

Famine, Flight, and Fear: Mapping the Humanitarian Catastrophe in Sudan

Dr. Vishnu Prakash Mangu

Associate Professor of Public Administration, Govt. College (A), Ananthapuramu, Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Since April 2023, Sudan has experienced a violent power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), resulting in one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world. This study examines the structural roots and contemporary consequences of the conflict, arguing that the catastrophe is not merely a product of military confrontation but a manifestation of long-standing state fragility, politicized security institutions, and fragmented governance. Drawing on theories of fragile states and the political economy of civil war, the research analyses how institutional breakdown, armed competition, and resource control have contributed to widespread famine-like conditions, mass displacement, and the erosion of civilian protection mechanisms.

Using qualitative analysis of secondary data from international organizations, academic literature, and policy reports (2023–2025), the study explores the relationship between conflict intensity, territorial fragmentation, and humanitarian outcomes. The findings reveal that areas under contested authority experience higher levels of food insecurity, administrative collapse, and restricted humanitarian access. The emergence of parallel governance structures and external involvement by regional actors has further deepened instability and reduced prospects for negotiated settlement. Although international humanitarian assistance has mitigated some immediate suffering, structural political reform and inclusive governance are necessary for sustainable recovery.

The study contributes to scholarly debates on state fragility and protracted conflict by demonstrating how militarized competition for sovereignty produces layered institutional and humanitarian collapse. It concludes that long-term stabilization in Sudan requires integrated strategies combining ceasefire efforts, security sector reform, accountable resource governance, and community-based peacebuilding initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Sudan's present humanitarian catastrophe must be understood as the outcome of a long and uneven state-building process marked by exclusion, militarization, and regional inequality. Since independence in 1956, Sudan has struggled to construct inclusive national institutions capable of managing its ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity. Instead, political power remained concentrated in Khartoum, while peripheral regions experienced limited investment and weak representation. Scholars of state fragility argue that

when governments fail to distribute resources equitably or build legitimate institutions, conflict becomes embedded within the political system itself (Rotberg, 2004; de Waal, 2015). Sudan illustrates this pattern vividly.

Two prolonged civil wars, first from 1955 to 1972 and later from 1983 to 2005, deepened divisions between the northern ruling elite and the southern regions. These wars caused massive displacement and economic collapse, ultimately culminating in the

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KEYWORDS: Sudan; state fragility; civil war; humanitarian crisis; conflict-induced famine; forced displacement; fragmented sovereignty; political economy of war; security sector reform; peacebuilding.

secession of South Sudan in 2011. While partition ended one phase of armed struggle, it did not resolve structural inequalities within the remaining Sudanese state. Regions such as Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan continued to face political marginalization, underdevelopment, and insecurity. The persistence of these inequalities reinforced what political economy scholars describe as a “centre–periphery imbalance,” where state authority relies more on coercion than consent (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

The crisis in Darfur that erupted in 2003 reflected these deeper grievances. Armed rebel groups accused the central government of systematic neglect and discrimination. The regime of Omar al-Bashir responded through counterinsurgency strategies that relied heavily on irregular militias commonly referred to as the Janjaweed. Reports of mass violence, forced displacement, and ethnically targeted attacks drew international condemnation. Over time, these militias were reorganized into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in 2013 under the leadership of Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti. The RSF evolved beyond a counterinsurgency force into a powerful paramilitary institution with autonomous funding sources, especially in gold mining and cross-border commercial networks. This transformation reflected a broader trend in contemporary conflicts, where armed actors develop parallel economic systems that sustain prolonged warfare (Kaldor, 2012; de Waal, 2015).

Sudan entered a new political phase in 2019 when nationwide protests, fuelled by rising food prices and economic hardship, led to the removal of Bashir. A transitional arrangement was formed between civilian representatives and military leaders from both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the RSF. However, underlying tensions remained unresolved. Disagreements over security sector reform exposed the fragile balance of power within the transition. A subsequent military intervention in 2021 weakened civilian authority and reinforced military dominance in governance structures.

On April 15, 2023, open conflict erupted between the SAF and RSF in Khartoum. What began as a power struggle within the security apparatus quickly escalated into a nationwide civil war. Urban warfare spread across the capital and into Darfur, Kordofan, and Gezira. By late 2024, territorial control had become effectively divided, with the SAF holding northern and eastern regions while the RSF dominated much of Darfur and parts of western Sudan. In early 2025, the RSF announced the formation of a parallel administrative authority, raising concerns about de facto partition. Such

fragmentation reflects what fragile-state theorists describe as “competing sovereignties,” in which multiple armed actors claim legitimacy over the same national territory (Rotberg, 2004).

The humanitarian consequences have been devastating. Tens of thousands have been killed, and millions have been displaced internally or forced to flee across borders. Agricultural production has collapsed in several regions, supply chains have been disrupted, and famine conditions have emerged in conflict-affected areas. Both armed factions have been accused of obstructing humanitarian aid and weaponizing access to food and basic services. In besieged cities such as al-Fashir, civilians face power outages, empty markets, and outbreaks of preventable diseases. The deliberate targeting or obstruction of civilian infrastructure reflects a broader pattern observed in modern civil wars, where economic and humanitarian systems become instruments of military strategy (Duffield, 2001).

The conflict has also accelerated the militarization of society. In response to RSF expansion, the SAF has mobilized civilian-based armed groups under initiatives such as “Popular Resistance.” While presented as self-defence mechanisms, the proliferation of loosely organized militias risks deepening communal divisions and undermining future state reconstruction. Fragmented chains of command and localized armed authority may complicate disarmament and reintegration processes in any post-conflict scenario. At the regional and international levels, Sudan’s war increasingly exhibits characteristics of proxy competition. External actors have strategic interests linked to Red Sea security routes, migration management, and access to mineral resources. Financial and logistical backing for rival factions has reduced incentives for compromise and extended the duration of hostilities. Such external involvement reinforces patterns identified in the political economy of conflict, where war becomes sustained through transnational networks of resource extraction and patronage (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; de Waal, 2015).

Rather than pursuing decisive military victory, both the SAF and RSF appear engaged in rival forms of state-building. Each maintains distinct administrative structures, economic arrangements, and territorial governance practices in areas under its control. These parallel systems suggest that Sudan’s conflict is not merely a temporary breakdown of order but a deeper crisis of sovereignty and institutional legitimacy. Unless inclusive political negotiations incorporate civilian actors and address longstanding regional grievances, the war risks

becoming protracted and entrenched. In this context, Sudan represents a critical case for examining how fragile states can descend into layered humanitarian collapse when militarized elites compete for political and economic dominance. The current crisis is therefore not only a humanitarian emergency but also a structural crisis of governance. Understanding this trajectory is essential for identifying pathways toward stabilization, institutional reform, and long-term peace.

Literature Review:

Scholars studying Sudan often explain the country's repeated crises through the lens of state fragility and uneven nation-building. Research argues that weak institutions, centralized power in Khartoum, and long-standing regional inequalities created structural conditions for conflict (Rotberg, 2004; de Waal, 2015). Studies of Sudan's earlier civil wars show how political exclusion and economic neglect of peripheral regions such as Darfur and South Kordofan contributed to cycles of rebellion and repression (Johnson, 2016). The Darfur conflict has been widely examined as a case in which state-backed militias and irregular armed groups reshaped patterns of violence and governance (de Waal, 2007). Scholars also note that control over natural resources, particularly gold, strengthened armed actors and weakened civilian institutions. From this perspective, Sudan's current instability reflects a longer historical process in which militarized power structures replaced inclusive political development.

Beyond Sudan-specific research, broader theoretical scholarship on civil wars and humanitarian crises provides additional insight. Studies on the political economy of conflict suggest that wars are prolonged when armed groups benefit economically from violence and receive external support (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The "new wars" framework further argues that contemporary conflicts often blur the line between combatants and civilians, targeting infrastructure and social systems rather than focusing only on military objectives (Kaldor, 2012). In humanitarian research, scholars emphasize that famine and displacement are rarely caused by natural factors alone; instead, they are frequently linked to governance failure, market disruption, and deliberate obstruction of aid (Duffield, 2001; Maxwell & Majid, 2016). These theoretical perspectives help explain why Sudan's current conflict has produced widespread hunger, forced migration, and institutional collapse.

Despite this growing body of literature, there remains a significant research gap. Much of the existing

scholarship focuses either on Sudan's earlier civil wars or on the Darfur crisis of the 2000s, with limited systematic analysis of the 2023–2025 conflict and its compound humanitarian consequences. Recent policy reports document displacement and famine trends, but fewer academic studies integrate state fragility theory, political economy approaches, and humanitarian analysis to examine how rival armed factions are simultaneously contesting sovereignty and reshaping governance structures. In particular, insufficient attention has been given to how parallel state-building efforts by competing military actors contribute to long-term fragmentation and regional instability. By bringing together conflict theory and contemporary humanitarian evidence, this study seeks to address that gap and offer a more comprehensive understanding of Sudan's ongoing crisis.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this research article are to examine the root causes and consequences of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan, focusing on how the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has led to widespread famine, mass displacement, and civilian insecurity. The study aims to analyze how structural political failures, armed violence, and institutional breakdown have impacted access to food, healthcare, and humanitarian aid. It also seeks to explore the demographic trends of internal and cross-border displacement and evaluate the role and limitations of international humanitarian response. Lastly, the article aims to assess the long-term risks posed by this crisis including state fragmentation, regional instability, and the erosion of civilian protection while proposing possible strategies for peacebuilding and recovery.

Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data analysis. The research draws on academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reports published between 2023 and 2025 by international organizations such as the United Nations, World Food Programme (WFP), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These sources were selected because of their credibility, relevance to the Sudan crisis, and availability of updated humanitarian data. The study focuses on analysing patterns related to armed conflict, famine conditions, forced displacement, and governance breakdown. By reviewing multiple sources, the research aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of how political violence and

institutional fragility interact to produce humanitarian collapse.

A thematic content analysis approach was used to examine the collected materials. Key themes were identified, including state fragility, militarization of economic resources, obstruction of humanitarian access, and parallel governance structures. These themes were then interpreted through theoretical frameworks such as fragile states theory and the political economy of civil war (Rotberg, 2004; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The study does not rely on primary field interviews due to security constraints but instead synthesizes available empirical evidence to provide analytical insight into the crisis. This method allows for a structured and theory-informed examination of the ongoing conflict and its humanitarian consequences.

This research has several limitations. First, the study relies exclusively on secondary data sources, which may reflect institutional or reporting biases. Humanitarian reports and international assessments, while credible, may emphasize crisis narratives and lack access to areas under heavy fighting. The absence of primary fieldwork, including interviews with affected communities or policymakers, limits the ability to capture firsthand experiences and localized perspectives. Security conditions in Sudan and restricted access to conflict zones make direct data collection extremely difficult.

Second, the conflict remains ongoing, which means that available data may change rapidly. Casualty figures, displacement numbers, and territorial control are fluid and subject to revision. As a result, the analysis reflects the most reliable information available at the time of writing but may not capture future developments. Finally, while the study integrates theoretical frameworks to explain the crisis, it does not conduct quantitative modelling or comparative statistical analysis. Future research could expand on this work by incorporating field-based evidence, longitudinal data, and cross-country comparisons to deepen understanding of Sudan's evolving political and humanitarian landscape.

Causes and Consequences of Humanitarian Catastrophe:

While the violence that erupted in April 2023 appears to be a sudden military confrontation, it is deeply connected to Sudan's long history of political instability, uneven development, and fragile institutions. Understanding these structural causes is essential for explaining why the conflict has produced such severe humanitarian outcomes. Sudan's political system has long been characterized by centralized control of power, limited civilian

oversight of the military, and marginalization of peripheral regions. Scholars of state fragility argue that when state institutions lack legitimacy, accountability, and capacity, they become vulnerable to internal power struggles (Rotberg, 2004). In Sudan, competing military elites gradually accumulated political and economic influence, often operating with limited transparency. Over time, the RSF evolved into a powerful paramilitary force with independent financial resources, while the SAF remained the formal national army. The absence of effective integration between these two institutions created structural tensions within the security sector. When political transition efforts after 2019 failed to resolve these tensions, the competition for authority escalated into open warfare.

The consequences of this struggle have extended far beyond military battlefields. Civilian areas quickly became sites of heavy fighting, leading to widespread destruction of infrastructure. Hospitals, markets, schools, and water facilities were damaged or closed. Agricultural production declined as farmers fled conflict zones, and supply chains were disrupted. Research on conflict-induced humanitarian crises shows that when violence affects food systems and public services, the impact on civilians can be as destructive as direct combat (Maxwell & Majid, 2016). In Sudan, the breakdown of state coordination has intensified hunger, reduced access to healthcare, and increased vulnerability among women, children, and the elderly. Mass displacement is another major consequence. Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes either to seek safety within Sudan or to cross international borders. Forced migration often reflects both immediate insecurity and long-term loss of livelihood opportunities. In fragile states, displacement can further weaken institutional capacity by reducing economic productivity and increasing pressure on already limited services (de Waal, 2015). The humanitarian system has struggled to respond effectively due to insecurity, funding shortages, and access restrictions imposed by armed actors.

Humanitarian Crisis:

While armed conflict often produces visible destruction, its deeper impact is seen in the gradual collapse of essential services that support everyday life. In Sudan, long-standing governance weaknesses combined with active warfare have significantly reduced the state's capacity to protect civilian welfare. Political instability in Sudan did not begin with the current conflict. For decades, governance systems were shaped by centralized decision-making, limited accountability, and heavy reliance on security

institutions. Fragile state theory suggests that when governments fail to build strong administrative systems and inclusive political processes, public service delivery becomes vulnerable during times of crisis (Rotberg, 2004). In Sudan, the absence of resilient institutions meant that once fighting began between the SAF and RSF, there were few mechanisms available to prevent the rapid breakdown of food distribution networks, health systems, and emergency response structures.

Food insecurity has worsened significantly due to both direct and indirect consequences of violence. Agricultural production has declined because farmers have been displaced, irrigation systems damaged, and transportation routes blocked. Markets have been disrupted, leading to sharp increases in food prices. In conflict settings, hunger is rarely caused only by natural scarcity; it is often linked to political decisions, restricted mobility, and deliberate obstruction of supply chains (Maxwell & Majid, 2016). In Sudan, reports indicate that armed actors have established checkpoints, imposed blockades, and restricted humanitarian convoys. Such actions not only intensify food shortages but also transform basic survival needs into tools of political pressure.

Healthcare services have also suffered severe setbacks. Hospitals and clinics in conflict-affected areas have closed due to damage, looting, or lack of staff. Medical professionals have fled for safety, and supply chains for essential medicines have been interrupted. When health systems collapse during conflict, preventable diseases spread quickly, and vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly face heightened risks. Public health crises, including outbreaks of cholera and measles, often emerge in environments where sanitation systems and vaccination programs are disrupted.

Humanitarian aid delivery has been constrained by insecurity and bureaucratic barriers. International organizations require safe access corridors to deliver food, water, and medical supplies. However, ongoing hostilities and fragmented territorial control have limited such access. The politicization of aid—where assistance becomes entangled with military objectives—further reduces neutrality and effectiveness (Duffield, 2001). In Sudan, restricted access has meant that many communities remain isolated from life-saving support for extended periods.

Hurdles in Aid:

Armed conflict often produces large-scale population movements, but the speed and scale of displacement in Sudan since 2023 have been particularly significant. Millions of civilians have fled urban centres, rural

villages, and conflict zones in search of safety. This movement has reshaped demographic patterns within the country and placed pressure on neighbouring states. Internal displacement has occurred primarily in regions experiencing intense fighting, such as Khartoum, Darfur, and parts of Kordofan. Families have relocated to comparatively safer areas, often staying in schools, unfinished buildings, or temporary shelters. Displacement disrupts livelihoods, education, and social networks. In fragile states, such population movements weaken local economies and increase dependence on external assistance (de Waal, 2015). Many displaced individuals lack formal documentation, stable income sources, or access to health services. Women, children, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities face heightened vulnerability due to limited mobility and reduced protection mechanisms.

Cross-border displacement has also intensified. Refugees have entered neighbouring countries seeking protection, placing additional strain on already limited resources in border communities. Host states may struggle to provide adequate housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities for incoming populations. Research on forced migration shows that prolonged displacement can create regional instability if host countries lack sufficient institutional capacity (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In such contexts, refugee camps may become semi-permanent settlements where generations grow up with restricted educational and economic prospects. International humanitarian organizations have played a central role in providing emergency assistance. Agencies such as the United Nations, the World Food Programme, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have delivered food aid, medical support, shelter materials, and protection services. These interventions are guided by principles of neutrality, impartiality, and humanity. However, operational challenges have limited the reach and effectiveness of these efforts. Armed confrontations, roadblocks, damaged infrastructure, and administrative restrictions have constrained access to many conflict-affected areas.

Funding gaps represent another major limitation. Humanitarian appeals often receive only partial financial support, reducing the scale of food distribution, healthcare provision, and protection programs. In addition, coordination among international agencies, local organizations, and host governments can be complicated by overlapping mandates and logistical difficulties. The politicization of humanitarian assistance may further undermine trust between communities and aid

providers (Duffield, 2001). Displacement in Sudan is therefore not only a humanitarian issue but also a structural transformation of the country's demographic landscape. The scale of internal and cross-border movement highlights the interconnected nature of conflict, governance breakdown, and regional security concerns. International response efforts remain essential, yet they operate within significant constraints shaped by insecurity, limited funding, and fragmented territorial authority.

Peacebuilding and Recovery Strategies:

State fragmentation occurs when central authority weakens to the point that competing actors exercise control over separate territories with parallel administrative, economic, and security systems. In Sudan, the division of territorial control between rival armed groups has created conditions resembling divided governance. Fragile state theory suggests that when sovereignty becomes contested and authority is no longer unified, institutional legitimacy declines and public trust erodes (Rotberg, 2004). The longer such fragmentation persists, the more difficult national reintegration becomes. Competing systems of taxation, policing, and local governance can harden into semi-permanent structures, increasing the likelihood of prolonged instability.

Regional instability is another serious concern. Armed conflict rarely remains confined within national borders. Cross-border refugee flows, illicit trade in natural resources, and the circulation of weapons can affect neighbouring states. External actors may also become involved by providing military or financial support to rival factions, thereby prolonging the conflict. The political economy of civil war literature argues that when armed groups gain economic benefits from continued instability, incentives for negotiated settlement decline (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In Sudan's case, access to gold resources, trade routes, and foreign partnerships may reinforce patterns of competition rather than compromise.

Civilian protection mechanisms have also weakened considerably. In stable political systems, state institutions are responsible for ensuring public safety, upholding legal standards, and protecting minority rights. When security institutions themselves become parties to conflict, civilian protection collapses. Communities may form self-defence groups, leading to militarization at the local level. Such developments increase the risk of human rights violations, revenge attacks, and long-term social fragmentation. Women and children often bear disproportionate burdens during these

breakdowns, facing heightened exposure to violence, exploitation, and limited access to justice.

Addressing these risks requires comprehensive peacebuilding strategies that extend beyond ceasefire agreements. Sustainable recovery depends on inclusive political dialogue, credible security sector reform, and the restoration of civilian oversight over armed forces. Rebuilding trust in public institutions is essential for reversing fragmentation. Economic recovery programs should prioritize equitable distribution of resources, livelihood restoration, and reintegration of displaced populations. International support can facilitate mediation, provide technical assistance, and mobilize reconstruction funding, but durable peace must be rooted in domestic political commitment and community participation. Peacebuilding in Sudan will require coordinated efforts that address political legitimacy, economic inequality, and social reconciliation simultaneously. Without structural reforms and inclusive governance, the risks of fragmentation and instability may persist even if active combat declines.

Findings:

The findings show that Sudan's humanitarian catastrophe is not an accidental byproduct of war but the predictable outcome of prolonged structural fragility combined with militarized political competition. The rivalry between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has transformed existing governance weaknesses into systemic collapse. State institutions responsible for food distribution, health services, and civilian protection have either disintegrated or become instruments of armed control. In several regions, access to humanitarian aid has been shaped less by logistical constraints and more by deliberate obstruction, territorial fragmentation, and competing claims to authority. The data further indicate that displacement patterns are uneven and politically mediated, with Darfur, Kordofan, and parts of Gezira experiencing intensified demographic shifts linked to armed consolidation strategies. Civilian insecurity is reinforced not only through direct violence but also through economic strangulation, market breakdown, and restricted mobility. External involvement by regional and international actors has prolonged the conflict by sustaining rival power centers rather than supporting unified governance. Overall, the evidence suggests that famine risk, mass displacement, and institutional collapse are interconnected outcomes of a fragmented sovereignty structure in which parallel authorities compete for legitimacy, territory, and economic resources.

Discussion:

The findings contribute to fragile state and civil war scholarship by illustrating how institutional breakdown in Sudan extends beyond administrative weakness into contested sovereignty. While classical fragile state theory emphasizes governance incapacity, the Sudan case demonstrates a more complex dynamic in which armed actors actively construct rival systems of authority within the same territorial space. This dual militarized governance undermines humanitarian neutrality and reshapes civilian survival strategies. The conflict also complicates political economy explanations of civil war that distinguish between greed and grievance, as resource competition, ethnic mobilization, and institutional exclusion operate simultaneously. Moreover, the Sudan crisis challenges assumptions that humanitarian intervention can function independently of political settlement; in contexts of fragmented sovereignty, aid becomes embedded in power struggles. Rather than viewing famine and displacement as secondary humanitarian consequences, the Sudan case suggests they function as structural mechanisms within broader strategies of territorial consolidation and regime competition. This deepens existing debates on state fragility by showing that humanitarian collapse may not merely reflect state weakness but can emerge from deliberate patterns of rival state-building under conditions of prolonged armed contestation.

Significance:

This study is significant because it contributes to a deeper understanding of how contemporary civil conflicts in fragile states evolve into prolonged humanitarian disasters. By linking theories of state fragility, political economy of war, and conflict-induced displacement, the research moves beyond descriptive accounts of violence and provides a structured explanation of systemic collapse. The study highlights the importance of examining governance failures and militarized economic structures when analysing humanitarian crises. It also offers policy-relevant insights by identifying how fragmented sovereignty, resource competition, and external involvement can undermine peacebuilding efforts. For scholars, the research adds to theoretical debates on institutional breakdown and hybrid governance in conflict zones. For policymakers and humanitarian actors, it underscores the need for integrated strategies that combine emergency relief with structural political reform. In this way, the study provides both academic and practical value, particularly for understanding and responding to protracted crises in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Policy Recommendations:

Effective policy responses must address immediate humanitarian needs while also confronting structural drivers of conflict.

- **Immediate Humanitarian Access and Protection Mechanisms:** All armed actors should commit to internationally monitored humanitarian corridors to ensure uninterrupted delivery of food, medicine, and essential supplies. Neutral humanitarian access must be insulated from military objectives. International organizations should strengthen local partnerships to improve last-mile distribution and community-based protection systems. Special attention must be given to vulnerable populations, including women, children, and internally displaced persons.
- **Inclusive Political Dialogue and Civilian Participation:** Sustainable peace requires broad-based political negotiations that extend beyond military elites. Civil society groups, regional representatives, women's organizations, and displaced communities should be included in peace processes. Inclusive dialogue increases legitimacy and reduces the risk of elite-driven settlements that fail to address root grievances.
- **Security Sector Reform and Demilitarization:** Long-term stability depends on restructuring the security sector under unified civilian oversight. Gradual integration or demobilization of parallel armed forces should be pursued through transparent, internationally supported reform frameworks. Security institutions must be professionalized to ensure accountability, rule of law, and civilian protection.
- **Economic Stabilization and Resource Governance:** Control over natural resources, particularly gold and trade networks, has played a central role in sustaining armed competition. Transparent resource governance mechanisms, independent auditing systems, and anti-corruption measures are necessary to prevent economic incentives from fuelling continued conflict. International actors should condition financial assistance on accountability and reform benchmarks.
- **Regional and International Coordination:** Neighbouring states and international stakeholders should coordinate diplomatic efforts to prevent proxy involvement and arms proliferation. Multilateral mediation platforms may provide neutral spaces for negotiation. Development partners must also plan for long-

term reconstruction funding that supports infrastructure rebuilding, livelihood restoration, and reintegration of displaced populations.

- **Social Reconciliation and Community-Based Recovery:** Post-conflict recovery should include community reconciliation programs that address grievances, trauma, and local tensions. Educational restoration, healthcare rebuilding, and employment generation initiatives can help rebuild trust between citizens and institutions. Peacebuilding efforts should prioritize youth engagement to reduce the risk of future militarization.

Conclusion:

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) represents more than a military confrontation; it reflects deep structural weaknesses within Sudan's political and institutional systems. This study has examined how historical marginalization, fragile governance structures, and unresolved security sector tensions created the conditions for violent power competition. The findings demonstrate that the humanitarian catastrophe currently unfolding in Sudan is closely linked to institutional breakdown, fragmented sovereignty, and the politicization of economic and security resources.

The analysis shows that armed confrontation has disrupted agricultural production, damaged healthcare infrastructure, obstructed humanitarian access, and displaced millions of civilians. Hunger and disease are not isolated consequences but interconnected outcomes of governance collapse and sustained violence. The emergence of parallel administrative systems and rival territorial control structures indicates a dangerous trend toward de facto fragmentation. If these dynamics continue unchecked, Sudan risks prolonged instability similar to other protracted civil conflicts in fragile states (Rotberg, 2004).

The study also highlights the regional dimension of the crisis. Cross-border displacement, external military support, and competition over strategic resources have internationalized the conflict. Such involvement may extend the duration of violence by reducing incentives for compromise (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). At the same time, humanitarian response efforts, though critical, face limitations due to insecurity, funding shortages, and political constraints. Without structural political reform, emergency assistance alone cannot reverse the deeper causes of instability. Sudan's crisis illustrates how state fragility, militarized political competition, and economic resource control can

converge to produce sustained humanitarian collapse. Long-term stabilization will require more than ceasefire agreements; it demands institutional reconstruction, inclusive governance, and renewed social trust.

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