

Guest Editor's Note

Reading and Rethinking the Sudan Crisis

The latest issue aims to conceptualise the multifaceted crisis that Sudan has been embroiled in since 2023, seeking to provide a more comprehensive analysis than a mere chronicle of the present conflict. The study explores the continuity of the state, debates on sovereignty, the production of legitimacy by armed actors, the political economy of humanitarian disasters, and the intersection of regional competition with conflict dynamics. The primary concern of the guest editor in preparing this issue was that addressing the Sudanese crisis solely under the heading of a civil war would be incomplete. This crisis must be regarded as a crisis of the institutional state, a crisis of the social contract, a regional security crisis, and an increasingly evident crisis of international intervention and proxy rule.

A seminal threshold of the Sudanese conflict is the dissolution of the state's legitimate security apparatus and the erosion of public authority. At this juncture, the nature of the armed competition that is emerging on the ground is of critical importance. The crisis, while eroding the capacity of the institutional state, simultaneously encourages armed actors to produce *de facto* spheres of sovereignty. In this process, RSF's transformation of cities into conflict zones, its practices aimed at establishing public order by force of arms, and its approach of disrupting institutional functioning in areas of control have deepened a

picture that directly targets the continuity of the state. Therefore, the conflict can be understood as indicative of a broader transformation, encompassing the erosion of state capacity, the collapse of public services, the commodification of security, and the institutionalisation of a war economy.

The second key point of the current issue is that the humanitarian catastrophe is not a secondary consequence, but a central component of the crisis. The displacement of millions, the deterioration of food security, the collapse of the health system, and the disruption of educational continuity have been shown to increase the social cost and make post-conflict state-building more challenging (UNHCR, 2022). As the humanitarian crisis intensifies, the capacity of local solidarity networks is gradually diminishing. This has resulted in the emergence of new vulnerabilities with regard to both social resilience and political legitimacy. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of the situation in Sudan can be achieved by considering the humanitarian crisis in conjunction with broader processes such as the management of the war, the shrinking of civilian space, and the militarization of the fragile economy.

The third line of reference pertains to the regional and international context of the crisis. It is evident that Sudan is situated at a crossroads of intense regional competition. This is due to a number of factors, including its geographical location,

proximity to the Red Sea basin, cross-border trade networks, and resource-economic balance. This underscores the significance of external incentives in prolonging the conflict and the channels that fuel the conflict economy. This issue focuses on studies that move beyond mere speculation on the nature and scale of external support. Instead, it offers a more analytical perspective through mechanisms such as arms flows, financial networks, logistical routes, diplomatic legitimization strategies, and information operations/disinformation. The objective of this study is to transcend the binary question of the existence of external intervention and to instead demonstrate which instruments of intervention engender the crisis.

The fourth line of reference pertains to deliberations on peace and political transition. The Sudanese example serves to underscore the notion that negotiation processes are not confined to the mere act of convening at the negotiating table. In circumstances where armed actors hold politics hostage, security is fragmented, and de facto areas of sovereignty are established, calls for ceasefires can often result in the freezing of conflict; however, they do not ensure a resolution. The present issue thus seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on the question of whether security or politics should be prioritised, not as a rigid dichotomy but as a comprehensive discussion encompassing sub-topics such as institutional reconstruction, disarmament/integration models, transitional justice, the protection of civil space, and the reproduction of local legitimacy. The establishment of peace is not only achievable through the cessation of conflict, but also through the restoration of the state, society, and economy. It is posited that this issue makes a dual contribution to the reader. Firstly, it proposes an analytical framework that does not reduce the Sudanese crisis to a single cause, but rather examines internal dynamics, the strategies of armed actors, societal vulnerabilities, and external interactions together.

Secondly, it poses the question of “what should be done?” for policymakers and actors working in the field, eschewing simplistic prescriptions. This includes the following measures: securing humanitarian access, strengthening civil protection mechanisms, cutting off networks that fuel the conflict economy, supporting local capacity, and considering the institutional foundations of post-conflict reconstruction in advance.

It is both a pleasure and a great honor for us that the foreword of this issue, which focuses on Sudan–Türkiye relations, was written by H.E. Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan. Mr. Chairman approaches the crisis not merely as a confrontation between rival armed groups, but as a foundational challenge to state sovereignty, political legitimacy, and national unity. The foreword demonstrates how the erosion of state authority, external interference, and the proliferation of armed actors have intensified insecurity, humanitarian collapse, and social fragmentation. It argues that sustainable peace requires the restoration of legitimate state authority and the dismantling of parallel centres of armed power as a prerequisite for any meaningful political process. In addition, the foreword draws attention to the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe and highlights the role of humanitarian diplomacy and social resilience in post-conflict recovery. Taken together, the analysis underscores that Sudan’s reconstruction and stabilisation depend on sovereignty-centred solutions, inclusive national dialogue, and strategic partnerships—particularly with Türkiye—grounded in respect for territorial integrity and regional stability.

Tirab Abbkar Tirab’s study addresses the border disputes between Sudan and South Sudan by tracing their historical roots, identifying key contested areas, and assessing the broader security implications of these tensions. It situates the dispute within national, regional,

and international contexts, while also evaluating prospects for future relations between the two states. The analysis further considers the potential role of Türkiye as a mediator in supporting conflict resolution and regional stability.

Waleed Mohamed's contribution examines the war that began on 15 April 2023 through its social dimensions and structural consequences. It demonstrates how the conflict has reshaped identities, power relations, and patterns of social organisation, accelerating a shift from national frameworks toward tribal and regional affiliations. The study argues that the war represents a foundational rupture with Sudan's pre-conflict order, marking the emergence of a profoundly reconfigured social and political landscape in which state-based institutions and networks have been displaced by armed, pre-state, and ethnically rooted formations.

Focusing on the period between 2023 and 2025, Miada Bashir Mohamed Abdallah analyses how armed conflict has transformed Sudan's media landscape. The study explores changes in information flows, journalistic practices, and public trust, showing how media institutions have become both instruments and targets of warfare. By situating Sudan as a critical case, the article sheds light on the interaction between war, media manipulation, and the erosion of credible public discourse in contemporary conflict settings.

Esin Güzel's study explores the historical and cultural foundations of relations between Sudan and Türkiye by focusing on the legacy of Ottoman rule in Sudan and its enduring impact. It traces how Ottoman-era administrative, educational, and social practices shaped Sudanese society and contributed to a shared historical memory. The analysis demonstrates how this legacy continues to inform contemporary Türkiye-Sudan relations through cultural connections, humanitarian

engagement, and diplomatic cooperation, offering a *longue durée* perspective on bilateral ties.

The off-topic article by Ebrar Şebin addresses the implications of contradictory counterterrorism approaches adopted by Western European states toward the PKK/YPG. It examines how international cooperation with the group's Syrian branch has contributed to perceptions of legitimacy and facilitated the recruitment and participation of foreign terrorist fighters from Europe. By focusing on the security consequences of these dynamics, the study highlights the risks posed by returning and redeployed foreign fighters during and after their involvement in the organisation.

In the present issue of *Almanac Diplomatique*, two additional analytical contributions are featured.

Younis Ahmed Adam Yahya's analysis, entitled "The Deepening Crisis of War in Sudan: Collapse in Darfur and International Balances," examines the armed conflict that erupted on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Focusing on the fall of El-Fashir and the ethnically motivated massacres in El-Jeneina, the study situates the conflict among the most severe humanitarian crises of the century, marked by mass displacement and the accelerating collapse of the state. Moving beyond a local power struggle, the analysis demonstrates how the war has evolved into a broader contest for regional influence, with the United Arab Emirates providing logistical and military support to the RSF, while Egypt and Saudi Arabia align with the SAF. Despite repeated warnings from the international community regarding the risks of ethnic cleansing and war crimes, these externally reinforced dynamics persist, further eroding Sudan's territorial integrity and regional security balances.

The issue also features Subhi Adam's analysis, "Sudan as a Country at Risk of Fragmentation," which examines the country's ongoing political and social crises through the conceptual lens of state fragmentation and the weakening of territorial authority. The study traces structural fragilities within Sudan's political and administrative institutions since independence and links them to the dynamics of the civil war that erupted in 2023 amid sustained internal conflicts and external interventions. It concludes by outlining possible scenarios for Sudan's future, highlighting the risks and trajectories associated with continued institutional erosion.

In the present issue of Almanac Diplomatique, two book reviews are also included.

The first review, authored by Suliman Nasir Ibrahim Abdallah, examines Sudanese Folk Riddles, a seminal work by Abdullah al-Tayyib. Rather than approaching the book solely as a collection of folkloric material, the review situates it as a cultural document that illuminates the moral values, oral traditions, and historical memory of Sudanese society. It highlights the pedagogical, sociological, and linguistic dimensions of the work, underscoring its significance in preserving an oral heritage at risk of disappearance and in revealing Sudan's multi-layered identity as a historical bridge between the Arab-Islamic world and African civilisations.

The second review, written by Abdullatif Hüseyin Mazi, focuses on Politics to Practice: Türkiye–Africa Relations, edited by Tunç Demirtaş. The review traces the evolution of Türkiye's engagement with the African continent from the 1998 Africa Initiative Action Plan to the institutionalisation of a strategic partnership in 2008. It examines this relationship across areas such as security, energy, economics, and cultural diplomacy, conceptualising Türkiye's presence in Africa not as a temporary or purely humanitarian endeavour, but as an increasingly

institutionalised and deepening partnership model. In doing so, the review offers a substantive analytical contribution to the literature on contemporary Turkish foreign policy.

Finally, a conscious decision was taken to prioritise the perspectives of Sudanese academics, researchers, and experts with field experience in the preparation of this issue. It is the view presented here that the individuals wielding influence over the future of Sudan should not be those who merely observe the crisis from a distance, but rather those who are in direct contact with the segments of society that are shouldering the greatest burden of the crisis and who possess an intimate understanding of the local reality. It is hoped that this issue will make a lasting contribution to the literature on understanding Sudan, and that it will also make the humanitarian devastation on the ground visible, thus fostering discussions on more just, realistic, and implementable solutions. Last but not least, this issue is dedicated to the memory of the innocent civilians who lost their lives in Sudan and Gaza. It is hoped that it will serve as a call to a shared conscience for humanity, reminding us of the inviolability of human life.

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