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Digitalisation, Aid and Exclusion

**Digital Domination in War-Torn Sudan:
Political Economy and Experiences of
Digitalised Food Assistance**

Digital domination in war-torn Sudan

Political economy and experiences of digitalised food assistance

Tamer Abd Elkreem, University of Khartoum
Susanne Jaspars, SOAS University of London



Digital tools have become essential to food assistance in wartime Sudan, but access remains deeply unequal. Based on fieldwork across five conflict-affected locations, this working paper examines how digital transfers, banking applications and connectivity can save lives while also concentrating power among merchants, banks, service providers, authorities and international organisations. It argues that digitalised aid can reproduce existing inequalities, expose excluded communities to exploitation and reinforce Sudan's extractive political economy unless programmes account for who can access technology and on what terms.

Conflict Economies, Business and Governance

Business and Human Rights in Conflict: Gum Arabic from Sudan

Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights

July 2026

Sudan is a major global supplier of gum arabic, a commodity widely used in the food, pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries. This briefing paper examines how conflict, human rights abuses and opaque trading routes create risks throughout the gum arabic value chain. It highlights the responsibilities of states and companies sourcing from conflict-affected areas and calls for stronger



Briefing Paper

Business and Human Rights in Conflict: Gum Arabic from Sudan

global supply chains contribute to Sudan’s war economy and conflict-related harms.

The Economics of Revenge, Historical, Ethnic, and Governance Roots of Sudan’s SAF-RSF Conflict

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Abstract
The economics of revenge examines how vengeful motives perpetuate conflict persistence, resource misallocation, and inefficiency. This paper extends greed-grievance models by embedding emotional retaliation into rational choice theory, then applies the framework to Sudan’s Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)–Rapid Support Forces (RSF) war. It uniquely integrates historical relations (colonial centralism, post-independence Arabization), racial and ethnic causes (Arab-versus-African identity as political capital), demographic and environmental pressures (desertification, population growth, resource scarcity), and bad governance (predatory rent-seeking, legal pluralism failure). A two-period game-theoretic model with spite-dependent revenge utility shows that even moderate spite ($\tau^R = 0.3$) reduces welfare by 40%, trapping belligerents in a Pareto-inferior equilibrium. Calibrated with RSF’s \$260 M annual gold revenue, the model predicts a 42% GDP contraction—matching empirical forecasts. Policy simulations indicate that gold sanctions (raising cost τ^C) and inclusive mediation (lowering spite τ^R) can shift the equilibrium toward cooperation. The paper provides 12 tables and 3 mermaid diagrams to visualize causal chains, historical timelines, and equilibrium dynamics.
Keywords: revenge economics, Sudan conflict, SAF-RSF, gold revenues, ethnic marginalization, climate conflict, bad governance, spiteful unity

Introduction
Civil wars in resource-rich yet institutionally weak states often defy rational explanations: belligerents continue fighting long after any conceivable material gain has vanished. Sudan’s 2023–2026 war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) exemplifies this paradox. Despite combined GDP losses exceeding 40% (IFPRI 2025), over 17,000 documented civilian deaths, and 11 million displaced, both sides escalate retaliatory violence—the RSF massacring Masalit in El Fasher (2025), the SAF bombing markets in Khartoum. Standard greed-grievance models (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004) explain *onset* using lootable resources, but they struggle with *persistence* driven by spite. This paper introduces a “revenge economics” framework that formalizes emotional retaliation as a utility-enhancing good. Building on Amegashie and Runkel (2007) and behavioral contest theory, we model how past harms escalate spite intensity, generating multiple Nash equilibria—including a high-effort revenge trap. We then ground the model in Sudan’s specific historical and structural conditions:
1. **Historical relations**, Turco-Egyptian (1821), Mahdist, and Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule created a centralized Nile Valley elite that systematically marginalized peripheral regions (Darfur, Kordofan, and the Nuba Mountains).

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The Economics of Revenge: Historical, Ethnic, and Governance Roots of Sudan’s SAF–RSF Conflict

Issam A. W. Mohamed

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Sudan’s SAF–RSF war is driven not only by competition for power and resources, but also by cycles of grievance and retaliation. Historical centralisation, ethnic exclusion, environmental pressure, gold revenues and predatory governance have created incentives that prolong the conflict. Using an economic model of revenge, the author argues that targeted sanctions on conflict financing and more inclusive mediation could help reduce retaliation and shift incentives towards cooperation.

Histories, Revolution and the Politics of War

From al-Zubayr to Hemedti: The Fall of El Fasher

Tsega Etefa

July 2026

El Fasher’s fall in October 2025 reflects a longer history of conquest, militarisation and contested state authority in Darfur. Tracing the city’s major collapses in 1874, 1916 and 2025, the author

technologies. The analysis also documents the latest siege's starvation, displacement and massacres while highlighting El Fasher's enduring importance as a symbol of Sudanese resistance and national heritage.

Teena Eftea*

The Journal of Oromo Studies

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This paper examines the fall of El Fasher in Sudan to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on October 26, 2023, situating this event within the longer durc of the city's political and social history. Established in 1799–92, El Fasher emerged as the capital of the Darfur Sultanate, a polity that had consolidated its rule into a full-fledged state by the mid-seventeenth century. The city's first major political rupture occurred in 1874, when the forces of the nineteenth-century Sudanese slave trader and warlord al-Zuhayr Rahma al-Manсур overthrew Darfur, bringing the sultanate under Anglo-Egyptian administration. A second decisive collapse followed in 1916, when British forces defeated and killed the last sultan and incorporated Darfur into Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. In the postcolonial period, El Fasher functioned as the administrative capital of North Darfur State and developed into a principal node linking the region to Khartoum through expanding transport and commercial corridors. The outbreak of the current war in April 2023 once again placed Darfur at the center of national conflict dynamics, with El Fasher becoming the focal point of prolonged and devastating military confrontations. On all three occasions the latest military technology was employed, contributing to its fall. Both al-Zuhayr and the current Rapid Support Forces leader Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, Hemedi are examples of the merchant-warlord model where a private business empire is used to fund a private army that eventually challenged the state itself. While the city escaped mass destruction during its 1874 and 1916 attack, its 2023 fall saw several physical signs of war, marked by massive starvation, displacement, and displacement, displacement, profound dehumanization, and massacres. Still, El Fasher remains the symbol of national unity, resistance, resilience, and significant historical heritage for all Sudanese. Sources for this paper include archives, various Sudanese and international news outlets, investigative reports, and the available literature.

Keywords: El Fasher, Darfur, al-Zubayr, Hemedti, Rapid Support Forces, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Sulayman Solong, Ali Dinar, Jebel Marra, Darfur E-fashar.

Hemedti and the Fall of El Fasher

El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, has been subjected to escalating and entrenched militarization by all competing armed actors since the April 2023 outbreak of war in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan), and the Rapid Support Forces (under the command of Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti). Beginning in May 2024, the

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