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# On the impact of the 2023 Sudanese war on Africa and beyond

Dirk Kohnert <sup>1</sup>

*Conflict in Sudan, 2023* <sup>2</sup>



Source: © [Enrico Bertuccioli](#), 17 April 2023

**Abstract:** For decades, the history of Sudan, Africa's third-largest country with around 46 million inhabitants, has been marked by violent clashes between the northern, Muslim and Arab military elites of the capital Khartoum at the expense of the civilian population. Since Sudan gained independence in 1956, there have been 16 attempted coups, six of which were successful. That was more than in any other country on a continent that has seen more coups than any other region in the world. Two civil wars between the government in Khartoum and the southern regions claimed around 1.5 million victims. In addition, the ongoing conflict in the western Darfur region has killed more than 200,000 people and displaced two million people. In these conflicts, borders mean little. Control of resources and subjects is the primary objective, and forces arising in the borderlands seek revenge on the despised metropolitan elites. Sudan's geopolitical importance in a volatile region bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, as well as its agricultural prosperity, attracted regional and global actors and hampered the successful transition to civilian-led government and sustainable development. In addition to Great Britain, the former colonial power, Russia, the USA, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other neighbouring countries were fighting for influence in Sudan, including Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan. They, too, were affected by political unrest and conflict and suffered under the burden of Sudanese refugees fleeing the fighting to neighbouring countries. The British colonial rulers had already used existing differences to divide the population according to ethnic and regional affiliations, a practice that survives to this day. Militia activism deepened divisions among rebel supporters. This divide-and-conquer policy corresponded to a well-established tactic used by African governments in ethnic civil wars, often exploiting the militias to encourage and facilitate ethnic migration by integrating the militias into the national army. Transnational, well-entrenched criminal networks involved in drug-, arms- and human trafficking also stood ready to take advantage of the chaos. This made Sudan one of the most fragile countries in the world. Sudan's collapse would not only shake its neighbours, but could also upset several other African countries, including fragile states in the Sahel, and East and North Africa. The side effects of such an incalculable conflict zone and the resulting chaos would also affect Western Europe, which is already suffering from the influx of refugees from Syria and other war zones in the Middle East and Africa.

**Keywords:** [Sudan](#), [2023 Sudan conflict](#), [South Sudan](#), [Sub-Saharan Africa](#), [arms trafficking](#), [drug trafficking](#), [famine](#), [refugees of Sudan](#), [migration](#), [sustainable development](#), [democratization](#), [post-colonialism](#), [informal sector](#), [international trade](#), [nationalism](#), [Russia](#), [Great Britain](#), [Pakistan](#), [ODA](#), [NGOs](#), [African Studies](#)

**JEL-Code:** E26, F22, F24, F35, F51, F52, F54, F63, H12, H27, H56, H77, H84, I31, J46, J61, L31, N17, N37, N47, N97, O17, O55, Z13

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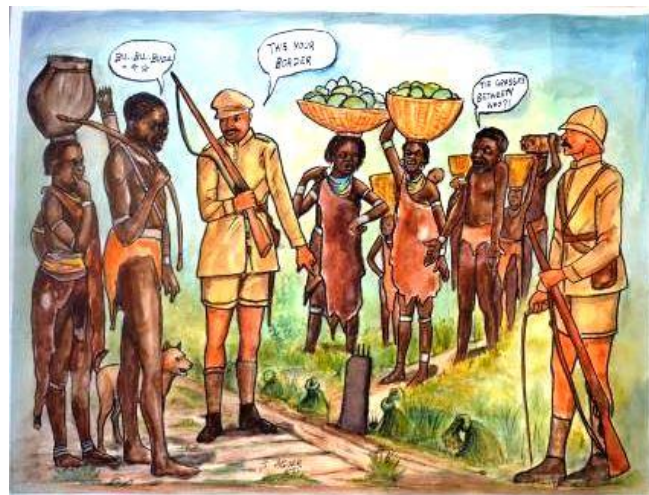
<sup>2</sup> [Cartoonmovement.com](#). Tags: [Sudan](#), [Abdel Fattah al-Burhan](#), Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti'. Dagalo.

## 1. Introduction

[Sudan](#) is in a volatile region bordering [Egypt](#) in the North, [Chad](#) and the [Sahel zone](#) in the West, the [Red Sea](#) and the [Horn of Africa](#) in the East, and [Ethiopia](#) and [South Sudan](#) in the South. Its geostrategic location and agricultural wealth attracted regional and global power players for generations. Alongside the former colonial power [Great Britain](#), notably [Russia](#), the [USA](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), the [United Arab Emirates](#) and Sudan's other neighbouring states battling for influence in Sudan (Fulton & Holmes, 2023).

Like similar artificially created former colonies of the [British Empire](#), e.g. [Nigeria](#), the region comprises different people, ethnic groups and resource endowments. Its frontiers run across conquered kingdoms, spheres of influence and transnational trading routes. Especially in times of conflict, these frontiers have little meaning, control of resources and subjects counts the most (Burke, 2023a).

**Cartoon 2: 'This is your border'**<sup>3</sup>



Source: Simple, Alex Miskin (2022)

Already the British pursued the policy of administering the colony until the independence of Sudan in 1956 as two essentially separate areas, Northern and [Southern Sudan](#). Sudan was the largest African country by area up to the secession of [South Sudan in 2011](#), which has appropriated most of Sudanese rich oil and gas deposits. The war of Secession due to the political and economic marginalisation of the local people by Sudan's central government in [Khartoum](#) was prolonged and ferocious. Thereafter, Sudan remained the third largest country, behind [Algeria](#) and [DR Congo](#), with an estimated population of about 46 million citizens in 2021 (UNSTATS, 2021).

The civilian population in Sudan has been devastated by wars for decades, including [civil wars](#) from 1956 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005, and the gruesome [Darfur war](#) (2003-2010) with genocidal consequences, a conflict continuing to this day in certain regions. The estimated human losses in the Darfur conflict amount to several hundred thousand victims, caused by ethnic cleansing and famine, exacerbated by the [forced migration](#) of millions to refugee camps or across the border (Rothbart & Korostelina & Gjeloši, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> © South Sudan National Archive Project, Rift Valley Institute. - Cartoon on the arbitrary border delimitation of Sudan in colonial times by the British colonial power. Source: Simple, Alex Miskin (2022).

### Graph 1: Map of Sudan (2011)



Source: [Sudan](#), Muhammad Daffa Rambe, Wikipedia

In the following, the immediate roots of the conflict and its renewed outbreak will be analysed. The internal and external parties involved in the conflict, its impact on all factions, including casual victims, as well as the likely impact on outside conflict regions (e.g. Pakistan), will be included. Finally, the migration triggered by the wars and its possible effects on external regions such as Western Europe just as lessons learned will be outlined.

## 2. The roots and parties involved in the conflict

**Cartoon 3:** [Military conflict in Sudan](#)<sup>4</sup>



Source: © Enrico Bertuccioli, 7 May 2023, [Cartoonmovement.com](https://www.cartoonmovement.com/).

In April 2019, General [Omar al-Bashir](#), who had served as the seventh Sudanese head of state from 1989 until 2019, three times (re-)elected in undemocratic and contested elections, was

<sup>4</sup> [Cartoonmovement.com](https://cartoonmovement.com). Tags: [Sudan](#), [Abdel Fattah al-Burhan](#), [Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo](#), civil war, fight for power, Africa, people, [Sudan's military](#).

deposed in a military coup d'état of the two major which he had formed years earlier with the tried and tested government tactic of rule and divide. The regular [Sudanese Armed Forces](#) (SAF) of Gen. [Abdel Fattah al-Burhan](#), and the paramilitary [Rapid Support Forces](#) (RSF), a militia, also known by the name of [Janjaweed](#), which became associated with widespread atrocities, led by his rival, Gen. [Hemedti](#) Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Fulton & Holmes, 2023). Bashir himself had already toppled the democratically elected government of [Sadiq al-Mahdi](#) in a military coup in June 1989, when the latter tried to negotiate with the rebels in [Southern Sudan](#).

The [Sudanese revolution of 2019](#) resulted in a declaration of a new order and roadmap for the country's return to democracy. According to a constitutional charter, a transitional government composed of officers and civilians was to be replaced by an elected government in 2024 (Tønnessen, 2023). In July 2020, deposed president Omar al-Bashir was put on trial for leading the 1989 military coup that brought him to power. This was the first time an African leader, who had come to power by ousting his predecessor, was being prosecuted for conducting a coup (Fabricius, 2020). Also, the International Criminal Court (ICC) tried to initiate legal action against [Omar al Bashir](#) and other Sudanese suspects of gross human rights violations, including killings of pro-democracy protesters in June 2019 in which allegedly the military was involved (Fulton & Holmes, 2023).

In the meantime the country was ruled by a military coalition of the SAF and the paramilitary RSF, led by Gen. [Hemedti](#) Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who became the Deputy Chairman of the [Transitional Military Council](#) (TMC). Hemedti and his RSF also acted as a kind of state mercenary, employed like the notorious Russian [Wagner group](#), or the [Chad](#) government, renting out its special forces for counter-insurgencies on the French or U.S. payroll (Waal, 2023). For example, following the March 2015 [Saudi Arabian-led intervention in Yemen](#), [Khartoum](#) struck a deal with [Riyadh](#) to deploy Hemedti's troops in Yemen, which proved quite lucrative for him (ACSS, 2023).

However, on 15 April 2023, the SAF and RSF clashed violently in [Khartoum](#), while less-reported violence spread across the country. The conflict caused major civilian casualties and a humanitarian disaster. Growing tensions between the two allies had been noticed already since the 2019 coup because of the civilian and international demand for control of the integration of the RSF into the regular armed forces. Political activists and NGOs also called for the handover of the lucrative military holdings in agriculture, trade and other industries that constituted a crucial source of power for the army that often outsourced touchy military actions to regional militias (Fulton & Holmes, 2023).

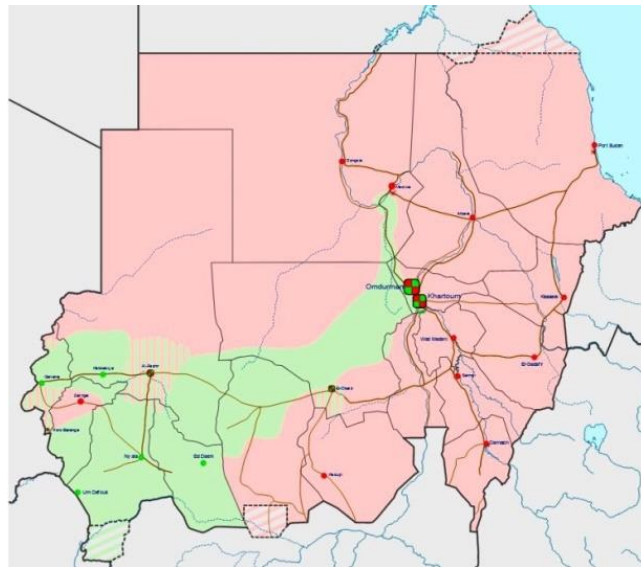
**Graph 3: Location of Darfur in Sudan**



Source: Burke, Jason (2023)

Up to early June 2023, more than 1.2 million people had been displaced within the country, with another 400,000 forced to flee into neighbouring countries. Beyond the capital, where there were the most intense clashes, deadly fighting broke out again in [Darfur](#) which was already devastated by long-running unrest and huge humanitarian problems. Fighting between [Masalit](#) and Arab people resurfaced, caused by the security vacuum after the two warring sides left, including attacks on camps displaced people and deliberate efforts to destroy the humanitarian infrastructure. In [Nyala](#), the capital of [South Darfur](#), for example, the biggest market in the region was destroyed, a medical supply warehouse burned down, and government institutions, private businesses, national and international organisations and some stores were looted. The extension of the conflict to Darfur was also important because the region could provide a vital redoubt for Gen. [Hemedti](#) in the case the RSF should lose ground elsewhere (Burke, 2023). On 5 June, fighting escalated once more in [Khartoum](#) after the breakdown of repeated ceasefire talks (Reuters, 2023).

**Graph 4: Map of the 2023 Sudan clashes** <sup>5</sup>

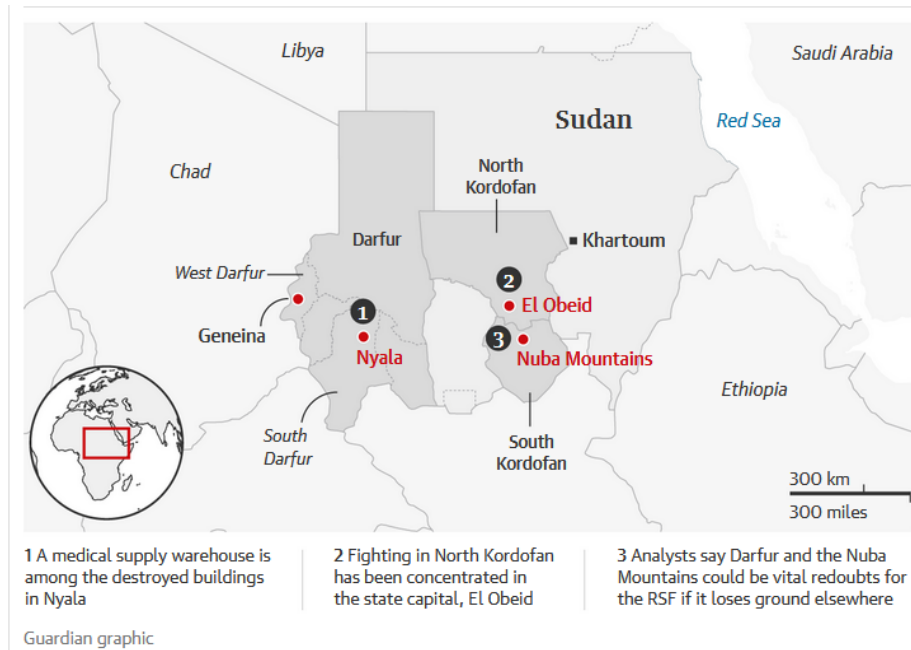


Source: '[2023 Sudan conflict](#)', Wikipedia

The growing conflict was also likely to aggravate existing regional political faultlines, notably in [Ethiopia](#), [Chad](#) and [South Sudan](#) (Oxford Analytica, 2023; Fulton & Holmes, 2023). Moreover, the conflict developed major geopolitical dimensions because global players like [Russia](#), the [US](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), and the [United Arab Emirates](#) fought for influence in Sudan for different reasons. The Saudis and the UAE saw Sudan's transition as an opportunity to push back Islamist influence in the region. They, together with the US and Britain, formed the "[Quad](#)", which mediated in Sudan along with the [UN](#) and the [African Union](#) (Fulton & Holmes, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Sudanese Internal Conflict.svg – red colour: controlled by the Sudanese government (SAF), green colour: controlled by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

**Graph 5:** Map of Nyala (Darfur) and El Obeid, North Kordofan, and the Nuba mountains



Source: Burke, Jason (2023)

### 3. The impact of the conflict on all factions and victims

**Cartoon 4:** [Sudan in the grip of civil war again](#)



Source: © Alaa Satir (Sudan), [cartooningforpeace.org](https://cartooningforpeace.org) , 2023

The current conflict in Sudan also concerns the regulation and impact of recurrent communal conflict, for example on borderlines, rights of pasturage, and water rights. The intervention of the government, notably if it is biased in favour of certain groups, can undermine conditions for communal cohabitation. It can endanger community resilience to communal violence and thus tipping the balance in favour of conflict rather than cooperation (Brosché, 2023). Unclear boundaries might cause disputes, depending on how differences are managed. Disputes over boundaries repeatedly occurred in Eastern Sudan but did not escalate, indicating that how disputes are managed seems to be more important than the frequency of such differences. According to case studies, in [Eastern Sudan](#), in contrast to [Darfur](#), borders were not generally drawn to shift power balances or to incite conflicts (Brosché, 2023).

Moreover, the conflict may deepen the faultlines between regional and ethnic groups. This had been observed already during the [first Sudanese civil war](#) in the aftermath of independence in 1956. The Arabization and Islamization policy of the Arab- Muslim elite in the capital triggered fears of marginalization among the majority of black communities in the South. Sporadic uprisings in southern towns and garrisons escalated into a full-blown civil war in the early 1960s (Voller, 2023). Already the British colonialists in the [Anglo-Egyptian Sudan](#) (1899 and 1956) had used existing cleavages to split the southern population, a practice that continued in the Sudanese state's counterinsurgency COIN strategy. Militias were used as a tool for encouraging ethnic defection by using them to absorb defectors from rebel constituencies into their ranks. The democratically-elected government of [Sadiq al-Mahdi](#), tried to organize militias into semi-formal units, called *al- haras al-watani* (National Guards). These were employed throughout [Southern Sudan](#) by the mid-1960s, meant to control violence. However, against all odds, the activism of militias contributed on the contrary to deepening the divide in rebel constituencies. They enabled [Khartoum](#) to manipulate group identities and stir communal tensions. Thereby, they weakened and delegitimized the rebellion and reinforced the dependence of defectors on the survival of the central state (Voller, 2023).

#### **Cartoon 5: Sudan plunged into civil wars**

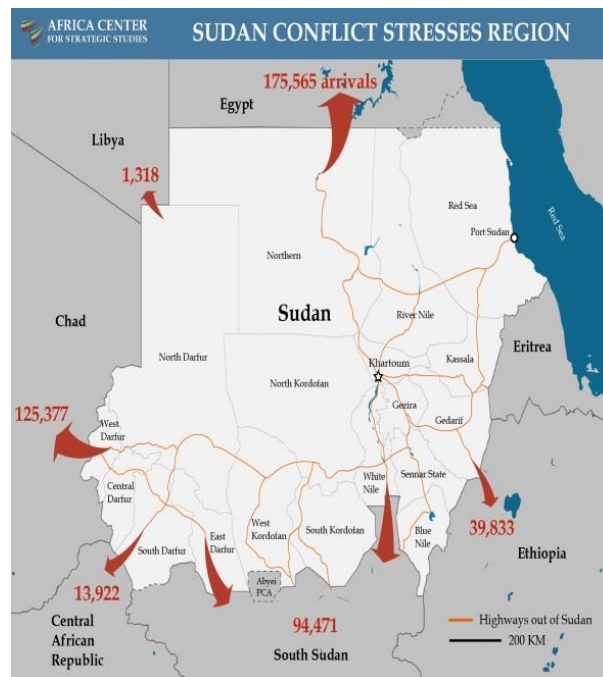


Source: © Rahma Cartoons, 27 April 2023, [cartoonmovement.com](https://cartoonmovement.com)

For decades, the population in Sudan has been devastated by violent conflicts, including two civil wars ([1956-1972](#)) and ([1983-2005](#)), and hostilities continuing up to date in certain regions (Rothbart & Korostelina & Gjeloši, 2023). The victims' vision of justice in trying to overcome systemic inequalities revealed that their notion of justice concerning the violence and traumata experienced, such as shootings, aerial assaults, rape, destruction of property, the devastation of entire villages, looting, and strategic destruction of the land, was inseparable from peace. The overthrow of President al-Bashir represented the culmination of at least ten years of activism by grassroots civic organizations, including, resistance groups, and local issue-oriented demand groups like oppression against women initiatives (*Mubadarat*). Yet, the military coup of 25 October 2021 derailed these expectations. It resulted in repressive measures against local movements and its members which were fragmented and acutely weakened (Rothbart & Korostelina & Gjeloši, 2023; Sawant, 1998).

#### 4. Impact of the conflict on outside regions in Africa and beyond

**Graph 6:** Sudan Conflict straining fragility of its neighbours <sup>6</sup>



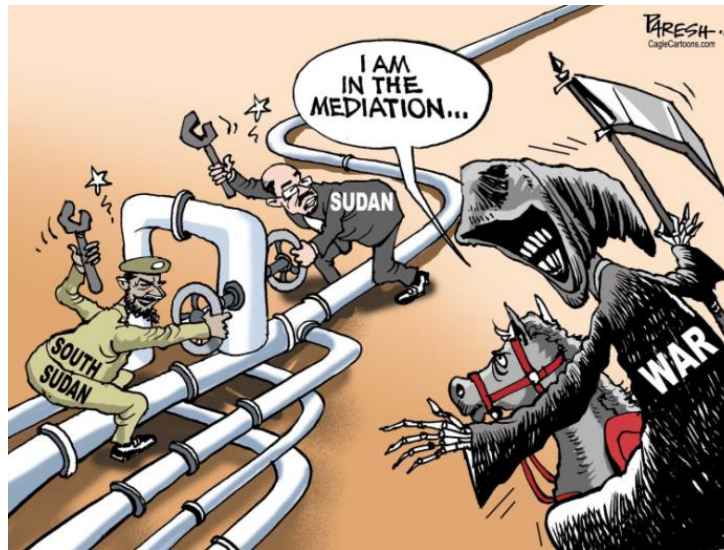
Source: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Washington, DC

The current conflict in Sudan has been fuelled by forces far beyond its borders, like proxy wars in other regions, for example in Syria (Burke, 2023a), driven by the geopolitical contest of superpowers, regional and neighbouring governments and warlords, like Libyan [Khalifa Haftar](#), and last, but not least, the international run for Sudan's rich resources. However, the parties involved cannot always act independently. Haftar, for example, had to carefully balance his need to please supporters in the [United Arab Emirates](#), who are key partners in the gold business with [Hemedti](#), but without annoying his other sponsors in [Egypt](#), who are backing SAF General [Burhan](#) (Burke, 2023a). In November 2017, Hemedti's RSF took control of the artisanal Jebel Amer gold mines in North Darfur, which were Sudan's single largest source of export revenues. Thus, he had captured the country's two most lucrative sources of hard currency, state mercenarism and gold trade (Waal, 2023). Moreover, Sudan's neighbours have to cope with their conflicts or political instability, and the region's crises are interdepend (ACSS 2023).

In this conflict frontiers are of little importance, control of resources is the primary aim. Other interest groups include forces from the borderlands seeking their revenge on arrogant metropolitan elites. Obscure alignments of interests, brutal realpolitik and systematic disinformation are the tactic used to the detriment of the rural poor and the weak (Burke, 2023a). Informed international analysts worried that the current battle between two distinct enemies might develop into an even more intractable conflict of multiple local-level militias based on ethnicity or regional and religious identities which could continue for decades, like the Islamist movements. After all, [Osama bin Laden](#) started his crusade against the West in Sudan. The collapse of Sudan could send shockwaves throughout Africa, shaking fragile neighbouring states as well as other countries stretching across the troubled [Sahel](#) region up to [North-](#) and [East Africa](#) (Burke, 2023a).

<sup>6</sup> May 2, 2023 (updated on June 6, 2023)

**Cartoon 6:** Impact of Sudan wars on transnational resource control <sup>7</sup>



Source: © Paresh Nath, 18 April 2012, [www.cagle.com](http://www.cagle.com)

The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control ([OFAC](#)) had already on 15 July 2020 taken action as part of its ongoing sanctions efforts regarding the Russian oligarch [Yevgeniy Prigozhin](#), the financier of the Russian troll farm '[Internet Research Agency](#)' (IRA), and the [Wagner mercenaries](#), by targeting entities located in Sudan, meant to evade U.S. sanctions. The actors targeted had allegedly directly facilitated Prigozhin's global operations and attempts to suppress and discredit protestors seeking democratic reforms in Sudan (US-Treasury, 2020). Three years later, on 1 June 2023, the OFAC sanctioned also military-affiliated companies fuelling both sides of the Sudan conflict. The *Al Junaid Multi Activities Co Ltd* and the *Tradive General Trading L.L.C.*, based in the UAE, both controlled by RSF, and the *Defence Industries System*, Sudan's largest defence enterprise and *Sudan Master Technology* (SMT), an arms company, both controlled by the SAF (US-Treasury, 2023). About two decades earlier, from 2004 to 2007, the [US](#), [Uganda](#), [Sudan](#) and [South Sudan](#) even collaborated in intelligence sharing against a common enemy, the Lord's Resistance Army ([LRA](#)), although they were highly asymmetrical allies and the pact even joined antagonistic African governments (Shaffer, 2023). For instance, [Kampala](#) had supported the [Sudan People's Liberation Army](#) in Southern Sudan, while [Khartoum](#) supported the Uganda-based rebel group [LRA](#).

Also, [China](#) had a considerable interest in mediating the Sudan conflict since it had maintained strong relations with [Khartoum](#) following the deposition of Omar al-Bashir in 2019. [Beijing](#) supported the country's transitional government because it wanted to protect its access to Sudan's important oil resources and infrastructure links within the framework of its new silk road, the [Belt and Road Initiative](#). In 1996, for example, the China National Petroleum Corporation acquired a 40 % stake in a Sudanese oil consortium (Lucente, 2023).

[India](#), another emerging power represented by the [BRICS](#) coalition, also remained formally neutral but was equally interested to end the conflict to prevent Sudan's neighbourhood from being drawn into the war. [New Delhi](#) had already earlier played an important role in overseeing the ultimately peaceful birth of South Sudan, thereby ending at least formally the half-century-long civil war for the region's secession (Nayar, 2023).

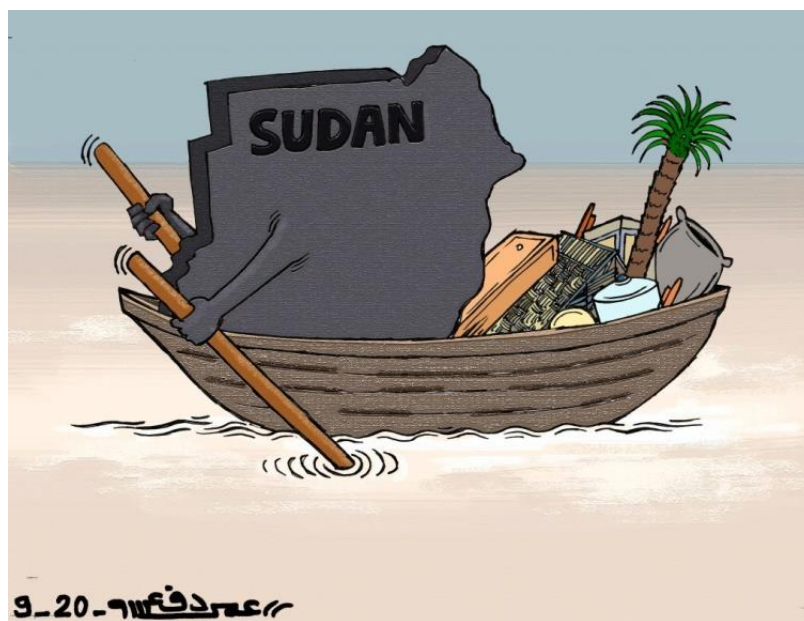
<sup>7</sup> Paresh Nath is the chief cartoonist for India's National Herald, and his cartoons are syndicated in the United States by Cagle Cartoons.

Also, [Pakistan](#) had cordial bilateral relations with Sudan since colonial times. For example, Khartoum supported [Islamabad](#) in the [Indo-Pakistani wars and conflicts](#), and Pakistan backed Sudan to defend its integrity and sovereignty, especially concerning its boundary disputes with Egypt and South Sudan. Moreover, [United Nations peacekeeping troops](#) from Pakistan had helped bring peace and security to [Darfur](#). Before the current fighting began, there were roughly 1,500 Pakistanis living in Sudan. More than 700 of them so far managed to reach [Port Sudan](#) to return home (Hussain, 2023).

The African Union ([AU](#)) remained suspiciously absent in mediating the conflict in Sudan. Its slogan ‘African solutions to African problems’ remained once again a hollow mantra. Already in 2009, when the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)) indicted [Omar al-Bashir](#) for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur, the AU had refused to assist attempts to bring him to international justice. On the contrary, it advised its member states to ignore the ICC warrant, claiming that the ICC was unfairly targeting African leaders and that al-Bashir’s arrest would endanger attempts to secure peace in Darfur and South Sudan (Mhaka, 2023).

## 5. Transnational migration caused by the wars and its effect on Western Europe

**Cartoon 7:** migration and floods in Sudan



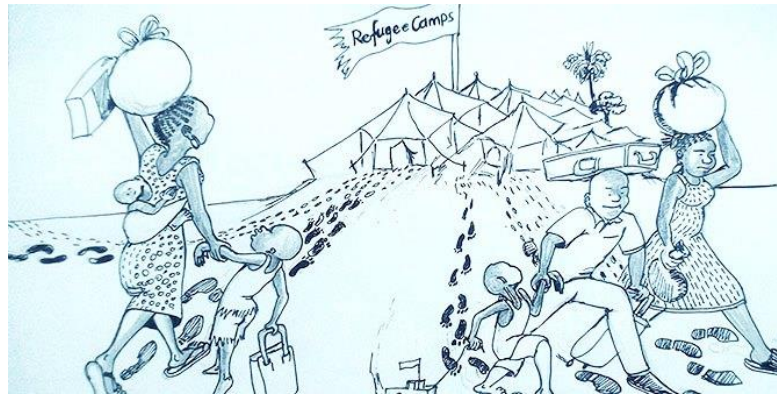
Source: © Omar Dafallah; Sudan, 2020

In 2020, a particularly heavy rainy season saw the Nile reach record levels and caused the worst flooding in Sudan in the last three decades. More than 100 people died and at least 770,000 Sudanese have been affected. Entire towns and villages were devastated (Sudan, 2020). In the rainy season of 2023, once again more than 80,000 refugees living in inhuman conditions in vulnerable border regions after fleeing war at home were threatened by floods. Many of them, especially women and children, who had crossed the border into [Chad](#), sometimes along with their livestock, to get shelter in refugee camps like Koufroun, north of [Adré](#) at the Sudan border, risked a ‘major humanitarian disaster’ according to Red Cross officials. Already before the most recent conflict in Sudan, Chad was hosting about 600,000

refugees, the largest refugee population in central Africa, including 400,000 from Sudan (Davies, 2023).

Sad histories of repeated migration of [internally displaced persons](#) (IDPs) in Sudan and elsewhere are manifold. They are characterized by cycles of displacement and return, including [circular migration](#) (Pendle, 2018).

**Cartoon 8:** ‘*Making family – the journey into exile by a South Sudan refugee*’



Source: © Pendle, 2018

Thus, the Northern [Bahr el-Ghazal](#) borderlands had long been an economic frontier between northern and southern Sudan, heavily affected by the [Second Sudanese Civil War](#) (1983 to 2005). It reshaped social relations and livelihoods rendering them not only more volatile but also more dependent on cash-based markets (Majok, 2020). After the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) (CPA) by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement ([SPLM](#)) and the Government of Sudan in 2005, and the subsequent independence of [South Sudan](#), those people the war had displaced northwards to [Darfur](#) or even to the capital [Khartoum](#), returned home. Yet, because their men recruited for war had left, their women lacked support. They were forced to find new ways to generate income for their families to survive. This split of families, combined with poor harvests and floods, forced women to move to Sudan with their children or take on paid work. However, local (male) authorities tried to prevent cross-border movement since women and children were seen as national assets. Thus the conflict and subsequent migration created also strong generational and gender effects (Majok, 2020), on top of the already heavily skewed gender equality. 2019 Sudan ranked 138th out of 161 countries in the [Gender Inequality Index](#) (GII) of the 161 registered countries worldwide.

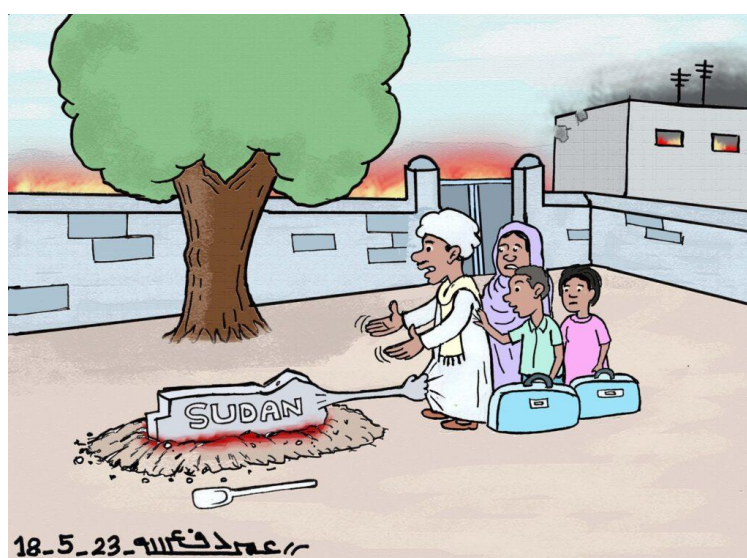
**Cartoon 9:** ‘*South Sudan – people fleeing violence*’



Source: © [Damien Glez](#), [toonpool.com](#)

Sudanese refugees are a relatively new group in Western Europe and their migration and receiving circumstances differ from those of more established groups such as refugees from Nigeria and Eritrea. Sudanese extended families, with members scattered across multiple countries, draw on formal and informal institutions to make ends meet (Serra Mingot & Mazzucato, 2018). Thereby they use differences in migration control of European countries systematically. For example, the French-Italian border that had been highly permeable over the decades. When Paris tried to restrict asylum seekers' mobility, the informal economies of migrant smugglers were revitalised. Thus, border areas were constantly reshaping as migration policies harden, with social, political and economic impacts at local and international levels. Modifications in migration governance also changed the nature of the makeshift settlements, from being spaces of autonomy, however precarious, to exclusion and uncertainty. Moreover, the relationship between formal and informal spaces and migrant agency became ambiguous and changed over time (Aru, 2021). This was also due to the lack of shared responsibility between EU member states, the disrespect of the common asylum system of the Schengen area and for human rights, with increasing claims for national sovereignty by some member states like the [Visegrád Group](#) (Amigoni & Molinero & Vergnano, 2021). The EU migration regime also impacted on early stages of the migration route of Sudanese migrants. Thus, refugees transiting through Egypt intending to leave the country for Europe adjusted their strategy which was mainly driven by extrinsic motivation, previous performance experience and societal factors (Zwick, 2022).

**Cartoon 10: Sudan exodus – how to stem the flow?**<sup>8</sup>



Source: © Omar Dafallah, [Radio Dabanga](#), Khartoum, 18 May 2023

Last, but not least, the encouragement of resilience of potential refugees by aid and humanitarian organizations in the host countries suited also the Sudanese government because it hid its actions as the cause of the ongoing crisis. Moreover, it absolved the donor community from the responsibility to protect. This may have been especially convenient when Brussels collaborated with Khartoum to stem migration to Europe (Jaspars, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Omar Dafallah expresses the dilemma of thousands of Sudanese feeling about neighbouring countries.

## 7. Conclusion

### **Cartoon 11:** Sudan conflict pitches military leaders into a struggle for control



Source: © Derkaoui Abdellah, 18 April 2023, [cartoonmovement.com](http://cartoonmovement.com)

Up to 2005, conflict mediation in Sudan had a positive impact on conflict resolution. It enabled the antagonized parties to engage in dialogue and reach mutually acceptable solutions, while also promoting compromise and cooperation as shown by the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) (CPA) between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement ([SPLM](#)) and the Government of Sudan and the subsequent independence of [South Sudan](#) (Chuol, 2023).

The repeated break of armistice agreements between the warring parties SAF and RSF in the current conflict does not offer much optimism concerning mediation attempts. This, the more so because external powers like Russia and Arab states showed an active interest in fuelling the conflict even more as indicated above. On the contrary, recent Sudan fighting escalated after a breakdown in ceasefire talks (Reuters, 2023). Provided, that the conflict does not degenerate into a full civil war or even a genocide like the [Darfur war](#) (2003 to 2010), the affected population probably will continue to show an extraordinary tolerance for suffering, but also a lack of revenge, and will orientate more towards notions of justice based on peace. At least, case studies among victims demonstrated that they saw returning to peaceful times in the aftermath of war already as a sufficient condition of justice (Korostelina & Rothbart & Gjeloši (2023). Such construction of a 'peace-based' conception of justice may have implications for the design and implementation of [truth and reconciliation](#) programs along the South African example rather than focusing on experiences of war and conflict. This is all the more likely because contemporary conflicts are increasing in the duration of phases of violent and non-violent confrontation, and most violence is directed against civilians. Therefore, an alternative conception of peace as a social condition would be required to build legitimate institutions, counteracting authoritarian, fundamentalist, and sectarian narratives (Gomez, 2023).

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**Résumé :** *[L'impact de la guerre du Soudan de 2023 sur l'Afrique et au-delà]* – Depuis des décennies, l'histoire du Soudan, troisième plus grand pays d'Afrique avec environ 46 millions d'habitants, est marquée par de violents affrontements entre les élites militaires du Nord, musulmanes et arabes de la capitale Khartoum aux dépens de la population civile. Depuis que le Soudan a obtenu son indépendance en 1956, il y a eu 16 tentatives de coup d'Etat, dont six ont réussi. C'était plus que dans tout autre pays sur un continent qui a lui-même connu plus de coups d'Etat que toute autre région du monde. Deux guerres civiles entre le gouvernement de Khartoum et les régions du sud ont fait environ 1,5 million de victimes. En outre, le conflit en cours dans la région occidentale du Darfour a tué plus de 200 000 personnes et déplacé deux millions de personnes. Dans ces conflits, les frontières ont peu d'importance. Le contrôle des ressources et des sujets est l'objectif principal, et les forces qui surgissent dans les régions frontalières cherchent à se venger des élites métropolitaines méprisées. L'importance géopolitique du Soudan dans une région instable, bordant la mer Rouge, le Sahel et la Corne de l'Afrique, ainsi que sa prospérité agricole, ont attiré des acteurs régionaux et mondiaux et ont entravé la réussite de la transition vers un gouvernement dirigé par des civils et le développement durable. Outre la Grande-Bretagne, l'ancienne puissance coloniale, la Russie, les États-Unis, l'Arabie Saoudite, les Émirats arabes unis et d'autres pays voisins se battaient pour l'influence au Soudan, notamment l'Éthiopie, le Tchad et le Soudan du Sud. Eux aussi ont été touchés par les troubles politiques et les conflits et ont souffert sous le fardeau des réfugiés soudanais fuyant les combats vers les pays voisins. Les dirigeants coloniaux britanniques avaient déjà utilisé les différences existantes pour diviser la population en fonction des affiliations ethniques et régionales, une pratique qui survit à ce jour. L'activisme des milices a approfondi les divisions entre les partisans des rebelles. Cette politique, de diviser pour régner correspondait à une tactique bien établie, utilisée par les gouvernements africains dans les guerres civiles ethniques, exploitant souvent les milices pour encourager et faciliter la migration ethnique en intégrant les milices dans l'armée nationale. Des réseaux criminels transnationaux bien établis impliqués dans le trafic de drogue, d'armes et d'êtres humains étaient également prêts à profiter du chaos. Cela a fait du Soudan l'un des pays les plus fragiles au monde. L'effondrement du Soudan ébranlerait non seulement ses voisins, mais pourrait également bouleverser plusieurs autres pays africains, y compris des États fragiles du Sahel et d'Afrique de l'Est et du Nord. Les effets secondaires d'une zone de conflit aussi incalculable et le chaos qui en résulte affecteraient également l'Europe occidentale, qui souffre déjà de l'afflux de réfugiés de Syrie et d'autres zones de guerre au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique.

**Zusammenfassung :** *[Zu den Auswirkungen des Sudan-Krieges 2023 auf Afrika und darüber hinaus]* – Seit Jahrzehnten ist die Geschichte des Sudan, dem drittgrößten Land Afrikas mit rund 46 Millionen Einwohnern, von gewaltsamen Auseinandersetzungen zwischen den nördlichen, muslimischen und arabischen Militäreliten der Hauptstadt Khartum auf Kosten der Zivilbevölkerung geprägt. Seit der Unabhängigkeit Sudans im Jahr 1956 kam es zu 16 Putschversuchen, von denen sechs erfolgreich waren. Das war mehr als in jedem anderen Land auf einem Kontinent, der selbst mehr Staatsstriche erlebt hat als jede andere Region der Welt. Zwei Bürgerkriege zwischen der Regierung in Khartum und den südlichen Regionen forderten rund 1,5 Millionen Opfer. Darüber hinaus hat der anhaltende Konflikt in der westlichen Darfur-Region mehr als 200.000 Menschen getötet und zwei Millionen Menschen vertrieben. In diesen Konflikten bedeuten Grenzen wenig. Die Kontrolle über Ressourcen und Untertanen ist das Hauptziel, und in den Grenzgebieten entstehende Kräfte streben nach Rache an den verachteten Eliten der Metropolen. Die geopolitische Bedeutung des Sudan in einer instabilen Region an der Grenze zum Roten Meer, der Sahelzone und dem Horn von Afrika sowie sein landwirtschaftlicher Wohlstand zogen regionale und globale Akteure an und behinderten den erfolgreichen Übergang zu einer zivil geführten Regierung und einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung. Neben Großbritannien, der ehemaligen Kolonialmacht, kämpften Russland, die USA, Saudi-Arabien, die Vereinigten Arabischen Emirate und weitere Nachbarländer um Einfluss im Sudan, darunter Äthiopien, Tschad und Süd-Sudan. Auch sie waren von politischen Unruhen und Konflikten betroffen und litten unter der Last der sudanesischen Flüchtlinge, die vor den Kämpfen in die Nachbarländer flohen. Bereits die britischen Kolonialherren nutzten bestehende Unterschiede, um die Bevölkerung nach ethnischen und regionalen Zugehörigkeiten aufzuteilen, eine Praxis, die bis heute Bestand hat. Der Aktivismus der Milizen vertiefte die Spaltungen unter den Rebellenanhängern. Diese „Teile-und-herrsche“-Politik entsprach einer bewährten Taktik afrikanischer Regierungen in ethnischen Bürgerkriegen, bei der die Milizen häufig ausgenutzt wurden, um ethnische Migration zu fördern und zu erleichtern, indem sie in die nationale Armee integriert wurden. Auch transnationale, fest verwurzelte kriminelle Netzwerke im Drogen-, Waffen- und Menschenhandel standen bereit, das Chaos auszunutzen. Dies machte den Sudan zu einem der fragilsten Länder der Welt. Der Zusammenbruch des Sudan würde nicht nur seine Nachbarn erschüttern, sondern könnte auch zahlreiche andere afrikanische Länder in Mitleidenschaft ziehen, darunter fragile Staaten in der Sahelzone sowie in Ost- und Nordafrika. Die Nebenwirkungen einer solch unkalkulierbaren Konfliktzone und das daraus resultierende Chaos würden auch Westeuropa treffen, das bereits unter dem Zustrom von Flüchtlingen aus Syrien und anderen Kriegsgebieten im Nahen Osten und in Afrika leidet.