by the mediators—the AU, the United States, and the European Union—with artificial deadlines and coercion of the negotiating parties. It was a flawed document that lost the support of civil society actors, caused defections amongst the rebels, and failed to win the endorsement of field commanders, resulting in its collapse. However, the Darfur Community Peace and Security Fund (DCPSF), established by donors at the end of 2007, sought to support community-level peace-building activities and foster social cohesion by drawing diverse communities together through processes of dialogue and consultation.⁸

Ali (2013) estimated the total cost of the civil war in Sudan from 2003 to 2009 as USD 41.5 billion. This comprised USD 10.1 billion in direct military expenses; USD 7.2 billion in lost productivity from civilians who became internally displaced persons (IDPs); USD 2.6 billion in foregone lifetime earnings of the dead; USD 4.1 billion in infrastructure damage; USD 6.5 billion in lost gross domestic product and military expenditure; and USD 10.9 billion

To understand Sudan's protracted conflicts and current problems, it is necessary to understand how the development of the nation-state was created off the back of power struggles that originated from differences among the major actors, and how the resulting restructuring of state power is deeply rooted and connected to the problems of modern-day Sudan. With a large degree of power and state resources under control of the security services, attaining peace requires the difficult task of introducing effective state administrative mechanisms and executive authority in order to deliver effective civilian oversight.

³ Ali (2013; 2014).

⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵ See Scanteam (2007).

⁶ UNHCR (2019).

⁷ Lanz (2008).

⁸ UN-Habitat Sudan (2015).

for the expenses for the African Union Mission (AUMIS), later converted into the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMAID).⁹ Despite the increasing cost of the civil war, President Omar al-Bashir continually argued that the exploitation of oil revenues was essential to build a more robust military and fund helicopters along with other military supplies. The Sudanese government then used these procurements to launch aerial attacks on towns and villages and support militias fighting the proxy war in Darfur.¹⁰

The Doha Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed in 2011, following an initiative by the Qatar government, supported by the Arab League, African Union, and the United Nations. The government of Sudan and the JEM had a Goodwill Agreement in 2009 and signed the Framework Agreement on 23 February 2010. During the negotiations the mediators were concerned about the JEM's size and influence, and there was pressure to bring other marginal and splinter groups to the negotiating table. The JEM later split up and a new movement was formed known as the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM). The LJM signed the framework agreement with the government of Sudan in March 2010, while the JEM withdrew from negotiations, leaving the LJM and government to sign the main agreement in July 2011.

This led to the formation of the Darfur Regional Authority to take on responsibility for peace and security, socio-economic development, stability, growth, justice, reconciliation, and healing.¹¹ The DPA was a generous agreement in terms of financial support, providing access to power across the state and other actors. To avoid the pitfalls of the 2006 accord, wealth and power-sharing were delineated in detail as a part of the agreement.¹² The DPA process was an internationally supported forum for negotiations between the government and rebel groups and continued as a recognized forum. It brought attention to regional and international efforts to resolve the conflict in Darfur. Nevertheless, the DPA created financial exploitation opportunities for both the government of Sudan and the rebels. At least five significant groups were competing for political power in the region: members of the ruling party who occupied some leadership positions (regional and nationwide); the first and second DPA and their signatories; rebel movements opposing the DPA; traditional political parties; and a myriad of civil society organizations (both pro-and anti-government).¹³ All of these groups were acting to influence future governance in Darfur, some of them by force.

At the Darfur Donor Pledging Conference in Doha in 2013, USD 1.04 billion was pledged by the Gulf states and European countries for Darfur's early recovery and development. The fund targeted infrastructure development, which was intended to benefit agriculture, agro-industry, and social sectors (thereby addressing some of the conflict's root causes). Efficiency gains associated with all-season feeder roads, reliable power, and water supply systems were expected to play an incremental role in boosting agricultural production and productivity (along with developing other sectors). The effectiveness of the package was, however, reduced considerably by members of the regime commandeering resources.¹⁴

Ten rebel group leaders signed the JPA in 2020, which covered national and regional issues. Regarding national issues, the parties in the SRF and the government of Sudan agreed to govern the country and share power. They called for a new national contract through a national constitutional conference mechanism that would guarantee fundamental human rights, respect diversity, and create a government system with a developmental state.¹⁵ For the first time, it was stipulated that states or regions had the right to keep a portion of the national wealth derived from extracted natural resources, which should go towards local development. The JPA also called for establishing a National

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch (2003).

¹¹ DDPD (2011).

¹² For example, Article 100 of the agreement stated that "Wealth constitutes a vital element, whose generation and government institutions, policies and programs greatly influence distribution."

¹³ Mohamed (2009).

¹⁴ African Development Bank (2016).

¹⁵ JDPAS (2020).

Commission of Resources and Financial Revenue Sharing and Allocation. A significant component of the agreement focused on Darfur, and representatives of rebel groups signed the accord. Six Darfuri rebel groups agreed with the JPA's embedded principles, which ensured that Darfur citizens could participate at all levels of government, state institutions, and civil service through equitable power and wealth sharing.¹⁶ It stated that IDPs had the right to return to their places of origin with financial compensation and restitution.

South Kordofan province includes the Nuba mountains bordering South Sudan. The region is divided into five provinces: Kadugli, Dilling, Rashad, Abu Jibeha, and Talodi. It is home to an estimated population of one million, the vast majority of whom are either displaced or severely affected in multiple ways by the ongoing conflict.¹⁷ South Kordofan and the Blue Nile served as the base for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). In 2005, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sponsored the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to settle the conflict between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). It included agreements for an interim period—from 2005 to 2011—on security, wealth sharing, power-sharing, and the status of the three regions of Abyei, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile.¹⁸ Conflict in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile erupted in 2011, following unresolved issues from the 1983–2005 civil war. From 2011–2016 there were eleven rounds of peace negotiations between the government and armed opposition groups, facilitated by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP).¹⁹ By 2017, the Sudan People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) had split into two factions, one led by commander Malik Aggar and the other by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, making any peace deal cumbersome. Abdelaziz al-Hilu endorsed the Nuba people's right to self-determination whereas al-Hilu's main rivals, Malik Aggar and former secretary-general Yassir Arman, did not. The Blue Nile and South Kordofan were both represented by SPLM-N. The JPA, signed on 3 October 2020, was signed by one faction, Malik Aggar (SPLA-N Aggar), while the other faction, led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLA-N al-Hilu), refused to sign.

The restructuring of state power

Many of the deepest insecurities in Sub-Saharan Africa derive not from state weakness but rather from militarized strategies and processes embedded into the state, using the foundations of previous colonial systems and methods to spread violence. Sudan's conflicts can be seen to have their roots in the colonization period.²⁰ Most Sudanese scholars agree that the north-south divide was fueled by the British, who favored social and economic investment in northern Sudan under the Southern policy implemented between 1920 and 1947.²¹ The British system led to a further structural divide by northern elites, and the first Sudanese civil war, which ran from 1955 to 1972, was resolved under the Addis Ababa Agreement.²²

Even though Sudan was one of the first African states to gain independence from its colonial rulers, the restructuring of state power before independence continues to undermine the post-colonial arrangements— despite regular shifts in state control between civilians and the military. The colonial regime in Sudan maintained its rule through a combination of brutal military repression and strategies of divide, “identity”, co-opt, and rule.²³ Mamdani (1996) argues that the major impediments to democracy and democratization in Africa are located in the institutional legacy of colonial domination linked with indirect rule and the everyday running of the “Native Authority system”.²⁴

¹⁶ Ibid.,16.

¹⁷ Asylum Research Centre (2018).

¹⁸ Wennmann (2008).

¹⁹ Amnesty International (2016).

²⁰ Johnson (2011).

²¹ Ali et al. (2005).

²² Beswick (1991, p. 200).

²³ Mamdani (2009).

²⁴ Mamdani (1996, p. 192).

The colonial and independence eras also set up very different kinds of governance within urban and rural areas. The urban political economy was structured around developmental state institutions, which led to both middle and working-class political structures, whereas in rural areas—those further from urban professional connections and migration links—societies were governed in a more indirect, informal way. This hybrid system, according to Mamdani, created a “decentralized despotism” in rural areas that produced the separation of (rural) subjects and (urban) citizens.²⁵ This system of divide and rule helped to exacerbate tensions between the different regions. It widened disparities between, on the one hand, elites, and on the other, the less privileged sectors of society.²⁶

The post-colonial era encouraged the exploitation of resources, which had become the source of warfare financing. The very existence of the regime(s) in Sudan became a warfare objective in itself.²⁷ The colonial system was mastered by the post-colonial regimes, who mirrored its tactics and techniques. Thus, divide-and-rule campaigns and exploitation of peripheral territorial control shaped the modern Sudanese state.²⁸ This laid the groundwork for a post-colonial class formation and the rise of the northern bourgeoisie, who dominated Sudanese politics and added a class dimension to the developmental state.²⁹ The Sudanese state’s industrial and social policy arena created class identities, composed of teachers and economists with personal stakes in Sudan’s development project and who had an ideological vision of economic development, national sovereignty, and independence. This led to Sudan being dominated by military rule, overthrown by a popular uprising, followed by a short period of democratic governance, quickly followed by a military coup again, and so on. Over 32 years, the Nimeiri regime (1969–1985), overthrown by a popular uprising or *intifada*, and the National Islamic Front regime (1989–2004) revived old colonial policies and arrangements that would help Omar al-Bashir restructure state power and transform modern Sudan into a state where northern elites used resources outside of Khartoum for their own benefit.³⁰

Under Bashir, the discovery of oil and the revenues derived from it enabled the regime to dramatically increase military expenditure, expand and upgrade its military hardware, develop an arms industry, and use oil infrastructure to prosecute war.³¹ Bashir restructured state power formally in two ways. First, through opportunistic use of Political Islam, which was advocated via foreign policy. This was a customized version, tied to the regime’s geopolitical interests and used to exploit power between competing factions within the regime. Second, Bashir reformed the security sector, creating paramilitaries, providing them with uniforms and salaries, and bringing them under the command and control of the armed forces or the intelligence services under the president’s office. These paramilitary forces were used as critical instruments of political power for those associated with the National Congress Party (NCP).

To further the restructuring of state power, Bashir and the regime dominated four critical components after the split of the NCP. First, the Sudanese Islamic Movement’s religious ideology was an essential tool for regime stability, which was made up of competing power centers. The movement imposed its ideological stance through coercion, purges, and strategic placement of leaders in unique positions across Sudan’s state institutions. Second, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), which in its earlier years was dominated by Major General Salah Abdallah (‘Gosh’), who would play a significant role in the overthrow of Bashir in April 2019. Gosh’s role in the 2012 attempted coup is evidence of the cracks appearing within Bashir’s regime at the time. NISS was refashioned as the General Intelligence Services (GIS) in July 2019. Third, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), headed by Bashir and

²⁵ Johnson (2011).

²⁶ Khalid (1990, p. 54).

²⁷ Ali et al. (2005).

²⁸ El-Battahani (2006).

²⁹ Khalid (1990, pp. 72–73).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 72–73.

³¹ See Human Rights Watch (2003); Sharkey (2004); Taylor (2009).

utilized to initiate most of his restructured state power program. Fourth, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), composed of elements of the Janjaweed, a tribal militia mainly recruited from Darfur. Their repeated attacks were orchestrated by Brigadier General Mohammed Hamdan Dagolo, referred to as ‘Hemedti’.

Acquiescence to Bashir’s initial purge of the SAF, civil servants, and other sectors of the state during the 1989 coup, alongside internal party relationships and allegiances, meant that Bashir was able to dominate the military. He was also in a position to create factionalism and rivalries within the senior leadership, helping to eradicate his enemies or anyone who posed a substantial threat. By restructuring state power, sections within the SAF were kept on their toes, creating a fluid and ever-changing picture within the military sector, and weakening the military in the long term. Lack of confidence in the SAF led the regime to consolidate and strengthen NISS’s powers at the SAF’s expense. Despite its expanding economic engagements, in the later years of Bashir’s rule, the SAF no longer held a monopoly over the means of security, violence, and resources, casting doubt on its future role in the event of regime change. Bashir’s approach eroded and partially destroyed the defense forces’ institutional systems and any chance of a cohesive military doctrine being adopted.³²

Bashir encouraged NISS’s—now known as the General Intelligence Service—dominance to discourage a coup by the SAF. He later used the Janjaweed in the same way. In 2003, during the Darfur civil war, the Janjaweed used indiscriminate violence against civilians with impunity and had armed support from the Sudanese state.³³ However, the initial insurgency in Darfur was not only local but also reflected a breakdown of the accommodation of elites within the NCP networks.³⁴ The rebels in Darfur eventually received significant political and military support from the national (insurgent) opposition, the SPLA/M. Meanwhile, the Janjaweed attempted to evolve into a professional pro-government force called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Hemedti, as insurance against threats from NISS after their attempted coup in 2012.³⁵ NISS became a rival to the SAF, and an extension of Sudan’s restructuring of state power, by emerging as an ostensibly “professional” power center. Due to this feeling of deep insecurity and the risk of coups by the SAF and NISS, Bashir brought in the RSF to stifle any coup attempts and future unrest.³⁶

Across Sudan, Bashir drastically cut back on the state’s health and education services and poured money into the security services. International pressure was mounting as the conflicts in the south (known as South Sudan from 2011) and Darfur grew, in part due to a humanitarian crisis and appeals from Hollywood superstars. Non-governmental organizations and international aid organizations were often disincentivized to support health and education,³⁷ while international debates on Sudan were centered on the “Responsibility to Protect” and the need to intervene to stop mass atrocities.³⁸

Despite international efforts to curtail violence in Darfur, the security services continued to control many state services and resources.³⁹ Bashir allowed security segments to use these resources to finance their costs, expand their assets, and control state resources. NISS, SAF, and the RSF owned vast amounts of state resources. Both NISS and the RSF controlled companies that produced weapons, oil, gold, gum, wheat, telecommunications, banking services, water, banknotes,⁴⁰ and more.⁴¹ Military forces managed hospitals, trading companies, and financial commerce assets, which under normal circumstances would sit under the state’s control. Under Bashir’s regime, paramilitaries were

³² See Mirghani (2002, pp. 305–308); Jok (2007).

³³ Human Rights Watch (2004).

³⁴ Roessler (2011, p. 45).

³⁵ Sudan Tribune (2013).

³⁶ Roessler (2011).

³⁷ Human Rights Watch (2006).

³⁸ Williams and Bellamy (2005).

³⁹ LeRiche, M. (2019).

⁴⁰ Gallopin (2020).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

used to remove populations from oilfields and goldfields, and private elements were then able to drain off all profits.⁴² Bashir's unique mix of authoritarianism, Islam and self-serving black-market economics shaped Sudan's template for restructuring state power and economic management.⁴³ As part of this, the SAF, NISS, the National Police, and the RSF created immense business empires exempt from government taxes and other levies, undercutting the private sector. Defense and security forces were encouraged to keep part of their revenues off-budget and feed the restructured power system.

Corruption under Bashir became state-sanctioned and created a parallel black economy. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, vast parts of the state had become a dysfunctional bureaucracy. As the system grew, so did the depth of control by companies run by senior governmental and military forces. Companies owned by state forces, with financing from state loans, acted as intermediaries to supply strategic commodities to Sudan, from Gulf countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The regime hid security and defense expenditures under the office of the presidency⁴⁴ and quasi-government agencies.⁴⁵ The November 2012 coup attempt in which Major-General Salah Abdullah Mohammed was arrested revealed divisions within the regime. It led to the entire regime being reshuffled in 2014, giving considerably more power to Bashir's military and security allies.

Resource extraction by security forces

After the 2011 secession of South Sudan, when Sudan's oil boom came to an end, the state faced a protracted financial crisis. Under pressure to honor its commitments to the peace agreement, the government gambled with multiple schemes to make up for the loss of oil revenues. It leased millions of acres of agricultural land⁴⁶ and gave investors from the Gulf access to the Nile, as a way to continue propping up the regime, but without great success.⁴⁷ In 2016, the Saudi government leased one million arable acres in the east of the country; indeed all Middle Eastern countries have seen the value of buying fertile land in Sudan to deal with their future food consumption and food insecurity problems.⁴⁸ The sale of agriculture land by Bashir's regime created a new boom, which the RSF reportedly wanted to experiment in by acquiring 200,000 acres of agricultural land in the North state.⁴⁹ Bashir's efforts went as far as engaging with Russia, which led to Russia's first naval outpost on the continent.⁵⁰ The situation in Sudan became so dire that, in 2018, the government started cutting wheat subsidies.

Gold also served as an important natural resource for Sudan with production increasing by 141 percent between 2012 and 2017 (making Sudan the thirteenth largest global gold producer).⁵¹ While between 2012 and 2018 the Central Bank reported over 205 thousand kilograms of gold exports, the country's trading partners reported around 405 thousand kilograms of gold imports, leaving a considerable gap.⁵² The significance of the gold industry has meant that security forces have ended up owning companies in the industry rather than them being state or privately run. For example, Al-Juneid, a private company founded by Hemedti, sold around 1 tonne of gold in Dubai, worth roughly

⁴² Suliman (1993; 2008).

⁴³ Human Rights Watch (2003).

⁴⁴ For example, a recent investigation shows that Hemedti's purchasing power included over 900 Toyota Hilux and Land Cruisers, which the RSF frequently converts into 'technical'—4x4 military vehicles mounted with machine guns.

⁴⁵ Global Witness (2019).

⁴⁶ Sudan has roughly 200 million acres of arable land, is strategically located near the Red Sea, and has around a 25 percent share of the Nile's waters under regional agreements. With significant agriculture potential, Sudan is the world's largest gum Arabic producer, the fourth-largest exporter of peanuts, and the fifth-largest producer of sorghum.

⁴⁷ Schwartzstein, P. (2019).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Gallopin (2020).

⁵⁰ Goncharenko, R. (2020).

⁵¹ World Gold Council (2020).

⁵² Global Financial Integrity (2020). Al-Juneid—a private company founded by Hemedti—sold around one tonne of gold in Dubai, worth roughly USD 30m, during four weeks in 2018, a figure that suggests an annual turnover of USD 390m Gallopin (2020).

USD 30 million, during four weeks in 2018—a figure that suggests an annual turnover of USD 390 million.⁵³ While the transitional government has recently taken steps to take back gold mines, Sudan's gold rush has expanded the national interest in gold extraction into the regions, and made it a profitable income for security forces.⁵⁴

Despite the regime's control, a deepening economic crisis brought on by the Sudanese pound's sharp devaluation and hyperinflation led to protests spreading in 2018. The hyperinflation was partly a product of the considerable growth of black-market hard currency, the government's inability to control the economy, and the partial lifting of US sanctions in 2017. Poor resource management continues and is still resulting in wealth transfer to entities that have deprived the country of essential resources. State control over resource extraction remains an important part of rejuvenating the Sudanese economy.

Towards the end of Bashir's rule, Members of Parliament argued that Sudan's defense and security budget had got out of hand. In 2017, three-quarters of the state budget was allocated to security and defense instead of development and general services.⁵⁵ While the plea for reform and for sanctions to be lifted was welcomed by the regime, it made minimal efforts to modernize the state.⁵⁶ Instead, it allowed the existing state forces to continue their monopoly and fill the void once Bashir was ousted in 2019.

Since Bashir's removal,⁵⁷ the restructuring of state power has continued under Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as General Hemedti). Both serve on Sudan's new Sovereign Council, a power-sharing deal between the ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) coalition. The council is comprised of five military personnel nominated by the TMC, five civilians nominated by the FFC, and one civilian candidate agreed upon between the two sides.⁵⁸ Al-Burhan, who is also the head of the SAF, has taken control of the Military Industry Corporation, a SAF holding company in charge of many of the companies once owned by NCP leaders and Bashir's associates. The RSF controls the businesses previously run by GIS (formerly NISS). Al-Burhan placed General Al-Mirghani Idris, a close associate from his military college days, as head of the Military Industry Corporation. General Abbas Abdelaziz, a former head of the RSF, is now in charge of al-Sati, another holding firm.⁵⁹

Despite Sudan's constitutional declaration that places civilians partially in control of Sudan, the security forces would still seem to be calling the shots. The current civilian government has been unable to dismantle existing state structures, implement security sector reforms, or consolidate control over tax revenues. This means that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning has no control over companies run by the defense and security sectors. In June 2020, the government stated that 638 of 650 government-owned companies do not pay income taxes, including 200 belonging to the military sector.⁶⁰ Defense and security sector budgets have still not been scrutinized by the National Audit Chamber or the transitional government.

Although Sudan has a new transitional government, its control is limited, and parts of the state are still under the control of elements from the old system. It has made little progress when it comes to taking control of resources because the civilian component is operating outside of existing state power. Thus, they fail to meet expectations and address necessary structural reforms. State wealth continues to serve the interests of a relatively small per cent of

⁵³ Gallopin (2020).

⁵⁴ Sudan Tribune (2020b).

⁵⁵ Dabanga (2017a).

⁵⁶ Dabanga (2017b).

⁵⁷ Tchie, Y, E, A (2019a). 'How Sudan's protesters upped the ante and forced al-Bashir from power'. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/how-sudans-protesters-upped-the-ante-and-forced-al-bashir-from-power-115306>. (Accessed: 25 October 2020).

⁵⁸ Tchie, Y, E, A (2019b). 'Sudan's deep state still poses a threat to the democratic process'. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/sudans-deep-state-still-poses-a-threat-to-the-democratic-process-130243> (Accessed: 08 October 2020).

⁵⁹ Gallopin (2020).

⁶⁰ Sudan Tribune (2020a).

connected elites, all of whom have extracted economic benefits from the country's vast resources and continue to go to great lengths to protect the system in place. Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok has forcefully argued that the security forces' vast business holdings are "unacceptable";⁶¹ however, the government is still constrained because it has yet to dismantle the regime's grip and put in place new democratic structures that will move Sudan forward.

Conclusion

This article has provided a case study analysis of the protracted conflict in Sudan. It has shown how the development of the nation-state of Sudan was created off the back of power struggles that originated from differences among the major actors, and how the resulting restructuring of state power is deeply rooted and connected to the problems of modern-day Sudan. It has also shown that political marginalization led to economic isolation, inequality, and grievances. Past grievances resulted in significant conflicts that damaged the economy and cost lives and, while Sudan has witnessed several peace agreements over the last four decades, problems remain. State wealth continues to serve the interests of a relatively small number of connected elites, all of whom have extracted economic benefits from the country's resources, at the expense of the Sudanese people, and who continue to go to great lengths to protect the system in place.

Effective civilian oversight is necessary to attain peace in Sudan. Such oversight can only be achieved when the state strengthens its administrative mechanisms and executive authority over the security services. This will require efficient oversight of the relations between the civilian government and intelligence agencies, characterized by stronger ties between oversight committees and intelligence leadership bodies. The government will then need to extend control from oversight to budgetary allocation, to ensure that the state's security forces are financed by the state and have no direct access to other financial resources.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments.

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⁶¹ Aljazeera (2020). 'Unacceptable': Sudanese PM criticizes army's business interests. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/15/unacceptable-sudanese-pm-criticises-armys-business-interests>. (Accessed: 15 December 2020).

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