

Sudan, past, present and future



**Umayya Youssef Hassan
Abu Fedayah**

A specialist researcher
focusing on the affairs of
the Horn of Africa



Sudan, past, present and future

Umayya Youssef Hassan Abu Fedayah

A specialist researcher focusing on the affairs of the Horn of Africa.

Sudan, with its geographical borders prior to the secession of the South in 2011 AD, was the outcome of the invasion by Muhammad Ali Pasha, the ruler of Egypt (1805–1849), who had an ambitious expansionist tendency and aimed to establish a personal empire under the umbrella of the Ottoman Caliphate. His invasion of Sudan was in 1821 AD with an army led by his son Ismail Pasha and his son-in-law Muhammad Bey Al-Daftardar. The objectives of Muhammad Ali Pasha during that invasion can be summarized as follows:

A military objective is to recruit men to support the army, consolidate rule, and build the empire.

An economic goal aimed at searching for gold in the far southeastern part of Sudan (which currently belongs to the state of Ethiopia).

"A security goal aimed at protecting the sources of the Nile."

Muhammad Ali Pasha's army conquered the kingdoms in northern Sudan. Later, Ismail Pasha led an expedition to central Sudan to eliminate the Islamic Sultanate of Sennar, which is located in present-day central and southeastern Sudan. This Sultanate was established twelve years after the fall of Andalusia, around 1504 AD, and it lasted for nearly three centuries. Al-Daferdar penetrated and took control of the present-day west-central and southern Sudan.

The Mahdist state took control of Sudan following a series of victories and conquests, culminating in the liberation of Khartoum in 1885 AD.

'It seems that Mahdism was more aligned with the revolution than with the establishment of a stable state. It was successful in achieving liberation under the leadership of its inspiring imam, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi. However, it did not succeed in building and establishing a stable state, achieving political stability, contentment, and societal consensus, especially after the loss of its leader, who died shortly after the liberation was complete.'

Sudan was placed under British rule, which was connected to Egypt. In reality, both Sudan and Egypt were under British rule. This period lasted from 1899 AD, when the British overthrew the rule of Caliph al-Mahdi, until 1956 AD, which is a total of 57 years.

After gaining independence, Sudan was faced with the effects of the colonizer's plotting and deceit. This led to a rebellion in South Sudan in 1955, resulting in the division between North and South Sudan. The colonial plan enforced the "Closed Areas" Law, which prohibited the use of the Arabic language and the wearing of Islamic clothing in the South. Additionally, the call to Islam was prohibited, while Western churches and missionary campaigns were given complete freedom to operate. This situation persisted until the rule of President Abboud (1958-1964).

Since gaining independence, Sudan has been stuck in a continuous cycle of unrest. It starts with a period of democracy which is then overturned by the military. Subsequently, the military rule is overthrown by a popular uprising, leading to a new democratic period. However, this is followed by another military takeover, and the cycle repeats itself.

This is undoubtedly evidence of the failure of all Sudanese civil and military elites to achieve political consensus, but the outside hand was not absent in all of those periods.

This hand has deliberately pursued a policy that exhausts Sudan and exhausts it forever. It seems like they want to witness Sudan in a state of political upheaval. "... turmoil in which there is no renaissance, no growth is achieved, and there is no independent decision-making in politics or economics.

To understand the current crisis in Sudan, the observer needs to consider several facts and insights.

One of the important points to remember is the nature and history of the Sudanese army.

The Sudanese army is ranked 75th globally and 11th in the Arab world. The Sudanese soldier has always been wanted for his courage, bravery and high discipline. France, for example, sought help from a Sudanese battalion in 1863, consisting of 435 soldiers, in agreement with the Khedive in Egypt. Only 313 soldiers returned to Sudan after 4 years, after 140 were martyred in the Mexican War of Independence, which was supported by France.

Sudanese soldiers participated in the first war with the allies, but the Sultan of Darfur (Ali Dinar), who remained independent in Darfur, the farthest part of Sudan, from English colonialism, sided with the Ottoman Caliphate. He was punished and killed in 1916 AD, after which Darfur was annexed to British colonial rule.

The Sudanese political parties came to power in military uniforms, meaning they operated within the military institution. This was recognized by all parties, regardless of their political leaning. The involvement of political parties within the military would have led to tensions if they hadn't gained power. However, if they had succeeded, they would have faced the challenges of governance, management, and security.

All of this – unequivocally – debilitated the Sudanese army, despite its presumed advanced capabilities. Throughout Sudan's history after gaining independence, this issue persisted. Despite criticisms about the effectiveness of the rescue efforts and the role of the military at the time, an unbiased observer of the military's industrialization efforts in this period recognizes the actual accomplishments and commends them. Perhaps it is also true of the outside world's attention, which is upset by attempts at independence in industrialization and is more disturbed by the fact that it is war industrialization for it is always striving to weaken the armies of the Arab and African region.

Among the facts and insights to understand the nature of the current Sudanese crisis is getting to know Sudan's

resources, which have been the subject of long-standing ambitions. It is not an exaggeration for someone to say that Sudan has resources that no one else has. One resource is sufficient for Sudan's renaissance and a guarantee of the well-being of its people if it achieves political stability.

Sudan has an underground wealth of gold and reserves of silver, mica, talc, manganese, chromium, platinum, oil, and gas.

Furthermore, the country has 84 million hectares of arable land, but only 20% or less of it is currently being utilized. Out of this 20%, over 80% depends on rain-fed irrigation. This country is home to the longest and greatest rivers of the African continent, not just the Nile, and it also has water sources apart from rivers.

Sudan possesses a livestock wealth of 30 million cows that are not being fully utilized for meat and milk production.

40 million sheep are not fully exploited for meat and dairy production, and 32 million goats are also not fully exploited.

Then it has 15 million camels, most of which are exported abroad for the quality of their meat and, to a lesser extent, their racing skills.

Sudan has a diversity of climates that allow for various types of pastoral or agricultural activity and a wealth of fisheries.

It is no secret that Sudan is the first source of Arabic gum, which every industry in the world needs.

So, we are talking about a country that is rich in resources but very poor on the ground, with a population that does not exceed 45 million.

It has been said that Sudan has not had political stability since its independence, that political parties were

exploiting the military institution (the army) to reach power, and that party activity within the army institution and attempts to bring it to power were not left behind by any of the Sudanese political parties, whether right or left.

However, what is new in the Sudanese crisis is the Rapid Support Forces.

Please remember the following text:

The Rapid Support Forces and its foundation are tribal forces (Arab from Darfur) that were created in 2013 AD during the era of President Al-Bashir after the secession of the south, the loss of its oil, and the increase in the activity of the rebel movements in Darfur (in number and area). Most of the rebel movements were from non-Arab African ethnicities and had hostility with neighboring Arabs.

After the uprising or revolution against the Bashir regime in 2019 AD, and until the war on April 15, 2023, the role of RSF increased, and it became:

The most significant economic power in the country (exporting gold, live and slaughtered meat, and agricultural products) and importing almost everything, even fuel.

The strongest military force controlled all the strategic facilities in the capital...and now possessed all types of weapons except the air force.

International relations extend beyond state institutions. For instance, Sudan has established connections with the UAE. These connections were initially authorized by Al-Bashir himself during the Decisive Storm and the Yemen War. Additionally, Sudan allowed the RSF to have relations with the European Union by providing swift support in the fight against illegal immigration to Europe. RSF also has relations with Libya, Chad, and the Russian Wagner forces.

A political role... as the RSF Commander became the second-in-command in the official institution and the ruling coalition of the military and civilian ruling partners from 2019 AD until the war.

On April 15, 2023, the RSF gained control of most parts of the Sudanese capital and the majority of military facilities. However, they were unable to take control of the General Command and the armored vehicles in Khartoum, the areas of Engineers and Karari in Omdurman, and the Signal Corps in Bahari. The RSF were well prepared and well-equipped, and they already occupied most of the strategic sites before the war under the pretext of guarding them. All this happened in the first months of the war.

With the prolongation of the war, many changes occurred in the military field and in the balance of power. But what is beyond doubt is that the war has exhausted the resources of the weak state to begin with. The losses of the state, the private sector, and the citizens amounted to approximately two hundred billion pounds during the first year.

8.1 million people were displaced within Sudan (to areas controlled by the military), and 2.25 million migrants sought refuge, searching for security and employment opportunities.

Nearly 13,000 died from the armed forces, 100,000 died from the Rapid Support, and a large number of dead and wounded civilians.

There have been 507 documented cases of rape, although most cases go unreported. In all instances, the allegations are directed at members of the Rapid Support Forces.

Citizens have reported a significant number of burglaries, looting and thefts, including cars and motorcycles, estimated to be around 203,000. These thefts are believed to have been committed by members of Rapid Support Forces.

Amid the international preoccupation with the Ukrainian war and the conflict in the Gaza Strip, a complex humanitarian crisis has unfolded due to the absence of relief and health institutions.

The war that is taking place now in Sudan is a war against the state, led by the Rapid Support Forces supported by the UAE, which blackmailed all neighboring countries to side with the Rapid Support Forces in its war against the Sudanese army. The Rapid Support Forces and the UAE in this war are merely tools in the project of dividing Sudan

into small warring states, a project behind which the American administration stands.

Accordingly, the war is not directed only against the Sudanese army, but rather against all of Sudan, land and people. The Rapid Support attacks that occur against civilians in areas where there are no military battles, and in fact, there is no military force in the first place, bear witness to this. This happened in the state of Al-Jazira and in the state of West Darfur before, and in both cases, the armed forces withdrew, so the Rapid Support violated everything, killed people, and practiced plunder and robbery. This caused citizens in other states to carry weapons and organize popular resistance and public mobilization campaigns to protect their lives, money, and honor.

Viable options for the end of the war:

Going to negotiations, as happened last year (Jeddah Platform), in which the RSF did not adhere to what was agreed upon in the initial agreement.

For the armed forces to prevail, even after a while and at an excessive cost, thus removing the Rapid Support Forces from political and military action. This is, of course, the ideal option for the majority of the Sudanese people.

The worst possibility is that the RSF will prevail, and an absent evil awaits. Then Sudan will be divided into four warring states, which represents a threat to the region in general and to sister Egypt in particular. Egypt senses the danger of RSF's victory over its national security, but it modestly strives to support the armed forces, with its eye on the UAE, which is exploiting the economic crisis in Egypt.

Evidence that Egypt is under pressure in relation to the current Sudan crisis is that it had invited Sudanese political forces to a conference in Cairo at the end of June, an invitation that was welcomed and approved by the Sudanese government. But the invitation was suddenly postponed. May God protect Sudan, its land and its people.