

Sudan's Tomorrow in the Wake of Former Allies Battle for Supremacy?

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Summary

Grappling with the ongoing conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Sudan finds itself at a crucial crossroads. This conflict, and the political, economic, military and security, social, and external risks facing the country, can impact its future and that of the region it is situated in. In this state stability and scenario modelling brief, I outline the risks facing the country and explore four scenarios that could potentially develop in the country in the foreseeable future: The Sudanese Military succeeds in expanding its complete control over the country; RSF Militias assuming control over Sudan; political settlement where the SAF and RSF agree on power sharing and ending the conflict, and finally, chaos and civil war, in which the ongoing conflict, and underlying risks, lead to a full-state collapse and endless warfare. It is crucial to examine these risks and scenarios because each of them holds significant consequences for the stability and survival of the Sudanese state, its political and security landscape, as well as the economic and social fabric of the country, more broadly the region and the engagement of global actors.

Background

Sudan's ongoing crisis is a result of an interplay of colonial, historical, ethnic, political, and socio-economic factors. To gain a deeper understanding of the current situation, it is imperative to dissect these elements and explore the dynamics at play.

Sudan's political instability can be traced back to its colonial past when foreign powers governed the country with little consideration for its ethnic and religious diversity. The nation is home to more than five hundred ethnic groups. This mosaic of ethnic diversity and their identities are often intertwined with linguistic, cultural, and regional factors. Over the course of Sudan's history, this ethnic composition of the country has played a central role in shaping the nation's socio-political dynamics, sometimes contributing to ethnic marginalisation, violent conflicts, and civil wars and more than 16 military coups. Further, the nation has grappled with periods of short-lived democratic governance, prolonged periods of dictatorship, and several lengthy civil wars, spanning from 1955 to 1972, 1983 to 2005, and 2023. Perhaps that is why, Sudan since its independence in the 1956 has lacked a cohesive and inclusive national project for effective nation-building.

The enduring impact of these issues and factors combined led to widespread nepotism, corruption, and the concentration of power within the hands of few in the country. Over several decades, military dictatorships under leaders like Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiry and Omar Hassan al-Bashir have contributed to shaping Sudan's political landscape. However, the removal of Omar al-Bashir from power

in 2019 marked a turning point in the country's recent history. Mass protests, driven by a younger generation of activists and civil society groups, erupted in response to soaring bread prices but quickly evolved into a demand for democratic reforms and civilian rule. The military's role in al-Bashir's ouster was significant, leading to the formation of the Transitional Military Council (TMC). Despite this, ethnic and regional divisions continued to influence the country's politics, even during the transitional period. Underlying grievances ran deep, the reconciliation became challenging, and transition to a more democratic system proved elusive.

The power-sharing agreement of August 2019 brought together the civilian-led protest movements and the military created a delicate balance in the formation of the transitional government under Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's leadership. However, the need to navigate this web of disparate political groups, interests and ideologies has added layer of complexity to the country's possibilities of transitioning into democracy.

Nation's landscape of rebel groups, particularly these active in regions like Darfur and South Kordofan that sustain diverse goals ranging from seeking greater autonomy to demanding increased political representation and an end to marginalization continued to pose significant challenges. Nevertheless, during the early phase of transition, Sudan's crisis extended beyond its borders, with neighbouring and regional countries like Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE pursuing their own interests within Sudan's political sphere

which has often exacerbated internal tensions and complicated efforts to reach peaceful solutions.

On the global stage, entities such as the United Nations, African Union, European Union, the US and the wider Western nations have played roles in pressuring the Sudanese government to undertake political reforms and seek peaceful resolutions to its internal conflicts. However, the international community's influence is constrained by the complex and volatile nature of country's transition.

Yet the political landscape of Sudan underwent a significant transformation in the wake of the coup on the October 21, 2021. General al-Burhan's actions, which involved the dismissal of civilian representatives within the Transitional Sovereignty Council and their replacement with individuals closely tied to the former regime of Omar al-Bashir, served as a watershed moment in the redistribution of power among local actors but also indirectly fuelling the current conflict. This led to the dissolution of the cabinet and the removal of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, resulting in a leadership vacuum at the helm of the nation's executive branch. Remarkably, as of January 2022, Sudan has been functioning without a formally appointed Prime Minister.

Dynamics among these key actors, coupled with ever-evolving political and security developments, have given rise to a distinct character of suspicion and distrust among the key actors within the country's transitional government. Against this backdrop, a series of disagreements centring primarily on critical transitional matters - most

notably the reform of the security sector and the integration of the RSF into the national army-intensified blame-shifting, and counteraccusations between General Burhan and General Hemedti. Despite the several rounds of negotiations and agreements aimed at resolving these pivotal issues, implementation of agreed resolutions has proven elusive. Consequently, the simmering tensions between the military and the RSF escalated into a full-blown conflict in April 2023. The conflict between the two is linked to these issues and the vested interests each of these actors and their allies have in safeguarding their own power positions.

In this complex landscape the RSF, a paramilitary group with a contentious human rights abuse record, stands as a significant destabilizing factor. Originating from the infamous Janjaweed militias during the Darfur crisis (2003-2008), RSF transformed into its present form in 2013, initially aiming to counter the activities of rebels in Darfur and to secure president Omar al-Bashir's regime against potential military coups. Though functioning as an infantry for the Sudanese armed forces until the recent conflict, RSF was never fully integrated into the country's army. This intentional arrangement allowed RSF, under the leadership of general Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti), to expand its presence and strength itself across the nation, swelling up to 120,000 well-trained, predominantly young members.

The military coup orchestrated by General Burhan and Hemeti in October 2021, to consolidate their collective grip over power resulted in rifts within the ruling allies. Further, despite promises, the coup failed to alleviate

public discontent arising from lack of democratic representation, and continued military rule. The absence of meaningful implementation of many of the aforementioned reforms led to different groups to view the new leadership as biased. Finally, the pre-existing economic challenges, including hyperinflation and currency shortages, worsened post-coup reaching 400%. The transitional government's inability to address these issues intensified public grievances as living conditions further deteriorated. Yet, it's important to recognize that the RSF is not the sole entity culpable for Sudan's current predicament. The military's entanglement in politics and its tenacious hold on power and economic enterprises, coupled with the lack of accountability for its leaders' actions, have collectively fuelled the cycle of instability and violence in the country.

In tandem with this, Sudan has and continue to grapple with over several decades of US economic sanctions and a select few elites consolidating control over its resources, turning the country's governance into a kleptocracy. Furthermore, the compounding factor, deep divisions in the society, have escalated. The nation's marginalized groups demand for economic development as country's growth continue to be disproportionately centered in the heartland, leaving the periphery overlooked. Successive regimes including the transitional government have all failed to manage this divide effectively, often resorting to divisive tactics that have further deepened and widened and deepened societal divisions and incited conflicts.

Following the eruption of conflict in the country in April 2023, the military is strategically positioning itself to regain

complete territorial control, enhance its public support and diplomatic reach vis-à-vis the RSF, and secure a decisive victory. However, the prospect of near-term stability for the country remains elusive. In the light of this, it is essential to assess the current risks facing the country stability. These encompass political, military and security, economic, social, and external risks, collectively shaping the nation's uncertain future and is important to explore for the following reasons.

First and foremost, a comprehensive understanding of potential risks and prospective scenarios becomes instrumental in the endeavour to fortify or reinstate domestic stability. Secondly, this analysis lends itself to a proactive approach in addressing conflicts, serving as a cornerstone for the enhancement of conflict resolution strategies by not only bolstering the country's prospects for sustained path toward effective conflict mitigation but also providing a framework for crisis preparedness and response. Moreover, the country's political trajectory significantly influences the regional stability and its international relationships. As such, identifying risks and possible scenario becomes an invaluable tool for informing decisions and can aid the formulation of political, security, and socioeconomic strategies that can aid stability and democratic evolution in the country.

In the following paragraphs the analysis turns to possible risk: political, military and security, economic, social, and external risks that the country faces. **Risk**, in this context, refers to the likelihood or possibility of unfavourable developments or outcomes occurring due to the complex interplay of different factors that collectively

contribute to the overarching risk of a prolonged civil war. The presence of deep-seated political discontent, military involvement in governance, insecurity, economic instability, social grievances, and external influences can all heighten the risk of protracted violent and protracted conflict and civil war. The prolonged civil wars that Sudan has experienced in the past serves as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of these risks going unchecked. Moreover, these risks can also contribute to the emergence of new rounds of conflicts within the country, as different regions and groups vie for their interests in the midst of the current complex conflict and volatile situation prevailing in the country.

In essence, the amalgamation of these risks creates an environment where the potential for sustained violence and conflict remains a significant concern, with implications not only for Sudan's internal stability but also for the regional and international actors seeking to promote peace and security in the region. Therefore, understanding and preparing for these risks is important as they have far-reaching implications for the stability and future of Sudan and beyond.

Political Risk

Throughout its post-independence history, Sudan's political terrain has remained entrenched in the shadows of authoritarianism. Decades of dictatorial rule and kleptocratic practices have left an indelible mark on the country's governance, sowing the seeds of rebellion, civil strife, and widespread public discontent creating the current political risk the country faces. Against this backdrop, Transitional Government (TG) in Sudan, despite its

composition of a diverse range of ideologically opposing groups, represents the most inclusive state structure in the country since the overthrow of Al-Bashir's regime. This transition, following the ousting of Al-Bashir, marked a significant opportunity for genuine grassroots-supported democratic change, challenging decades of autocratic rule. The evolving dynamics of the country's political landscape underscores the chaotic and costly journey the country has to endure toward achieving long lasting stability and effective governance.

While the transitional government in Sudan is internationally recognized as the legitimate government, it is just one of several groups competing for control in the country. Yet, it faces the formidable challenge of navigating a complex path towards democracy, all the while contending with the delicate power dynamics between actors that characterize this transitional phase.

However, ongoing power struggles between the SAF and the RSF, among other actors, continue to hinder the prospects of nation's transition to a democratic state. The military, a dominant force in Sudan's political landscape, wields substantial influence within the power-sharing arrangements alongside civilian political parties. The transitional government's response to civil society and political opposition has been marked by inconsistency, swinging between repressive measures and limited concessions. Criticism has been directed at the government due to its sluggish progress in implementing crucial political, security, social, and economic reforms, thereby hindering the path to credible elections. The military's role in the transitional government also introduces an

additional layer of complexity within the prevailing web of challenges. In fact, the military has often deflected accountability for the government's shortcomings, straining its relationship with the citizenry and impeding collective endeavours for stability and advancement. The economic influence wielded by both the military and RSF furthers country's political crises, a dire situation compounded by the historical prevalence of authoritarian rule and armed conflict. However, a formidable obstacle to progress lies in the enduring presence of remnants from the former regime, deeply embedded within the state apparatus. Over a span of three decades, these remnants have fiercely clung to their control over the nation's political rule, fostering an environment of tension and uncertainty that envelops the transitional government's efforts.

Addressing the underlying factors fuelling this chronic instability necessitates a united commitment to a shared vision of a democratic Sudan. Despite this, such a prospect remains distant on the horizon, at least for the foreseeable future. The country continues to face unresolved conflicts, political uncertainties, and disputes over power-sharing. The delay in establishing a transitional parliament, coupled with simmering factional tensions, amplifies the risks of political polarisation, rampant insecurity, social unrest and destabilization. Adding to these is the ongoing conflict between the SAF and the RSF.

It's important to note that the SAF still lacks the infantry capacity to establish complete territorial control, as demonstrated by the ongoing conflict. Nevertheless, efforts such as recruitment drives, mobilization initiatives, and strategic alliances are

gradually enhancing SAF's infantry capabilities, domestic appeal, and credibility. The recruitment of thousands of new troops, including the former ruling National Congress Party and independent figures, have consolidated SAF's position. These actors frame the conflict as a struggle to preserve the Sudanese state, with RSF portrayed as a rebellion threatening its very existence.

Since the conflict erupted in April, most civilian political actors, like FFC-CC and the Resistance Committees, have maintained a neutral stance for political reasons, refraining from aligning with either SAF or RSF. Nevertheless, pro-military elements have accused FFC-CC of siding with RSF, even without explicit declarations. Additionally, leaders from several Darfur Arab tribes have pledged allegiance to RSF, but their support lacks the political influence to significantly shift the conflict in favour of RSF, especially in comparison to the military's backing. Importantly, the military has preserved its unity throughout the conflict.

Nonetheless, significant political challenges persist. The military and its supporters' rejection of mediation efforts involving certain actors, and the characterization of RSF as an externally supported mercenary force, undermine the potential for a political resolution to the conflict. In Sudan's dynamic landscape, where alliances can rapidly change, RSF is likely to face defeats and public condemnation. Its image and prospects for any agreement in a reconciliation process are further challenged by the emergence of new groups allied to the military seeking to dismantle it.

This conflict not only inflicts human suffering but also erodes social cohesion, whilst reverberating throughout the economy. As the country navigates this treacherous terrain, it must confront the myriad risks and uncertainties that threaten to derail its very survival and existence.

Military and Security Risk

Sudan's security risks are multifaceted, driven by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, Sudan has a long history of unresolved conflicts, including armed conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. Besides, the ongoing conflict between SAF and RSF, these and its other conflicts have put millions of weapons being in hands of civilians, rebel groups as well as tribes in different parts of the country.

The transitional government has made limited progress in resolving these conflicts through peace negotiations and the establishment of joint security mechanisms. Peaceful negotiations have so far only led to meaningless 'paper peace' deals that focus on power and wealth sharing without any contribution to the stability of the country, and instead perpetuating conflict and violence. This approach is not new to Sudan. It's a continuation of al-Bashir's top-down peace deals that would buy the loyalty of the leaders of the rebel groups and reward them with nominal posts in the central government, as well as economic benefits for self-enrichment, without addressing the root causes of conflict. The Juba Peace agreement that was signed in 2020 is a case in point, as it have not brought any peace to the people of Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile. On the contrary, these areas have witnessed an

increased violence after the supposed peace agreement.

However, the RSF and its allies continue to pose the most significant security risk to Sudan. It remains unclear what approach General Burhan and SAF will pursue in their attempts to address the RSF threat. While SAF's primary political and military focus is on defeating the RSF rather than pursuing negotiations, it is evident that military might alone is insufficient to ensure Sudan's long-term stability. Historical precedent indicates that military might alone has rarely determined the definitive outcome of conflicts within the country.

Even when considering the combined military strength of the RSF and its internal and external allies, it's victory in the current conflict with the military and its supporters is highly unlikely. A significant portion of the Sudanese public and a majority of the military leadership, including military intelligence and police forces, have rallied behind General Burhan. Concurrently, remnants of the al-Bashir regime have returned to occupy crucial leadership positions, potentially influencing the military's fight against the RSF. Meanwhile, factions aligned with the RSF possess limited political influence and troop contributions against the military. In contrast, the military continues to bolster its infantry forces to match the RSF's numbers, albeit often with less experienced personnel. Further, the SAF maintains superiority in terms of air force, artillery, military hardware, and tactical capabilities, areas in which the RSF lacks strength. The SAF has also succeeded in disrupting major criminal networks facilitating RSF's revenue generation and targeting key sources of RSF income, such as gold mines. Furthermore,

external supporters of the RSF are increasingly reluctant to sustain their backing due to mounting concerns. Recent sanctions imposed by the U.S. administration on the RSF, citing grave human rights abuses and crimes against humanity, is likely to be a deterring factor for potential backers. Similarly, regional actors are hesitant to align with the RSF openly and meaningfully, not only due to the risk posed by the U.S. sanctions of the group but also because of the potential negative security implications of Sudan's prolonged conflict for the entire region's fragile security and even the continent.

It is essential to recognize that the RSF and their allies lack a unified leadership structure. Instead, they are united primarily by their shared enmity toward the military. Nevertheless, they comprehend that the outbreak of conflict jeopardizes a crucial source of their popularity and legitimizes the narratives propagated by the military and its allies against them. The RSF's history, and actions, which encompass mass killings in Darfur, assassinations, involvement in atrocities in the Yemeni civil war, and their unauthorized control over gold mines, have garnered opposition from the majority of the Sudanese population.

In addition to failed peace deals and conflicts, Sudan faces a range of security threats, including terrorism, organized crime, and cross-border smuggling. The country's porous borders and lack of effective security institutions make it vulnerable to threats, which could lead to further erosion of security, and could result in the breakdown of order. Externally, Sudan's strategic location also makes it a potential target for external security threats, such as attacks by extremist groups or other actors.

Addressing these security risks will require a comprehensive approach, including establishment of effective security institutions, the promotion of good governance and rule of law, and the resolution of internal conflicts.

Economic Risk

Economic risk in Sudan exerts a profound influence on other critical risks, particularly the political risk, and has the potential to escalate conflict and perpetuate instability. However, Sudan's economic challenges have endured over decades, marked by a complex interplay of mismanagement, corruption, conflict, and prolonged US sanctions. The military has inextricably embedded itself in the economic life of the country, and both SAF and RSF have a network of cartels who benefit from their control over various sectors of the country's economy. All these are affecting every sector of the country's economy. In addition to this, surges in inflation, scarcities of foreign currency, escalating indebtedness, and a convergence of political and military tensions have collectively precipitated an unparalleled economic upheaval in the country. For instance, because of that, inflation has transcended all previous thresholds in the country's economic history. With rates exceeding an astounding 400% in 2021, its repercussions are acutely experienced by ordinary Sudanese citizens. Essential goods have become prohibitively expensive, leading households into a grim struggle for survival. This soaring inflation is deeply interwoven into Sudan's fiscal fabric, tracing its origins back to decades of governmental extravagance, pervasive corruption, and administrative mismanagement. An illustrative example is the removal of fuel subsidies in 2018, causing a ripple

effect across transportation and commodities, and catapulting fuel prices skyward. Simultaneously, the scarcity of foreign currency continue to obstructing the import of essential goods. Critical commodities such as food, fuel, and life-saving medicines are held hostage by elusive foreign exchange reserves. A complex nexus of sanctions, deficits in oil revenue post-South Sudan's secession, and the hesitancy of global financial institutions converge have created a perfect storm that impedes Sudan's access to crucial foreign currency. However, the symbiotic relationship between economic and political factors means that economic instability can fuel political tensions, further intensifying the conflict. Consequently, economic risk amplifies political discontent, potentially triggering civil unrest or protests against the government. Moreover, it can impact the warring actor's ability to provide public services and address the demands of marginalized regions, contributing to regional conflicts. In this fragile context, the economic risk in Sudan is not isolated but intricately linked to political risk, and both factors can collectively increase the likelihood of conflict, exacerbating the ongoing one, or even a new round of war.

Social Risk

The ongoing conflict in Sudan stands as the foremost social risk confronting the nation. It impacts country's social fabric and infrastructure, and engenders a widespread displacement, disruption of economic activities—while contributing to the scarcity and inaccessibility of essential goods and services like healthcare and education as well. Further, it is eroding the social networks and social support systems and is fueling

an unprecedented social polarization along tribal lines.

Furthermore, the conflict's ramifications extend to gender relations and women's rights, bearing a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Reports of escalating instances of gender-based violence and sexual violence underscore the gravity of the situation. Moreover, the conflict also is eroding trust in Sudan state institutions and the rule of law, raising possibility of further instability in the country.

Addressing social risk necessitates conflict resolution, economic stabilization, access to education and healthcare, safeguarding human rights, and the promotion of gender equality. In that, a holistic approach, engaging both national and international stakeholders, is imperative to mitigate these risks.

External Risk

Sudan faces a complex web of external risks due to its intricate geopolitical position and ongoing regional conflicts. Situated amidst volatile neighbours and is attracting the attention of neighbouring countries, regional and global powers that are believed to be pursuing their geopolitical interest in the Horn of Africa in general and in Sudan in particular.

Of particular concern are Sudan's ties to global powers, notably Russia and China. Russia's historical involvement in Sudan's conflicts and General Dagalo's association with the Russian Wagner mercenary group raise questions about Russia's influence in Sudan. Russia is believed siding with RSF. On the other hand, China's substantial investments in Sudan's oil and infrastructure sectors

have granted economic and diplomatic influence but come with criticism due to it's role in the Darfur conflict. The position of China on the going conflict is not clear. It is because of Chinese foreign policy in the region that is pronounced to work with any party that promote its national interest. Sudan's interactions with Russia and China offer both opportunities and risks. The move from USA and EU to counterbalance the influence of China and Russia can either escalate the crisis or could help the country to successful transition to democracy.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) presents a pressing external threat to Sudan as it supports the RSF and intervenes in country's internal affairs. The UAE's interests include countering the Muslim Brotherhood and securing strategic ports in Sudan and the Horn of Africa. This support for RSF aligns with the UAE's regional domination ambitions, potentially destabilizing the country further.

Saudi Arabia is believed to be actively supporting SAF and to have provided substantial diplomatic and military support. The Saudi interest in Sudan and in the region is attributed to countering terrorism and concerns of security of the Red Sea littoral which partially is occupied by Sudan. So, Saudi Arabia considers the country as a vital to its national security and food security interest, which is to use Sudan as its breadbasket through huge agricultural investment.

The dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam adds to regional tensions, with Egypt's concerns about reduced water supply leading to its alignment with Sudan's military. Egypt's involvement underscores its regional

interests in Sudan's political landscape and is believed to be behind the 2019 overthrow of al-Bashir regime from power. Since then Egypt has been seen as a strong ally of General Burhan. Nevertheless, Ethiopia's internal turmoil limits its ability to extend its influence beyond mediation efforts providing a temporary respite for Sudan from additional external risks. However, it should be noted that SAF alleged Ethiopia and Kenya to have aligned with RSF citing both Kenya and Ethiopia's good relations with General Dagalo before the outbreak of the ongoing conflict.

Navigating these external complexities requires Sudan to cultivate robust relationships with its neighbours and the wider international community while ensuring partnerships with Russia, China, and other key actors align with its stability, democratic transition, and economic aspirations. Sudan's response to these challenges will shape its path forward, determining its ability to overcome political and governance issues and secure a stable and democratic future.

Risk factors	September 2023
Political risk	Significant
Security risk	Critical
Economic risk	Very high
External risk	High
Social risk	Very high
Total country risk	Very high

In the flowing section four different scenarios in the context of Sudan's current situation is explored. These scenarios offer a spectrum of possible futures for Sudan, ranging from optimistic to pessimistic and are meant to guide policy-makers and stakeholders in assessing plausible trajectories of the current

conflict to make informed decisions, and work towards the most desirable outcome – a peaceful and stable Sudan.

Scenario One: SAF establishes control over the country

Probability	Very High
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This scenario envisions the defeat of RSF and consolidation of power in the hands of the Sudanese military. It is facilitated by Sudan's transitional government's internal stability and enduring popular support for the military but also the military's unity, strategic focus and outreach to regional and international actors. Presently, there's a notable impetus for the military to confront and neutralize the RSF. This includes the Sudanese populace growing weariness of the RSF's history and use of violence. This sentiment has fuelled the military's recent rallying of citizens, successfully enlisting them in the battle against the RSF. Different regions of Sudan have recruited a new generation of Sudanese to join the military's ranks which has bolstered the military's campaign to dismantle the RSF without compromise, all the while promising to cultivate a more inclusive and democratic post-RSF government. The RSF's actions in the limited areas under its control have eroded their favourability, providing the military with a burgeoning reservoir of goodwill from the majority of Sudanese. Even the military's assertion that the nation is under threat from mercenary infiltration and foreign conspiracies could potentially further draw Sudanese, civilian parties and opposition groups towards supporting the military's plans.

In addition to this, the RSF's recent setbacks may accelerate their decline,

enhancing the likelihood of their defeat. The international community and Sudan's neighbouring nations may lean towards power-sharing mediation, a proposition unlikely to succeed given the intransigence of the conflict. All parties involved in the conflict will continue trying to strengthen their power position and military capabilities. The Army, in particular, seeks to attract low-level RSF members and other opposition groups to its fold. Simultaneously, the Sudanese government aims to secure the support of influential political factions that feel marginalized by prior reconciliation efforts or that nurse lingering grievances. Meanwhile, the RSF, will continue to draw support from its allies, especially those in Libya, Chad and central republic as well as the UAE and Wagner. However, as none of these can provide them sufficient fighting forces, the influence of such support on the ground is likely limited in the face mounting public anger and dislike of the RSF.

Despite challenges SAF leadership and the government stands united in overcoming the RSF. Their unity is another factor that presents a strong foundation for defeating the RSF in the near future. In this evolving landscape, Sudan's future hinges on the outcome of the military's conflict against the RSF.

In the long run the SAF will emerge as victories force because of these proceeding factors and the geopolitical rivalry in the region that favours its position. Thus, the likelihood of the military's defeat of RSF is assessed as high despite the risk factors at play. However, whether military's defeat of RSF will translate into lasting stability and governance transformation will remain to be seen, as internal dynamics

and external influences will have a role in shaping country's trajectory for stability.

In this scenario several critical policy implications and consequences for international actors arise. This includes, engagement and cooperation with the military leadership would be necessary to establish a more inclusive transitional government that can bridge the gaps between the military and various Sudanese factions. Security sector reform would become a priority, ensuring civilian oversight and human rights adherence within the military. Humanitarian organizations and donor countries would continue their efforts to aid Sudanese population and to support the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. However, consequences for International Actors would include Sudan's neighboring countries might face challenges like refugee flows and cross-border violence, necessitating certain efforts by international actors. Diplomatic engagement would intensify, with organizations like IGAD, AU, and the United Nations facilitating negotiations among Sudanese stakeholders. Nevertheless, potential implications related to sanctions, accountability mechanisms, democratisation, and challenges for humanitarian organizations due to insecurity can emerge, which could necessitate deploying UN Assistant mission in the country. In conclusion, the international community's role will be pivotal in shaping Sudan's path toward a peaceful and inclusive transition to democracy.

Risk factors	Scenario one
Political risk	Moderate

Security risk	Moderate
Economic risk	High
External risk	Low
Social risk	Moderate
Total country risk	Moderate

Scenario Two: RSF assumes control over the country

Probability	low
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Under this scenario RSF consolidation of power is aided by its significant forces of more than 120,000 troops in Sudan, control over pivotal economic sources including gold mines and illicit trafficking, as well as its established parallel role to the state entity. Thus, there remains a conceivable scenario where the RSF could seize control of Sudan, displacing both the transitional government and SAF. The RSF's ideological resistance to negotiation with SAF has sparked ongoing conflicts, driven by the aim of toppling the government and reshaping the SAF, if not entirely replacing its leadership. The RSF, under Hemedi's leadership, perceives itself as a champion of justice and democratic progress, implying an insistence on retaining significant power and representation.

Although the military has persevered despite a shortage of infantry forces—since RSF previously served this role. Notably, much of the SAF's infantry requirements were met by the RSF, which underlines the SAF's vulnerability due to insufficient infantry troops. This and —the SAF leadership's focus over recent decades on wealth accumulation has compromised its conventional warfare capabilities, as demonstrated by its ongoing struggle against the RSF. This and the shortage of infantry forces of SAF might offer the RSF an opening

to expand its territorial influence, potentially leading to the overthrow of the transitional government and defeating the military. In this context, the RSF might attempt to sway the Sudanese population against the transitional government and the SAF, portraying them as a dictatorial regime.

Nevertheless, challenges loom for the RSF. Leadership issues beyond Hemedi's presence, coupled with a shortage of anti-aircraft missiles, and the escalating recruitment of SAF infantry, could hinder the RSF's ambitions to topple the transitional government and overpower the military. Meanwhile, the alignment of former present Omar al-Bashir's factions with the SAF, along with certain political figures, ethnic leaders, and the opposition casts doubt on the RSF's appeal. While the RSF and other militias may sustain themselves independently, seizing control of the nation could prove elusive.

A potential catalyst that could favor the RSF is the risk of military leadership fragmentation and external intervention from neighboring nations or international actors with vested interests. Consequently, the RSF might continue seeking limited clashes with SAF forces, leveraging these skirmishes to emphasize their political and security relevance—especially in parts of Khartoum, Kordofan, and Darfur that remains contested.

Overall, the likelihood of the RSF defeat to the SAF is assessed as low especially as direct intervention from either regional or international actors in support of RSF is not in horizon and the SAF leadership continue to focus strategically in a unified manner.

However, in a scenario where RSF militias take control of Sudan, significant policy implications and consequences emerge for international actors. The dilemma of engaging with a government led by the RSF, given their history of violence and rights abuses, presents a moral and ethical challenge. Diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts among the RSF, opposition groups, and the military become paramount, potentially requiring international mediation. Humanitarian organizations must continue their aid efforts, but the RSF's control may impede access. Neighboring countries may grapple cross-border violence, necessitating regional diplomacy and conflict prevention. Consequently, international actors will face engagement dilemma, and diplomacy becomes a crucial tool in facilitating negotiations between the RSF and other Sudanese stakeholders. Human rights organizations may push for accountability regarding RSF abuses during their ascent to power. Aid organizations will need to navigate access challenges in an environment where key resources are controlled by the RSF. Neighbouring countries will engage in regional diplomacy to influence Sudan's situation and address potential stability concerns.

Risk factors	Scenario two
Political risk	High
Security risk	Critical
Economic risk	Very high
External risk	Very High
Social risk	Very High
Total country risk	Very High

Scenario Three: Political Settlement

Probability	Significant
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Under this scenario, Sudan's conflict takes a significant turn as a potential resolution emerges through a political settlement where the SAF and the RSF agree to end hostilities, integrate their forces, and share power with civilian political forces and leaders.

This scenario is assessed significant as several pivotal factors contribute to its possible emergence: With the talks in Jeddah initiated by the United States and Saudi Arabia garnering backing from various regional and international stakeholders, including Egypt, IGAD, Ethiopia, Kenya, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN), which lends legitimacy and momentum to a possible political settlement scenario. Further, the fatigue and weariness of the Sudanese people over the continuation of the conflict, combined with historical precedent of conflicts resolution strengthens this scenario. Sudan's past conflicts have consistently found closure through political settlements, underscoring the viability of this approach. However, unlike previous conflicts, the international consensus established in this scenario creates a broader framework for success. And in that, this scenario presents Sudan with an opportunity to transition from turmoil to cooperation, unity, and shared responsibility. By choosing a political settlement and power-sharing agreement, SAF and RSF not only seek to resolve the immediate conflict but also lay the foundation for a more harmonious and progressive future for the country.

However, this scenario presents certain policy implication for international actors as they must actively support and facilitate the negotiations in Jeddah to ensure the success of the political

settlement. Such efforts should initially focus on building trust among conflict parties, ceasefire, and overseeing the implementation of the settlement agreement but also providing financial support needed in that regard. Successful mediation in Sudan has the consequence enhancing the credibility of international diplomacy and conflict resolution efforts and may contribute to regional security and stability. International actors will need to remain engaged in Sudan's post-conflict phase to ensure the consolidation of peace and prevent relapse into violence.

Risk factors	Scenario three
Political risk	Low
Security risk	Low
Economic risk	Moderate
External risk	Low
Social risk	Low
Total country risk	Low

Scenario Four: chaos and a full-blown civil war

Probability	low
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Under this scenario both SAF and RSF fail to defeat each other, become internally fragmented, external actors become embroiled into the conflict and final transitional government collapses, and full-blown civil war emerges. However, despite the ensuing conflict, certain factors mitigate against this dire outcome. Prevailing political norms and the cultural practices of political elites have historically channelled tribal identities but also conflicts toward sporadic localised conflicts rather than widespread, engulfing turmoil. Sudan's history shows instances of ethnic and

regional-based rebellions that never led to state collapse. Moreover, major ethnic groups in Sudan and urban populations tacitly recognize the unsustainable nature of the current situation and reject prolonged conflict or possible anarchy. This relative consensus against anarchy is amplified by Sudan's larger majority, which acts as a buffer against complete disintegration. Amidst the ongoing conflict and the various social and political grievances echoing through the country, these multiple factors emerge as deterrents to this scenario occurrence. Further the trajectory of the conflict mitigates against this outcome.

Additionally, the substantial emigration driven by decades of conflict has created a sizeable Sudanese diaspora, exceeding millions of people diaspora, which is a significant contributor to the country's economy, and advocates for nationwide solutions and democratic governance instead of parochial ethnic and political fragmentation approaches. Their influence aids in local reconciliations in their respective regions, national narrative of unity, and further discouraging widescale civil war. In fact, many of the Sudanese diaspora has returned for this reason, and to fill the institutions and the public sector undermined by the ongoing conflict.

In this scenario, international actors face significant challenges and responsibilities that will demand an immediate mobilization of resources for emergency assistance, despite potential difficulties in accessing affected populations that could emerge. Diplomatic mediation becomes crucial, with international and regional actors and organizations will strive to facilitate dialogue and the deploying peacekeeping missions to protect civilians and stabilize conflict

zones.

Consequences for international actors include the potential regional destabilization resulting from Sudan's internal conflict and a refugee crisis could emerge. The long-term consequences of civil war would necessitate international involvement in post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts to rebuild Sudan's institutions and infrastructure, a challenging but essential task.

the conflict in the country. The multiple peace-making efforts by powers, and neighbors that sustain competing interests cannot bring sustainable peace in Sudan. The coming months and year will be critical for the country's future, and the choices made by the transitional government and actors fighting in the country, but also regional and international actors and stakeholders will have significant implications for the country's future and that of the broader Horn of Africa, a region already grappling with insecurity and conflicts.

Risk factors	Scenario four
Political risk	Critical
Security risk	Critical
Economic risk	Very high
External risk	Critical
Social risk	Very high
Total country risk	Critical

Conclusion

The future of Sudan remains uncertain, with political, military and security, economic, society, and external challenges presenting risks to the country's future. The four scenarios presented here provide a useful framework for understanding the different risks and potential outcomes, their policy implications, and consequences. The international community can play an important role in promoting political settlement, reconciliation, and democratic governance and should intensify its conflict resolution effort spearheaded by IGAD and UN. In fact, IGAD can create a united front of neighboring countries with a common position that enhances ending