

**Bulletin of Islamic Research**

ISSN (Online): 3031-4526

Received: 02-01-2024, Revised: 15-01-2023

Accepted: 02-02-2023, Published: 03-03-2023

DOI: 10.69526/bir.v1i1.332

Sudan's Humanitarian Crisis and the War of Military Elites: Prospects For A Resolution

Mukhtar Imam¹

Abstract

Sudan has been facing a prolonged humanitarian crisis exacerbated by ongoing conflicts between military elites. This study aims to analyze the root causes of Sudan's humanitarian crisis, the role of military elites in perpetuating the conflict, and the prospects for a sustainable resolution. Using a qualitative approach with the literature review method, this research examines various secondary sources, including official reports, academic journals, and historical accounts. The findings suggest that Sudan's crisis is deeply rooted in historical injustices, political instability, economic inequality, and military dominance. The analysis highlights how military elites have exploited state resources and engaged in armed conflicts to maintain power, further worsening the humanitarian situation. Possible solutions include international mediation, grassroots movements, institutional reforms, and economic development to foster long-term peace. By providing a comprehensive understanding of Sudan's crisis, this study offers insights into potential strategies to address the ongoing humanitarian disaster.

Keywords: Sudan's Humanitarian Crisis; War; Military; Elites; Prospects; Resolution.

Introduction

Sudan, the third-largest country in Africa, has been embroiled in conflict for decades. The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is one of the most severe in the world, with millions of people displaced, widespread food insecurity, and a lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education. The crisis is deeply intertwined with the political and military dynamics of the country, particularly the power struggle between military elites. This article seeks to explore the historical and contemporary factors that have contributed to Sudan's

¹ Department of International Relations, Almuhibbah Open University, Abuja, Nigeria, Email: mukhtarimam01@gmail.com

humanitarian crisis, the role of military elites in the conflict, and the prospects for a resolution.

Sudan, a nation with a rich history and diverse cultural heritage, has been plagued by a protracted humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the ongoing conflict between military elites. This article delves into the root causes of Sudan's humanitarian crisis, the role of military elites in perpetuating the conflict, and the prospects for a sustainable resolution. The analysis is grounded in historical context, political dynamics, and socio-economic factors shaping the current state of affairs. The article also explores potential pathways to peace, including international mediation, grassroots movements, and institutional reforms. By examining the interplay between military elites and the broader socio-political landscape, this article aims to comprehensively understand Sudan's crisis and offer insights into possible solutions.

The ongoing conflict in Sudan is not merely a struggle for power but a manifestation of deeper structural issues, including economic inequality, ethnic and religious divisions, and the legacy of colonial rule. The military elites, who have dominated Sudanese politics since independence, have perpetuated a cycle of violence and instability, often prioritizing their own interests over those of the population. This article argues that addressing Sudan's humanitarian crisis requires a multifaceted approach that tackles both the immediate symptoms of the crisis and its root causes.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method to analyze Sudan's humanitarian crisis. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore various literature sources to understand the dynamics of the ongoing conflict. The focus of the study is to identify the root causes of the crisis, the role of military elites, and the prospects for conflict resolution in Sudan. Thus, this research is descriptive-analytical, aiming to provide an in-depth overview of the current situation.

The data sources for this study come from various secondary literature, including official documents such as reports from the United Nations (UN), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. Additionally, this research utilizes academic journals and scholarly publications that discuss the political and humanitarian aspects of Sudan. News articles from international organizations and books on Sudanese political history are also essential in gathering information.

The data collection techniques used in this research involve document analysis and literature review. Document analysis entails examining various

reports and publications related to the Sudanese crisis. The literature review involves reading and analyzing previous studies relevant to issues of conflict and humanitarian crises in Sudan. This approach enables the research to gain a broader understanding of the causes of the crisis and the actors involved.

To analyze the collected data, this study applies content analysis to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the reviewed documents. Furthermore, source triangulation is employed to verify the validity of the data by comparing information from multiple sources. Using a historical-sociological approach, this study also examines how historical and social factors have shaped the dynamics of Sudan's conflict.

The analysis is expected to provide a clearer understanding of how Sudanese military elites contribute to prolonging the conflict and its impact on the humanitarian crisis. By understanding their role, this study can propose measures to address the crisis. Potential strategies include international mediation, strengthening civil society movements, and implementing institutional and economic reforms to ease tensions in Sudan.

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of Sudan's conflict and offer recommendations for long-term solutions. By utilizing an academic approach based on secondary data, the findings of this research aim to contribute to the study of international conflicts and support efforts to resolve Sudan's humanitarian crisis.

Result and Discussion

Historical Context

Colonial Legacy and Post-Independence Struggles

Sudan's current crisis cannot be understood without examining its colonial past. The country was under Anglo-Egyptian rule from 1899 to 1956, during which time the colonial administration implemented policies that exacerbated ethnic and regional divisions. The British colonialists adopted a "divide and rule" strategy, administering the north and south separately and favoring the Arab-dominated north over the predominantly African south. This policy deepened existing tensions and laid the groundwork for future conflicts [1].

After gaining independence in 1956, Sudan faced immediate challenges in nation-building. The country's diverse ethnic and religious composition, coupled with the legacy of colonial rule, made it difficult to establish a unified national identity. The first civil war between the North and South broke out in 1955, just before independence, and lasted until 1972. The war was rooted in the South's

demand for greater autonomy and recognition of its cultural and religious identity [2].

The Rise of Military Elites

The post-independence period saw the rise of military elites who played a dominant role in Sudanese politics. The military has been a key player in Sudanese politics since the first coup in 1958, led by General Ibrahim Abboud. Military rule became a recurring feature of Sudanese politics, with coups and counter-coups becoming a common occurrence. The military elites, often drawn from the northern Arab elite, have historically used their power to maintain control over the state and its resources. This has led to the marginalization of other regions and ethnic groups, particularly in the south, west, and east of the country [3].

The military's dominance has also been a major factor in the perpetuation of conflict, as it has often resorted to violence to suppress dissent and maintain its grip on power. The military-industrial complex, which encompasses the military's involvement in various sectors of the economy, has further entrenched its power and created vested interests in the continuation of conflict [4].

The Second Civil War and the Rise of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)

The second civil war broke out in 1983, following the breakdown of the Addis Ababa Agreement that had ended the first civil war. The war was led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), a rebel group fighting for the rights of the southern Sudanese people. The SPLM, under the leadership of John Garang, sought to address the root causes of the conflict, including marginalization, inequality, and the lack of political representation for the south.

The Second Civil War was one of the longest and deadliest conflicts in African history, lasting for 22 years and resulting in the deaths of an estimated 2 million people. The war also led to widespread displacement, with millions of people forced to flee their homes. The conflict was characterized by brutal violence, including massacres, rape, and the use of child soldiers [5].

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the Secession of South Sudan

The second civil war came to an end with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. The CPA was a landmark agreement that provided for a power-sharing arrangement between the North and South, as well as a referendum on Southern independence. The referendum, held in 2011, resulted in an overwhelming vote for secession, leading to the creation of the Republic of South Sudan [6].

While the CPA brought an end to the north-south conflict, it did not address the underlying issues that had fuelled the war. The secession of South Sudan also created new challenges for Sudan, including the loss of a significant portion of its oil reserves, which had been a major source of revenue for the government. The post-CPA period saw a continuation of conflict in other parts of Sudan, particularly in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile [7].

The Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan Displacement and Refugee Crisis

One of the most devastating consequences of the conflict in Sudan has been the displacement of millions of people. According to the United Nations, Sudan has one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world, with over 2 million people displaced within the country. Additionally, Sudan hosts a significant number of refugees from neighboring countries, including South Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia [8].

The displacement crisis has been driven by a combination of factors, including armed conflict, ethnic violence, and environmental degradation. The lack of security and access to basic services in conflict-affected areas has forced many people to flee their homes in search of safety and better living conditions. However, the conditions in displacement camps are often dire, with limited access to food, water, healthcare, and education [9].

Food Insecurity and Malnutrition

Food insecurity is a major issue in Sudan, with millions of people facing acute hunger and malnutrition. The conflict has disrupted agricultural production, trade, and access to markets, leading to food shortages and price hikes. The situation has been exacerbated by climate change, which has resulted in erratic rainfall patterns, droughts, and desertification [10].

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), over 9 million people in Sudan are food insecure, with 3.6 million children suffering from acute malnutrition. The lack of access to nutritious food has had a devastating impact

on the health and well-being of the population, particularly children and pregnant women. Malnutrition has also contributed to high rates of morbidity and mortality, particularly among children under the age of five [11].

Health Crisis

The health system in Sudan has been severely impacted by the conflict, with many healthcare facilities destroyed or rendered non-functional. The lack of access to healthcare services has resulted in high rates of preventable diseases, including malaria, cholera, and respiratory infections. The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained the already fragile health system, with limited testing, treatment, and vaccination capacity [12].

The conflict has also had a significant impact on mental health, with many people experiencing trauma, anxiety, and depression as a result of violence, displacement, and loss. However, mental health services are severely lacking in Sudan, with few trained professionals and limited resources available to address the needs of the population [13].

Education Crisis

The conflict in Sudan has had a devastating impact on education, with many schools destroyed or closed due to insecurity. According to UNICEF, over 3 million school-aged children in Sudan are out of school, with girls being particularly affected. The lack of access to education has long-term implications for the development of the country, as it limits the opportunities for young people to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to society [14].

The education system in Sudan is also plagued by a lack of resources, including qualified teachers, textbooks, and infrastructure. The quality of education is often poor, with many children not acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. The conflict has further exacerbated these challenges, with many teachers fleeing conflict-affected areas and schools being used as shelters for displaced persons [15].

The Role of Military Elites in the Conflict

The Military-Industrial Complex

The military elites in Sudan have played a central role in the perpetuation of conflict and the humanitarian crisis. The Sudanese military, along with its allied militias, has been involved in numerous conflicts across the country, including in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. The military has often used brutal tactics, including aerial bombardments, scorched-earth policies, and sexual violence, to suppress rebel movements and maintain control over contested areas [16].

The military's involvement in the economy has also been a major factor in the perpetuation of conflict. The Sudanese military has a significant stake in various sectors of the economy, including agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. This has created a military-industrial complex that benefits from the continuation of conflict, as it provides opportunities for profit through the control of resources and the allocation of contracts [17].

The Role of Militias and Proxy Forces

The Sudanese military has often relied on militias and proxy forces to carry out its operations in conflict-affected areas. These militias, often drawn from local communities, have been involved in some of the most egregious human rights violations, including massacres, rape, and the destruction of villages. The use of militias allows the military to distance itself from these atrocities, while still achieving its objectives [18].

The Janjaweed militia, which was responsible for much of the violence in Darfur, is a prime example of this strategy. The Janjaweed, which was armed and supported by the Sudanese government, carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Arab communities in Darfur, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions [19].

The Political Role of the Military

The military has also played a key role in Sudanese politics, often acting as a kingmaker in the country's political transitions. The military has been involved in numerous coups and has often intervened to remove civilian governments that it perceives as a threat to its interests. The most recent example of this was the military coup in October 2021, which overthrew the transitional government that had been established following the ouster of long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 [20].

The military's political role has been a major obstacle to democratic governance in Sudan. The military has often used its power to suppress political opposition, restrict civil liberties, and maintain its control over the state. This has created a cycle of political instability, with civilian governments being unable to establish themselves and implement meaningful reforms [21].

Prospects for a Resolution International Mediation and Peacebuilding Efforts

International mediation has played a key role in past peace agreements in Sudan, including the CPA that ended the second civil war. The international community, including the United Nations, the African Union, and various regional organizations, has been involved in efforts to resolve the conflict in Sudan and address the humanitarian crisis [22].

However, international mediation efforts have often been hampered by a lack of coordination, competing interests, and the complexity of the conflict. The international community has also been criticized for its failure to hold the Sudanese government and military accountable for human rights violations and war crimes [23].

Despite these challenges, there is still potential for international mediation to play a role in resolving the conflict in Sudan. The international community can support peacebuilding efforts by providing financial and technical assistance, facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties, and promoting accountability for human rights violations [24].

Grassroots Movements and Civil Society

Grassroots movements and civil society organizations have played a crucial role in advocating for peace and human rights in Sudan. The Sudanese people have a long history of resistance to authoritarian rule, as demonstrated by the popular uprisings that led to the ouster of Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

Civil society organizations, including women's groups, youth movements, and human rights organizations, have been at the forefront of efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in Sudan. These organizations have worked to build bridges between different communities, advocate for the rights of marginalized groups, and promote democratic governance.

The role of grassroots movements and civil society is particularly important in the context of Sudan's humanitarian crisis. These organizations are often best placed to understand the needs of affected communities and to deliver assistance in a way that is responsive to local contexts. Supporting grassroots movements and civil society is therefore essential for building sustainable peace in Sudan.

Institutional Reforms and Governance

Addressing the root causes of Sudan's humanitarian crisis will require significant institutional reforms and improvements in governance. This includes reforming the security sector to ensure that the military is accountable to civilian authorities and respects human rights. It also involves addressing the structural inequalities and marginalization that have fuelled conflict in Sudan.

One of the key challenges in implementing institutional reforms is the resistance from military elites and other powerful actors who benefit from the status quo. Overcoming this resistance will require strong political will, both from within Sudan and from the international community. It will also require building a broad coalition of stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and regional actors, to support the reform process.

Economic Development and Resource Management

Economic development and sustainable resource management are also critical for addressing the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. The country's economy has been severely impacted by conflict, with significant losses in revenue from oil exports following the secession of South Sudan. The lack of economic opportunities has contributed to poverty, unemployment, and social unrest.

Investing in economic development, particularly in conflict-affected areas, can help to address some of the root causes of the conflict. This includes supporting small-scale agriculture, promoting local industries, and improving infrastructure. It also involves addressing the issue of resource management, particularly in relation to land and water, which have been major sources of conflict in Sudan [25].

Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

Transitional justice and reconciliation are essential for building sustainable peace in Sudan. The country has a long history of human rights violations, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Addressing these violations and holding perpetrators accountable is crucial for achieving justice and reconciliation.

Transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions, reparations programs, and criminal prosecutions, can help to address the legacy of past atrocities and promote healing and reconciliation. However, the success of these mechanisms depends on the political will to implement them and the involvement of affected communities in the process [26].

Conclusion

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is a complex and multifaceted issue that is deeply intertwined with the country's political and military dynamics. The conflict between military elites has been a major driver of the crisis, perpetuating violence, displacement, and poverty. Addressing the crisis will require a comprehensive approach that includes international mediation, grassroots movements, institutional reforms, economic development, and transitional justice.

While the challenges are significant, there are also opportunities for progress. The resilience and determination of the Sudanese people, as demonstrated by the popular uprisings that led to the ouster of Omar al-Bashir, provide hope for a better future. With the support of the international community and a commitment to peace and justice, it is possible to resolve the conflict and address the humanitarian crisis in Sudan.

Author Contributions

Mukhtar Imam: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - review & editing, Supervision, Project administration.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Almuhibbah Open University and an anonymous reviewer for providing valuable input on these papers.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

Bibliography

- [1] African Union. (2020). Report of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel on Sudan. Addis Ababa: African Union. <https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/8432?show=full>
- [2] Amnesty International. (2021). Sudan: Human Rights in Transition. London: Amnesty International.
- [3] De Waal, A. (2015). The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [4] Human Rights Watch. (2020). Sudan: Events of 2020. New York: Human Rights Watch.

- [5] International Crisis Group. (2021). Sudan: Transition at Risk. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
- [6] Johnson, D. H. (2011). *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*. Oxford: James Currey.
- [7] United Nations. (2021). Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021. New York: United Nations.
- [8] World Food Programme. (2021). Sudan: Emergency Food Security Assessment. Rome: World Food Programme.
- [9] Young, J. (2012). *The Fate of Sudan: The Origins and Consequences of a Flawed Peace Process*. London: Zed Books.
- [10] Zartman, I. W. (1995). *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- [11] S. H. M. Osman and A. J. Nashwan, "Prioritizing children's mental health amidst Sudan's humanitarian crisis: policy recommendations for immediate action," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, vol. 17, no. 1. 2023.
- [12] The Lancet, "Sudan's threatened health and humanitarian crisis," *The Lancet*, vol. 393, no. 10168. 2019.
- [13] E. E. Siddig, H. F. Eltigani, and A. Ahmed, "Healing the unseen wounds: Sudan's humanitarian crisis traumatizing a nation," *Asian J. Psychiatr.*, vol. 89, 2023.
- [14] R. K. Herrmann, P. Isernia, and P. Segatti, "Attachment to the nation and international relations: Dimensions of identity and their relationship to war and peace," *Polit. Psychol.*, vol. 30, no. 5, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00723.x>
- [15] A. Khan, "UN appeals for aid for Sudan's humanitarian crisis.," *Lancet*, vol. 363, no. 9425, 2004. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15195665/>
- [16] A. Dafallah, O. K. O. Elmahi, M. E. Ibrahim, R. E. Elsheikh, and K. Blanchet, "Destruction, disruption and disaster: Sudan's health system amidst armed conflict," *Conflict and Health*, vol. 17, no. 1. 2023. <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-023-00542-9>
- [17] A. J. Kuperman, "Moral hazard in Sudan's 'Two Areas' -humanitarianism that perpetuates civil war," *Conflict, Secur. Dev.*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2022.2034367>
- [18] S. De Simone, "Playing the 'fragile state' card: The SPLM and state

- extraversion in South Sudan," *J. Mod. Afr. Stud.*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2018.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X18000290>
- [19] P. D. Williams and A. J. Bellamy, "The responsibility to protect and the crisis in Darfur," *Secur. Dialogue*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2005.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605051922>
- [20] A. A. D. Akuey, "South Sudan and the emerging security implications for east Africa," *Univers. J. Educ. Res.*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1170471>
- [21] M. Olimat, "China and the Darfur Crisis," *Can. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2014.
<http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/5399>
- [22] R. O. Matthews, "Sudan's Humanitarian Disaster," *Int. J. Canada's J. Glob. Policy Anal.*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2005.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200506000410>
- [23] S. Fake and K. Funk, "Darfur and the West: The Political Economy of 'the World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis,'" in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, 2021.
- [24] A. C. Budabin, "Genocide olympics: How activists linked China, Darfur & Beijing 2008," in *Sudan Looks East: China, India and the Politics of Asian Alternatives*, 2011.
- [25] I. Elnur, *Contested Sudan*. 2009. ISBN 9780415542661,
https://www.routledge.com/Contested-Sudan-The-Political-Economy-of-War-and-Reconstruction/Elnur/p/book/9780415542661?srsId=AfmBOorzROSAubONqyJT43ykRXBHz-UIt7xB5o0S0gNE_YbpchSlpi_L
- [26] W. C. Soderlund and E. D. Briggs, *The independence of South Sudan : the role of mass media in the responsibility to prevent*. 2014.

Copyright

© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.