



Commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo with UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

At the Edge of American Empire:

Understanding the Gulf's Role in Sudan's War

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The third anniversary of Sudan's April 2023 war has grimly passed, and opinion pages in the Western press lament the ledger. Hundreds of thousands of people are likely to have died, just as many face [catastrophic food insecurity](#), and [around fourteen million have been displaced](#). Each year has produced horrific atrocities and the same tired prescriptions. A recent [International Crisis Group \(ICG\) briefing](#) is exemplary. Yes, it concedes, three years of feckless US diplomacy have produced no results, and the external actors backing the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) still seem committed to the conflict. Nevertheless, it insists, straining to be heard over the bombs dropping on Tehran, the solution is to backstop American diplomacy and bring pressure to bear on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia (Saudi), whose interests are supposedly better served by peace than by war.

The ideological swamp of liberal internationalism from which these appeals are dredged also contains recent pieces on Sudan's war published in [The Atlantic](#) and [Foreign Affairs](#). According to the tale these essays tell, there was once a global rules-based order, guaranteed by American hegemony. Under Trump, the US has abdicated its role as global policeman, and chaos reigns. Sudan's conflict, as The Atlantic recently characterised it, is a "[War About Nothing](#)." Such murky talk also runs through [much of the conversation](#)

about the 'rise of the middle powers.' As [humanitarian funding collapses](#) and Western diplomatic interest in the Horn of Africa wanes, it is the 'middle' powers—and the Gulf states *primi inter pares*—that are supposedly determining the fate of the region. All this is boldly stated, but misleading. If chaos reigns, it is only in our conception of geopolitics.

Both the RSF and the SAF are enabled by their external supporters in the Gulf. The [RSF's capture of El Fasher in October 2025](#) would not have been possible without the UAE's [paying for the Colombian mercenaries](#) and [air-defence systems that flowed from Libya into Darfur](#). [The SAF's deal to acquire Pakistani fighter jets and drones was backed by Saudi petrodollars](#) (as of May 2026, this deal is in question). Absent support from the Gulf, the belligerent parties would feel more pressure to come to the negotiating table.

Yet such flagrant support for the warring parties in Sudan is not the result of the end of American geopolitical dominance, but a by-product of its continued existence. The UAE's absolute dependence on US military power was made explicit during the recent campaign against Iran. America's reliance on the UAE affords Abu Dhabi the leeway it needs to pursue its objectives in Sudan. If the US administration wished, it could force the Emirates to halt their support for the RSF. Unfortunately, the UAE's support for Israel and its deals with

the Trump administration rank as more important American priorities than ending the war in Sudan. Enabling the death of civilians in Gaza is more important than saving Sudanese lives.

Mohammed bin Salman signed a [gargantuan defence agreement](#) in November 2025 that consolidated Saudi Arabia's place as a crucial American ally. Intra-Gulf competition might be fuelling the war in Sudan, but it is these states' absorption into the US imperial system that is the conflict's precondition. When MBS visited his BFF in the White House to ask him to sanction Mohammed bin Zayed for his role in the Sudanese conflict, it was one US client-state asking its patron to sanction another. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are sub-imperial powers—to use [Husam Mahjoub's locution](#), in turn borrowed from Brazilian



US President Trump and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

theorist Ruy Mauro Marini—that at once buttress American empire and use it to advance their own, often conflicting, geopolitical projects.

Current global disorder has routinely been ascribed, in a phrase of Antonio Gramsci's that has been [rendered meaningless by the op-ed pages](#), to an 'interregnum' between a rules-based order predicated on US hegemony and whatever will emerge to replace it. Quite the contrary. Both of this century's most recent genocides—Darfur and Gaza—have occurred thanks to American empire: Gaza because of America's active sponsorship of Israel and Darfur due to its inept acquiescence to the UAE. Contemporary conflict in Sudan—as in Gaza—is not the product of absent US leadership, but its all-too-violent presence. If the US-Israel war on Iran has proved a tombstone for the bromides of international law, it has revealed the material actuality of American power that has always underwritten the putative rules-based order.

Understanding the role played by US empire is necessary but not sufficient to explain Sudan's current war. Contemporary sub-imperial conflict has its own contours. The international press frequently compares the [current conjuncture to the 19th century](#). The comparison is inapt. The regional dynamics of Sudan's April 2023 war instead revolve around 21st-century concerns with the [control of global](#)

[commodity flows](#), expressed via [struggles over chokepoints](#) and [Red Sea ports](#); and pressing anxieties [about food security among Gulf states that import the vast majority of what they eat](#). The Gulf's responses to these crises have turned the Horn of Africa into a frontier for resource extraction.

As Rosa Luxemburg analysed in [The Accumulation of Capital](#), primitive accumulation—the violent expansion of capitalism into non-capitalist domains—was not a precursor to fully-fledged capitalism, but its constant tendency. Such accumulation continues today. The displacement of Sudan's nomads and pastoralists, as militias seize herds in Darfur and funnel them across front lines to Port Sudan, has resulted in record [livestock exports to the Gulf](#). [Gold from RSF-controlled mines in Darfur's conflict zones](#) has allowed the UAE to diversify



Livestock export from Sudan through Port Sudan

its holdings just as the Iran crisis puts the [petrodollar system under greater strain](#). For Western op-ed writers, Sudan's collapse is a catastrophe, not just for its people, but for the geopolitical order. Contrary to such claims, the unfolding horrors in Sudan have been propitious for the Gulf states and their backers. Disorder, no less than order, can be geopolitically and economically productive.

Much of the discussion of Saudi and the UAE in Sudan emphasises their divergent interests. Such divergences matter, but overemphasizing them blinds us to the fact that both countries are committed to accumulating resources and securing crucial logistical nodes in Sudan and the Horn of Africa more broadly. What unifies the Gulf's interventions since the fall of Omar al Bashir in 2019 is that they have undermined democratic processes to keep in power the military elites who enable the Gulf's continued parasitism on Sudan's resources. Even though Saudi and the UAE back different sides of the war in Sudan, they are united in their antipathy to democracy.

The Gulf's Long Shadow in Sudan

The Gulf's role in Sudan's disarray precedes the current conflict. After the first oil shock in 1973, the Gulf—and Saudi Arabia in particular—was deeply concerned about its own food security,

and Sudan, which Jaafar Nimeiri [styled as a breadbasket for the Middle East](#), became a potential saviour. During the 1970s and '80s, the Kingdom was Sudan's largest creditor. Billions of US dollars were invested in agricultural projects. Most of that money disappeared into the pockets of Nimeiri's cronies, and the projects that materialised were focused on large-scale irrigation schemes, not on improving the lives of subsistence farmers. What appeared to be development led to the privatisation of the country's largest productive sector, in a wholesale seizure of land from the Sudanese people. By the early 1980s, Sudan's economy collapsed under the weight of external debt, with exports halving and many skilled workers leaving for the Gulf. Saudi petrodollars, rather than developing Sudan, stripped it of its human assets. The ensuing economic crisis led to conflict. Southern Sudan had fought a civil war against the North until 1972, when a peace agreement brought hopes of development. Sudan's financial turmoil saw Khartoum withdraw from its promises to southern Sudan, and by 1983, after Nimeiri drew closer to Islamist actors in an effort to buttress his regime, the South returned to war.

By then, the financialisation of Sudan's economy was well underway, and a Saudi-backed expansion of Islamic banking had ensured the country's integration into the global economy. The [Bank Act of 1982](#), designed to lure in capital, had opened up the financial

sector to foreign investment, and the Muslim Brotherhood took advantage, using sympathetic backers in the Gulf to create a series of banks that controlled lucrative remittances. Both political elites and Islamic financiers—to say nothing of Hasan al Turabi and the National Islamic Front (NIF), formed in 1985—benefited from the privatisation of Sudan's financial sector, which placed increasingly large parts of the economy outside popular control. As with the Gulf's investment in Nimeiri's breadbasket project, its role in the financialisation of Sudan had a fundamentally anti-democratic bent. US policy was in keeping with the Gulf's priorities. By the early 1980s, the US was sending more development aid to Sudan than anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa. Empowering Nimeiri as a bulwark against Communism was more of a US priority than Sudanese struggles against a regime that, by 1984, [was trying to cover up a famine](#).

In Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's support for the Muslim Brotherhood came back to haunt it during the Sahwa movement that reached its apogee in the 1980s and 1990s, [as clerics criticised Saudi involvement in the First Gulf War](#). Support for Turabi proved similarly costly; Sudan backed Iraq and positioned itself against America's allies, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Sudan's internationalist version of Islam found a more natural partner in the Iranian regime, with which it collaborated in the 1990s in training fighters from across North Africa. This anti-imperialist



Ahmed winer

An irrigation pivot in an agricultural project in Kassala State - Sudan

stance against American empire, whilst a popular position, made Sudan a regional pariah.

Though relations with Egypt were restored after Bashir, who came to power with Turabi's backing in 1989, marginalised the NIF a decade later, restoring relations with Saudi Arabia would have to wait for the fallout from the 2007-2008 global food crisis. Anxieties over food security in the Gulf, compounded by the financial crash and a rise in global commodity prices, led to a renewed interest in Sudan's agricultural sector.

Bashir would fully open Sudan to Gulf capital after South Sudan's secession in 2011. Six years earlier, Sudan's second civil war had come to an end, when, under American pressure, Bashir had signed an agreement giving the South a regional government and a referendum on independence. [With South Sudan's secession](#), Sudan lost most of its oil

exports and the vast majority of its foreign exchange reserves, imperilling its capacity to import the commodities it needed to sustain the fuel and wheat subsidies that formed part of its [pact with the country's riparian urban centres](#).

In search of new economic grounds for state viability, Bashir swerved away from his alliance with Iran and opened programmes for agricultural revival and electrification aimed at attracting the Gulf. Both Saudi and the UAE—the latter a growing power in the Horn—re-established ties with Sudan in 2014. Under Bashir, the SAF and the RSF—[a Darfuri militia he formalised as his praetorian guard](#)—sent mercenaries to fight on the Emirati and Saudi payroll in Yemen. Both Gulf states opened banks and leased some two million acres of Sudanese land to cultivate feed crops for the Gulf's expanding livestock industry. These schemes, just like Nimeiri's breadbasket, were not successful economically—yields were low, and many projects simply functioned to siphon UAE and Saudi dollars to Bashir's coterie. They displaced thousands of farmers and pastoralists, increasing food insecurity and diminishing popular sovereignty by placing economic power in the hands of a Khartoum-based elite.

Sudan's financial woes led to diplomatic inconstancy that proved Bashir's undoing. He stayed neutral in the [blockade of Qatar in 2017](#), and went on to pivot towards Ankara and Doha. After Bashir

cut subsidies in 2018, massive protests broke out across Sudan, leading to his ouster in April 2019. The military commanders who deposed him did so with the backing of the UAE and Saudi, which quickly announced a multi-billion-dollar support package. The Gulf monarchies saw the demonstrations that brought down Bashir as a threat, much like the Arab Spring before them. The petrodollars proffered far exceeded what was actually delivered—in December 2019, the UAE and Saudi abruptly ended their support to the transitional administration that replaced Bashir's regime. They were nonetheless politically effective in ensuring that Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, the head of the RSF and the UAE's chosen interlocutor, and Abdel Fattah al Burhan, the head of the SAF, were strengthened at the top of the transitional regime, halting the protest movement's momentum.

Along with Egypt, Saudi and the UAE proved instrumental in undermining the civilian part of the transitional government, while providing the military with financial support. The UAE also pushed Sudan towards [normalising relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords](#), pulling it within America's attempted redesign of the Middle East, centred on Israeli military dominance. Given the unpopularity of Israel's policies in the occupied territories, and the Gulf's need to separate Sudan's resources from democratic control, Saudi and the

UAE were always going to be set against the Sudanese people. The Gulf's sub-imperial designs on Sudan were to march in lockstep with its patron across the Atlantic. America's role in Sudan, after Bashir's fall, [systematically marginalised the country's resistance committees, prioritised structural adjustment policies and related austerity measures over popular economic sovereignty](#), and kowtowed to the fractious military elite around Burhan and Hemedti.

For the UAE, Sudan was to be part of a logistical empire. In 2020, the transitional government awarded DP World a contract to develop the southern terminal of Port Sudan, the country's sole port on the Red Sea. A coup in October 2021 unseated the civilian component of the transitional government and installed Burhan and Hemedti atop a military junta, with the approval of Saudi and the UAE. In 2022, the junta signed an agreement with a UAE consortium to develop the Abu Amama port complex, along with a free-trade zone and an agricultural project. These deals indicated the UAE's interest in Sudan and the junta's need for external support.

The RSF and the SAF, as Magdi el Gizouli and Eddie Thomas have phrased it, are '[creatures of the deposed](#).' Both were security services that built economic empires through Bashir's privatisation of the state. Deprived of the popular support that Islamism had once brought Bashir, neither force, at the beginning

of the war, [had much in the way of a social base](#). Instead, they were reliant on financial support from the Gulf. Even such financing could not overcome the structural limitations of a regime without legitimacy. [By the anniversary of the coup in October 2022](#), as Burhan and Hemedti desperately cast about for a civilian figurehead for their regime, it was clear the junta was struggling.

The war saved the RSF and the SAF. The conflict that began in April 2023 is at once a war between Bashir's zombies, locked in a zero-sum struggle for control of the military-economic apparatus, and a war against the Sudanese people. For both belligerents, the popular movements that overthrew Bashir remain a threat to their control of the country's political economy. Sudan's current war has displaced what Mao [would call the principal contradiction](#)—that between a predatory military apparatus and a democratic movement—onto a secondary one: that between two military actors. The Gulf states are jockeying to control two different militarised visions of Sudan's political order.

[More unifies the SAF and the RSF than might seem apparent](#). Both have used the war to develop a broader social base, by mobilising fears of Arab annihilation in Darfur ([for the RSF](#)), and racialised visions of marauders from the west (for the SAF). Both have employed [famine as a weapon of war and restricted humanitarian access](#). The two forces



Henry Wilkins/VOA

Sudanese refugees in Chad

have also collaborated in a fire sale of the country's assets, [including livestock](#) and gum arabic, which, whether looted by the RSF or by the SAF, has the same destination: Dubai. Just as American empire is a precondition for Gulf sub-imperialism, so the Gulf's extractive empires are the sine qua non of the predatory apparatus of Bashir's zombies.

The UAE's Logistical Empire

The UAE's particular formula for imperial power—a form of logistical empire—is distinctive, and is one that Saudi, weighed down by decades of monarchical practice, has struggled to match. The UAE's growing geopolitical weight has been enabled by American empire (its previous position in the

world system was guaranteed by the role the monarchies played for British imperialism). After the First Gulf War, the UAE opened the Al-Dhafra airbase and the Jebel Ali port to the US military, just as America was taking on the role of the world's policeman. Jebel Ali became the biggest commercial hub for America's misadventures in Afghanistan and Iraq. The UAE's imbrication with US military power extends to bankrolling Lockheed Martin's jets and developing data centres. In 2024, the US designated the UAE a 'Major Defence Partner'—only India has the dubious honour of sharing this title.

The security afforded the UAE by their central places in the US war machine, and their privileged geographical positions at the centre of so many global flows have allowed them to overcome some of their demographic and spatial limitations. The Jebel Ali Port and Free Zone is the largest maritime terminal in the Middle East; Dubai has become a crucial node for global air travel; the [UAE plays a central role in finance for much of Africa](#)—including Sudan, which sold off significant stakes in the Bank of Khartoum and El Nilein Bank to Emirati investors in the 2000s. Bankak, the Bank of Khartoum's mobile payment system, and a financial lifeline for Sudan during the current war, is based in Dubai. For all Burhan's hostility, his regime remains dependent on the UAE.

The UAE is an artificial Leviathan in a sense at once more thorough and more

material than that intended by Thomas Hobbes, for whom all states were artificial, because they were arrived at through covenant. [Lacking a workforce, Abu Dhabi imported it](#). Without much in the way of agricultural production, and wary of the commodity price-spikes that came with the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UAE bought up land elsewhere. Their alfalfa grows in [Arizona](#), amongst other places, over the [protests of locals worldwide](#). Even though the UAE is bitterly opposed to Cairo on the battlefield in Sudan, [Emirati companies are the primary domestic producers of Egypt's most strategic crop](#): wheat. Sudan's agricultural resources represent a potent prize, as the UAE seeks to diversify away from oil, partly by becoming a hub in the global food system.

Controlling resources abroad without the trappings of territorial imperialism is tricky. The UAE's solution has been to create a logistical empire, predicated on the control of ports across the world. At present, the UAE is developing more [than twenty ports in Africa](#), as part of US\$97 billion that they have pledged to deliver to the continent over the next two years. Their control of littoral space, via Abu Dhabi (AD) Ports Group and DP World, is supplemented by logistics organisations across the continent. Blockages in the Strait of Hormuz after the American and Israeli assault on Iran have made clear the precarity of this strategy; ninety per cent of the UAE's food flows through

the strait, and Dubai is dependent on continuous imports.

To defend its logistical empire, the UAE has backed national governments eager for access to its wealth and technology, such as Ethiopia, and sponsored secessionist groups and ethnically organised militias, including Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army, separatist groups in greater Somalia, and, of course, the RSF. The empire has been predicated on national fragmentation across Africa and the Middle East. Access to raw materials—including gold in Sudan—is more easily secured from relatively weak actors, who depend on Emirati sponsorship. The RSF, for instance, has always been parasitic on state support. For its first decade, that state was Khartoum, which underwrote its acquisitions in Darfur. When the war began, it traded Khartoum for Abu Dhabi, in an attempt to occupy the former city, but nonetheless remained dependent on external support. The UAE's commitment to the RSF only makes sense relative to its investments in landlocked Ethiopia, which require a littoral conduit, and its ties elsewhere in the region. This empire, far from being reliant on states, has tended to fracture and weaken them as a means of control.

One cannot reduce the UAE to simply being a function of American empire. China is a far more important trade partner for the UAE than the US, and it has [sold liquefied natural gas in yuan](#),

breaking with the petrodollar's dominance at the core of American financial architecture. The prominence of gold in the UAE's adventures in Sudan is partly explained by efforts to hedge exposure to American unpredictability. Dubai is now the [main destination for gold mined in Africa](#)—including by the SAF, indicating a war economy that crosses national and factional lines. Emirati imperial designs on the Horn of Africa have the UAE's role in American empire as their precondition, but that does not stop Abu Dhabi often working at cross-purposes to Washington.

The Unity of Oppositions

Part of the reason the UAE decided to back the RSF lies in the strong connection between Hemedti and bin Zayed, [forged amid the RSF mercenary campaigns in Yemen](#), but such amity cannot itself explain the enmity between the SAF and the UAE. Contingent causes are initially more important than structural rationale. When the war began, it seemed—if only for a moment—that the RSF would take Khartoum, creating a strong negotiating position from which to stake a claim on the state. It was only then that the UAE decided to back Hemedti to the hilt. It proved a mistaken bet. The RSF failed to secure Khartoum, and to this day remains unacknowledged as a legitimate political force—even the UAE consistently deny their support for

the militia. Three years on, the UAE's sponsorship of Hemedti has largely failed. The RSF has not taken Khartoum, the UAE has incurred international opprobrium, and they are further than ever from getting control of ports on the Red Sea or access to agricultural land along the Nile.

Nevertheless, the UAE has profited from its misbegotten choice. The war has consolidated the UAE's logistical networks in the Horn, further militarising its relationship with Ethiopia, where the UAE has training camps and drone bases, and with Haftar in Libya—whence much of the RSF's supplies pass. [As Colombian mercenaries move from Bogotá to Abu Dhabi, and thence to Bossaso and Kufra, before arriving in Darfur](#), the UAE must congratulate itself on a job well-done: a mercenary army on its payroll, ports in the Gulf of Aden, primary resources flowing from the Horn, and a network of influence spanning regional national governments along with sundry rebel groups.

It is only since 2025 that Saudi has swung fully behind the SAF, largely in response to growing tensions with the UAE that run the gamut from feuding in OPEC and economic jostling—the Saudi Regional Headquarters Programme requires multinationals working in the region to register in the Kingdom, bypassing Dubai—to open conflict in Yemen, where the Emirati-supported Southern Transitional Council launched

an offensive against Saudi-backed forces, in what Riyadh considers its own backyard. Sudan has become a theatre for this rivalry.

Such antipathy, it must be underlined, is a sub-imperial struggle within the logic of American hegemony. After US and Israeli strikes on Tehran, both Gulf countries co-operated in subsequent covert attacks on Iran. Such temporary unity is unlikely to benefit Sudan. Both countries are shoring up geopolitical alliances (Saudi with Egypt and Pakistan; the UAE with America's genocidaire-in-chief, Israel) that do not augur rapprochement over Khartoum. Despite their shared patron in D.C. and similar economic interests in Sudan, the two sides' negotiating positions are far apart. Saudi has insisted that the army—as a state institution—must be maintained in Sudan's future, while the UAE are pushing for a transition to a civilian government amenable to Abu Dhabi's strategic priorities. US negotiating efforts have focused on arriving at a humanitarian truce—which neither the RSF nor the SAF can honour—and a framework agreement remarkably similar to that which [played an important role in producing the conflict](#).

The perversity of an approach that tries to take Sudan back to the day before the conflict is, precisely, the day after, as [Kholood Khair](#) has pointed out. Such an approach does not address the fundamental historical reason for the conflict—the two main cogs in Bashir's

war machine turning on each other—but rather entrenches these military forces as the central political actors in Sudan. These diplomatic approaches have prioritised reaching a UAE–Saudi détente, on the basis that a geopolitical agreement is a necessary—but not sufficient—condition for peace.

A rapprochement is impossible to envisage. Expecting one assumes too much about the coherence of the geopolitical order. Just as American empire only provides the ground for sub-imperial squabbling in the Gulf, so external support to the RSF and the SAF enables the two forces, without determining their decisions absolutely. To think otherwise is to believe that the Horn is merely a playground for the Gulf, and mistakes petrodollars for agency. In Sudan, the RSF and the SAF have skilfully engaged their Gulf backers, abandoning genuine sovereignty for the selective advantages conferred by regional geopolitical winds.

Overstating the power of the Gulf means misunderstanding how deeply the war has transformed Sudan. From weak social bases, both parties have waged war in the manner of their mentor, Bashir, by intensifying social cleavages, playing ethnic groups against each other, and outsourcing warfare to militias. Darfuri militia groups use RSF (and UAE) weapons to wage much more local struggles for Heimat against rival groups.

These conflicts are disaggregated from the fight for control of the state and increasingly produce political projects predicated on Sudan's fragmentation. Both the RSF and the SAF are now too internally fractured to come to a workable ceasefire agreement, and several parts of the coalitions built up by the belligerent parties are profiting too much from the war—politically and economically—to wish to end it.

The war is fragmented at both the local and the regional levels. All too often, the connections between these two levels bypass that of the state itself. Regional illicit gold trade profits from the state's absence, as do UAE flows of materiel across national borders. While it was not the UAE's intention upon entering the Sudanese conflict, the logic of the war economy may produce a forever war. Even if control of the country is the supposed telos of the warring parties, the external powers regard Sudan as a site for business projects that might be harmed, and not helped, by Sudanese sovereignty. Thus, the UAE continues to receive gold from the SAF and grows wheat in Egypt while backing Cairo's opponents in Kordofan. These seemingly contradictory alliances make no sense within a Cold War framework, in which one chooses one side or another. The proliferation of regional interests in Sudan is one of the reasons for the intense splintering of military groups on the ground, [and a concomitant ethnicization of conflict in Darfur](#).

It may not be in the Gulf's interest for the Sudanese state to be restored. The forces breaking apart Sudan are structural and have parallels elsewhere in the region: the collapse of state capacity, military forces backed by mercenary state- and non-state actors, and the fragmentation of the body politic, are also characteristics of conflict in Yemen, the Central African Republic, and Somalia. Increasingly, it seems as though the pieces will not be put back together. In the Horn of Africa at least, the epoch of the nation-state seems to be closing, and the contours of a new century are emerging, in which sovereignty gives way to disarticulated countries controlled by external interests and fragmented by local dynamics. Rather than this new state of affairs emerging after the demise of the liberal rules-based order, it emerges at the edge of American empire, enabled and constrained by what is still the globe's ruling military power.

Despite these structural antagonisms, the liberal fever-dreams with which this essay opened all ultimately call for the restoration of state sovereignty. [As Bayan Abubakr has suggested](#), the Sudanese radical tradition, as exemplified by the resistance committees that brought down Bashir, indicates another possibility: one based on a conception of sovereignty not lodged in state power, but in the Sudanese people, and which refuses the reduction of the war to two belligerent parties and their regional backers, and insists, beyond the state, on

a popular right to self-determination. It is this right against which Saudi, the UAE, and the US are all united.