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Dear Colleagues,

This **CSF Research Update** brings you a curated roundup of key open-source research and analysis to support aid actors working in Sudan. These updates provide timely insights into evolving dynamics, helping strengthen conflict-sensitive and effective aid responses.

We also feature select articles from the **CSF Knowledge Hub**, offering historical context, lessons learned, and background analysis. You can find all the publications below in the CSF Knowledge Hub.

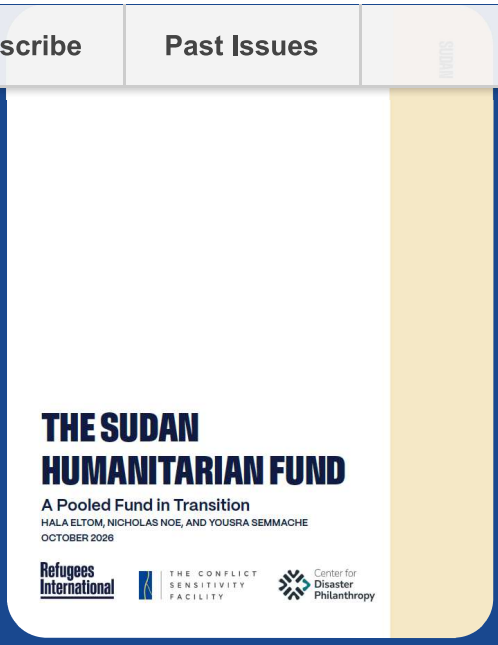
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Humanitarian Response and Localisation

FEATURED PUBLICATION

The Sudan Humanitarian Fund: A Pooled Fund in Transition



Nicholas Noe, Hala Eltom and Yousra Semmache

October 2026

Sudan's largest humanitarian pooled fund is expanding, but how far is it shifting power and resources to Sudanese responders? Published in collaboration with Refugees International, the research examines barriers to direct funding, recent reforms and opportunities for greater local decision-making. Recommendations include more accessible funding pathways, multi-year grants and stronger engagement with NGO-led funds.

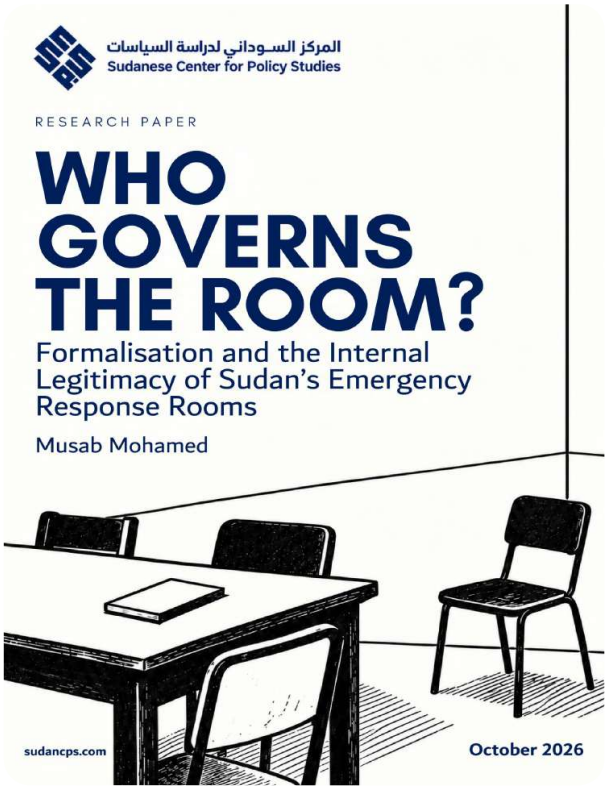
READ MORE

Who Governs the Room? Formalisation and Legitimacy of Sudan's Emergency Response Rooms

Musab Mohamed

October 2026

Emergency Response Rooms draw their legitimacy from community trust, but expanding formal coordination raises questions about representation and accountability. Interviews with volunteers and practitioners explore who speaks for these networks, whose voices are excluded and how experiences differ across geography and gender. The findings highlight the need for clearer representative mandates and stronger participation by Women's Response Rooms.



Funding Mutual Aid Groups in Sudan: Routes, Losses and What Needs to Change



Bashàir Ahmed, Musaab Alhadi and the Co-Researcher Collective

October 2026

Funding recorded as support to Sudan's mutual aid groups can lose significant value before reaching frontline responders. Evidence from community groups traces how intermediary deductions, exchange-rate rules and transfer costs reduce what grants can deliver. Greater transparency across funding chains and changes to donor requirements could help prevent local responders from absorbing these costs themselves.

War Economy and International Engagement

Sudan: Bypassing Sanctions, Sustaining the War Economy

Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker

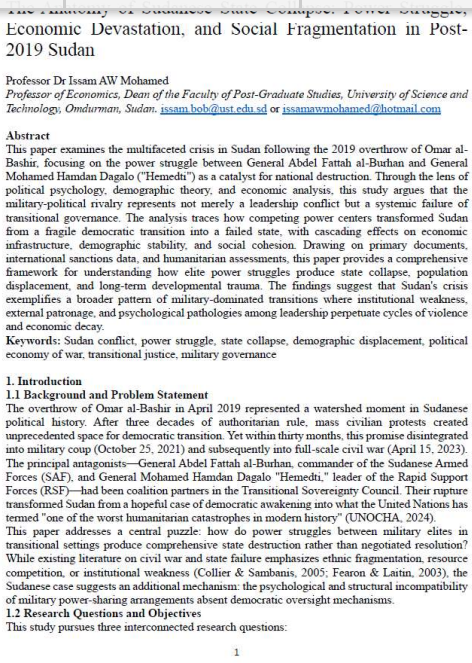
October 2026

International sanctions have struggled to constrain the financial and commercial networks sustaining Sudan's war. Assessing their effects on deterrence, disruption and political signalling, the analysis examines how targeted actors adapt through front companies, alternative markets and shifting jurisdictions. Recommendations include targeting connected business networks, widening the arms embargo and embedding sanctions within a coordinated political strategy.



Sudan as a Mirror For Today's World

Alden Young and Muez Ali



Economic Devastation, and Social Fragmentation in Post-2019 Sudan

Professor Dr Issam AW Mohamed
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Abstract
This paper examines the multifaceted crisis in Sudan following the 2019 overthrow of Omar al-Bashir, focusing on the power struggle between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ("Hemedti") as a catalyst for national destruction. Through the lens of political psychology, demographic theory, and economic analysis, this study argues that the military-political rivalry represents not merely a leadership conflict but a systemic failure of transitional governance. The analysis traces how competing power centers transformed Sudan from a fragile democratic transition into a failed state, with cascading effects on economic infrastructure, demographic stability, and social cohesion. Drawing on primary documents, international sanctions data, and humanitarian assessments, this paper provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how elite power struggles produce state collapse, population displacement, and long-term developmental trauma. The findings suggest that Sudan's crisis exemplifies a broader pattern of military-dominated transitions where institutional weakness, external patronage, and psychological pathologies among leadership perpetuate cycles of violence and economic decay.
Keywords: Sudan conflict, power struggle, state collapse, demographic displacement, political economy of war, transitional justice, military governance

1. Introduction
1.1 Background and Problem Statement
The overthrow of Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 represented a watershed moment in Sudanese political history. After three decades of authoritarian rule, mass civilian protests created unprecedented space for democratic transition. Yet within thirty months, this promise disintegrated into military coup (October 25, 2021) and subsequently into full-scale civil war (April 15, 2023). The principal antagonists—General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo "Hemedti," leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)—had been coalition partners in the Transitional Sovereignty Council. Their rupture transformed Sudan from a hopeful case of democratic awakening into what the United Nations has termed "one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in modern history" (UNOCHA, 2024).
This paper addresses a central puzzle: how do power struggles between military elites in transitional settings produce comprehensive state destruction rather than negotiated resolution? While existing literature on civil war and state failure emphasizes ethnic fragmentation, resource competition, or institutional weakness (Collier & Sambanis, 2005; Fearon & Laitin, 2003), the Sudanese case suggests an additional mechanism: the psychological and structural incompatibility of military power-sharing arrangements absent democratic oversight mechanisms.
1.2 Research Questions and Objectives
This study pursues three interconnected research questions:

1

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Sudan's war reflects a wider retreat from the international commitments that once supported peacekeeping and civilian protection. Young and Ali connect the erosion of the liberal world order with the weakening of Sudan's central state and infrastructure. They argue that older networks of trade and power offer clues to the forms of statecraft now emerging.

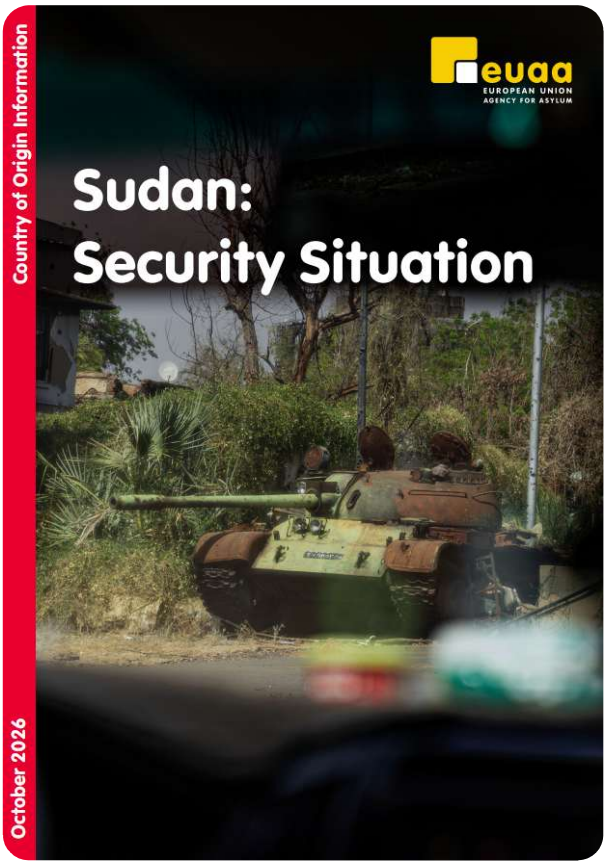
Conflict Dynamics and Drivers

Sudan: Security Situation

European Union Agency for Asylum

October 2026

Political developments, armed actors and humanitarian conditions frame this overview of Sudan's security situation between March 2025 and August 2026. State-by-state analysis maps conflict dynamics, major incidents and security trends, with particular attention to their consequences for civilians.



The Causes of Sudan's Protracted Armed Conflicts from a Human Geography and Ecology Perspective



ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

PERSPECTIVE

The causes of Sudan's protracted armed conflicts from a human geography and ecology perspective

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Keywords: conflicts, human ecology, human geography, Sudan, peacebuilding

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The causes and consequences of conflict incidents have been increasingly investigated through the lenses of human geography and human ecology, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the ecological, social, and economic dimensions involved in environmental and social conflict. Human geography principally strives to understand the structure of the interrelations between anthropogenic and environmental factors, and how they interact and influence each other (Fan *et al* 2022). Human ecology, on the other hand, aims to explain how people's culture, livelihood, and social organization are reciprocally influenced by the natural environment.

Human ecology further examines human life and activities across diverse ecosystems and cultural contexts to better understand the factors influencing human-environment interactions. Consequently, socio-ecological concerns have emerged as a critical area of inquiry across disciplines such as geography, anthropology, political science, and economics. Complex socio-environmental phenomena, such as conflict and poverty, can no longer be confined to single disciplines. Instead, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach to development that integrates perspectives from the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

Academics, policymakers, and practitioners are increasingly calling for a comprehensive assessment of the environmental, social, economic, political, and geopolitical impacts of the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan (Konozy 2023, 2024, Basheer and Elagib 2024, Gregoire 2024, Siddig and Basheer 2024). This conflict, which erupted on 15 April 2023 between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, has spread across much of the country. Addressing these concerns effectively requires a thorough conceptualization and explanation of the root causes underpinning Sudan's protracted conflicts, thereby enabling the development of appropriate and sustainable solutions.

This essay examines the underlying causes of protracted armed conflicts in Sudan, drawing on key concepts from human geography and human ecology. The analysis is based on data and information obtained from secondary sources, complemented by observations of existing systems across social, economic, political, environmental and ecological dimensions in major conflict hotspots within Sudan. A descriptive-analytical approach is employed to explain the deep-rooted drivers of these prolonged conflicts.

Attributing social phenomena to physical environmental aspects has a long history in several scientific disciplines. Owing to the extractive and primary nature of the Sudan's economy, natural resource-based economy, a solid understanding of the country's social settings and economic performance would not be attainable without extending knowledge and cognition of the pervasive environmental contexts since labor, food, livelihood, economic activities, and socio-cultural life of Sudan revolve around land resources. This not only draws attention to the significance of valuing environmental and resource assets that hold socioeconomic development prospects but also recognizes them as decisive for political power and social life influence.

Numerous studies have attempted to explain the social and anthropological phenomena, such as conflicts by linking them to eco-environmental aspects and variables. Two conflicting narratives of 'resource curse' which attributes conflicts to resources abundance and 'resource scarcity' which frames conflicts as competition for the access and control of scarce resources have mainstreamed the explanation of resource-conflict links (Vesco *et al* 2020) among the three prevailing schools of thought

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Sudan's prolonged conflicts are examined through the relationships between people, livelihoods and their environments. Drawing on secondary sources and observations from conflict-affected areas, the authors bring together social, economic, political and ecological perspectives to explore the country's deep-rooted conflict drivers.

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