

Security Council

The Question of Sudan



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Introduction

Since 2014, extreme poverty rates in Sudan have risen by roughly 40%. Despite this, Sudan's A country of significant geopolitical importance, located in Northeast Africa, which boasts a rich historical tapestry and major artistic heritage. As the third-largest country in Africa, with an area of 1.9 million square kilometres, Sudan borders nine countries including: South Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia. Consequently, Sudan has on one hand maintained the advantage of accessing vital waterways such as the Red sea, whilst also being vulnerable to territorial disputes and regional competition.

Rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, gold, uranium, and agricultural lands, Sudan's oil reserves have gained them leverage in global energy markets. The country has therefore attracted foreign attention and investment, which has impacted their trade relations, economic development and energy security. In 2011, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan which has plagued the nation with economic challenges and political transformation. To mitigate these challenges, Sudan has embarked on a path of economic reforms, which included currency devaluation and subsidy reforms to attract foreign investment. The country's regional cooperation had started to improve in an effort towards enhancing trade.

However, Sudan is facing a daunting conflict that demands spontaneous attention from our international community. These socio-political tensions that lay beneath Sudan's vibrant cultural facade have sparked armed conflicts and tragically resulted in destabilisation and human suffering. In recent decades, the implications of the conflicts in Sudan are being felt. One prominent example is the Darfur conflict which has already claimed approximately 300,000 lives and displaced millions. The Sudanese crisis is a culmination of these intertwined events and a manifestation of some of the social, economic and political hardships they have faced. It is important to note however, that the



crisis is very complex and riddled with controversy which have shaped the region into a Security Council-worthy issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Darfur Conflict

This conflict refers specifically to the armed warfare and disastrous human suffering that took place in the Darfur region of Sudan. The conflict commenced in 2003. Consequences of the conflict include large-scale violence, population displacement as well as human rights violations.

Janjaweed

This term is used to describe the Arab militia groups during the Darfur crisis that were accused of perpetrating atrocities. Some of their accusations include acts of violence, looting, rape and killings on civilians. Ultimately, they majorly contributed to the humanitarian catastrophe of the region.

Secession

As a whole, Secession refers to the act of a territory or region separating from an existing nation state to becoming an independent state. In the case of the Sudan crisis, the secession of South Sudan was the declaration of independence of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011. As a consequence, Sudan lost major parts of its territory, valuable oil fields and faced major economic challenges.

Ethnic Cleavages

Ethnic cleavages refer to conflicts or divisions/tensions that are based on cultural, tribal or ethnic identities. These often result in major disputes between ethnic groups. Some major ethnic groups involved in the Sudan conflict include: the Arab-Berber (Arabized Berbers and Arabized Nubians), the Fur people, the Zaghawa people (that primarily inhabit Darfur), the Masalit group and the Nuba people.



Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Many people within different regions of Sudan seek safety and shelter. Internally displaced people are people that have been forced to flee their homes or habitual residence due to either conflicts or natural disasters. In the case of Sudan, many individuals have been forced to evacuate their homes due to the conflict but have stayed within the borders of the country. If they had crossed international borders they would be classified as refugees or immigrants.

Violations of Human Rights

Characterised by widespread suffering and tragedies, lack of essential goods and services as well as urgent humanitarian needs, the situation in Sudan has become extremely dire. Actions and policies that infringe on the rights, freedom and safety/security of the people of Sudan can be classified as Human Rights violations. Some examples include, killings, torture, sexual violence and restrictions on freedom of expression.

Transitional Justice

The Human Rights abuses mentioned above can be addressed by implementing mechanisms and processes that facilitate reconciliation and promote accountability. These mechanisms are especially prominent during times of political transition as was prevalent in Sudan.

General Overview

The consequences of deep-rooted tensions in Sudan are currently being epitomised by the power struggle over the sovereignty of Sudan between the country's army and a paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Previously, warring factions included a massive mobilisation of allied citizens that came together in 2019 to overthrow the Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir. However, these conflicts have not been one-off events. For most of its independent history, Sudan has battles with the impacts of major internal conflicts that have weakened their power on the international stage. Since its independence in 1956, success regimes have found it difficult to win general acceptance from the population. Whilst many political leaders have attempted to unify the people of Sudan, divisive civil wars, punctuated by violent conflicts, have regularly destroyed such attempts. Sudan's capital, Khartoum, is located at the centre of the country and is by far the largest



urban area in Sudan. It has therefore also been the epicentre of conflict in the region as well as the centre of commerce and government. The Nile River also plays a major role in the geography of Sudan. Dominantly used for drainage and soil for agriculture, all of Sudan's streams and rivers drain into or from the Nile. In terms of plant and animal life, Sudan has five main vegetational belts: the desert region, low and high rainfall savanna (grasslands), inland floodplains and mountain vegetation regions. Climate change is also a major contributor to humanitarian disasters in Sudan and has ultimately exacerbated the political, economic and social challenges in Sudan.

The secession of South Sudan

Under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, South Sudan officially seceded from Sudan in 2011 to become the 54th independent state of Africa. As a result of the secession, Sudan has faced numerous economic shocks. One of these included the massive loss of oil revenue that had been responsible for more than 50% of the Government's revenue and 95% of its exports. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement led to a referendum to determine whether South Sudan should gain its independence. 98.83% of people who took part in the referendum voted in favour of independence. However, major tensions in South Sudan remained. In 2011, it was reported that the country was at war with 7 armed groups in 9 of its 10 states. People voted in favour of independence because of the destabilizing conflicts that North and South Sudan had fought against each other over the years. The most prominent example of this conflict was in Darfur in 2003. The Darfur Genocide is the ongoing murder of 200,000 Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa people in the Darfur region. This genocide encapsulates the tensions between Northern and South Sudan. In 2003, when people in Darfur attempted to gain autonomy over their lives, the local inhabitants formed the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) which was then joined by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The road to independence for South Sudan, despite being peaceful, did not come without challenges. Since its independence, South Sudan faced a devastating civil war in 2013 which resulted in a humanitarian crisis. As a result of the high incidence of conflict caused by the secession, Sudan became a source of irregular migration and asylum seekers. The secession also caused many economic challenges which will be mentioned in the following section.



The Political Process to Form a Transitional Civilian Government

The National Congress Party (NCP) was the ruling party in Sudan between 1989 and 2019. On the late afternoon of 11 April 2019, a coup d'état took place in Sudan to overthrow President Omar al Bashir. He was overthrown, after popular protests demanded his departure, by the Sudanese Armed Forces. Mr Bashir was later charged with involvement in the killing of protesters. He will now also face charges of corruption after it was discovered that a major hoard of foreign currency was found at his home. Since then, Sudan has experienced a turbulent political transition. Under the name of 'Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC)', a coalition was set up between the Sudanese military and civic groups to lead a transitional government. However, people are demanding a civilian government to be set up again so as to protect the power of democracy. Therefore, in December 2022 the military and civilian actors signed a framework agreement for this form of government to develop once more. This however has resulted in further violence and new actors are involving themselves in violent activity around the capital Khartoum. Before the new framework agreement, Sudan had seen an increase in demonstrations against the transitional government. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded a peak in political protests in Sudan in 2022. This agreement stipulates a two year transition period during which the military slowly returns power to civilians, resulting in a democratic election of a new leader. Despite a recent improvement in the number of violent acts and conflicts in Sudan, tensions are still very much present – especially between paramilitary groups, such as the RSF.

Major conflicts in the region

Since the overthrow of al-Bashir, Sudan has faced different rounds of violence in a struggle for political power. The RSF and their leader Mohamed Dagalo (Meheiti) are major actors in these armed disputes. Because Sudan is separated into separate states, which are often controlled by rebel or paramilitary groups, different groups within these states have different political and economic agendas. As a result, many conflicts arose between groups in Darfur, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile. In the past year, however, violence has diminished drastically with rebel groups only accounting for approximately 10% of armed conflicts in Sudan. Previously, two major factions in Sudan accounted for 60% of political



violence. These factions were the Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and Abdul Wahid al-Nur faction of the SLM/A. However, these groups are no longer involved in the political process and therefore major violent events have decreased. Despite an initial sentiment of tumult and chaos after the removal of president al-Bashir, since the signing of the framework agreement, the restoration of democracy and a civilian government are very promising. UN agents have still estimated major death tolls and internal displacements due to remaining conflicts. The most deaths still came as a result of conflicts in 2013 which caused a whole humanitarian crises.

The humanitarian crisis

Although many were optimistic about the year 2013 after the peaceful secession of South Sudan, instead the conflict had severe consequences for a country that is ranked as one of the worst countries in the world for Human Development. The ethnic dimensions of the conflict displaced over 4 million Sudanese with over 34,000 living in overcrowded protection of civilian (POC) sites on UN bases. Furthermore, Sudan is also the epicentre of a climate change crises which has largely been ignored and which is endangering the lives of millions of people in Sudan. The decrease in rainfall and drastic increases in temperature have meant Sudan ranks in the top five most vulnerable nations to climate change according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Meteorological data is showing that the temperatures in Sudan have increased from 33 to 35 Fahrenheit. Ultimately, this has decreased agricultural output and caused major flooding from the Nile which has destroyed thousands of homes and infrastructure. With the complex balance of a climate crisis and a politically driven conflict, Sudan's humanitarian crisis reached an all-time high and the food insecurity is at an all time low. Moreover, the conditions for women are also at a low where despite some improvements in national policy and laws on gender equality.

Economic outlook

After contracting by 1.9% in 2021 on account of political instabilities and the effects of Russia's invasion on Ukraine, Sudan's GDP grew by 0.7% in 2022. The major contributors towards Sudan's economy include agriculture, mining and private consumption. Due to the crisis in Sudan currently, especially regarding the agricultural



crisis sparked by climate change, Sudan have been receiving financial aid from external



Source: Data are as of April 2023 and are from domestic authorities; figures for 2022 are estimates and figures for 2023 and 2024 are projections by the African Economic Outlook team.

countries. Between 2016 and 2020, Sudan received \$160 million in climate finance. Even though Sudan has a very strong natural capital, recent hindering of their output has meant that food insecurity reached new peaks and the country has found it difficult to transform their natural capital into financial turn over or energy sources.

Major Parties Involved

National Congress Party (NCP)

As the ruling party in Sudan between 1989 and 2019, the National Congress party originated from the National Islamic Front (NIF) and have therefore adopted an Islamist agenda. The party is now facing accusations of Human Rights violations. Until the ousting of the president al-Bashir, the party implemented policies that favoured Arab-dominated elites in Sudan.

South Sudan

As a neighbouring country of Sudan, South Sudan have been perhaps the most significant player in the Sudanese crisis. The secession of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011 was pivotal for the people of Sudan and has left remaining economic and political challenges for Sudan. The independence of South Sudan came as a direct consequence of conflict which arose between the central government and southern rebel groups.



The United States of America

Actively engaged in Sudan, the United States of America have been supporting peace efforts in the region to supposedly advocate for Human Rights and provide humanitarian assistance. The U.S. played an especially large role in the secession of South Sudan by facilitating negotiations for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

China

China's role in Sudan has been majorly economic, particularly in the oil sector. The country has faced criticism over their supposed support of the NCP government. By investing heavily in infrastructure for natural resources and specifically the extraction of oil, China essentially helped prop up the Sudanese government. The controversy arises in the human rights violations that were occurring simultaneously which China supposedly turned a blind eye to.

Norway

Norway have also played a significant role in supporting peace efforts in Sudan. They have been actively engaged in supporting Sudan financially so that the political crisis can somewhat stabilise. As a key actor in peace negotiations for the Comprehensive Peace Act and in the Darfur crisis, Sudan and Norway now maintain close relations.

Qatar

Similarly, the government of Qatar have also been a major player in attempting to resolve conflicts in Sudan. These attempts have been focused primarily on the Darfur region. The Qatari government have hosted several talks and negotiations between the Sudanese government and rebel groups such as the RSF.

United Nations

The United Nations have been supporting peace negotiations in Sudan for a long time. Established in 2005, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was tasked with overseeing the CPA, whilst the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was deployed to specifically assist and proliferate peace in the Darfur region.



African Union

The African Union has attempted similar peace promoting mechanisms as the United Nations, as mentioned above, their involvement in the UNAMID highlights their significant role as a Union towards fighting for peace.

Save the Children (Non-governmental organisation – NGO)

Save the Children is a renowned international NGO which works to improve the lives of children on a global scale. Their mission in Sudan specifically has helped to improve the quality of education and healthcare available to children in Sudan. They have additionally supplied general humanitarian assistance to Sudan to ameliorate the quality of life of their citizens.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
June 1989	The National Islamic Front (NIF) took power in Sudan which marked the start of al-Bashir's regime
February 2003	Conflict erupts in the Darfur region
January 2005	The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is signed
July 2011	South Sudan votes for independence
December 2013	Civil war breaks out in South Sudan
April 2019	President al-Bashir is violently overthrown
October 2020	Sudanese government and rebel groups make peace
August 2021	Sudan formed a transitional government

Possible Solutions

Despite the crisis in Sudan being very complex, there could be some possible solutions that could reduce the tensions in the region. Firstly, promoting the use of inclusive political dialogue between relevant parties and actors in the conflict is necessary to ensure that peaceful relations are



maintained within the state. This therefore also suggests that peaceful negotiations and treaties should be encouraged as much as possible to address the root causes of conflicts in regions of Sudan, such as Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. Furthermore, implementing economic policies to rebuild Sudan's economy in a peaceful, transparent, anti-corrupt manner could help diversify Sudan's economy. Lastly, prioritizing the continued support in the form of financial aid and humanitarian aid for Sudan is an utmost priority. If the international stage recognises the dire situation of Sudan, this assistance and protection can help improve living conditions for the people of Sudan.

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