

SUDAN: SCENARIOS



Possible developments in people's ability to live safely and meet their basic needs over the next 12 months.



SCENARIOS AT A GLANCE

SCENARIO 1

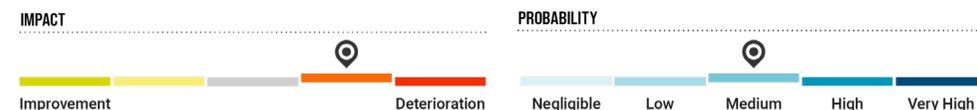
Pathway to civilian governance



An entirely new transitional governance agreement receives broad support from the military and key political, civilian, and armed groups. Proposed election dates allow a realistic time frame for registration and campaigning. A unifying civilian figure leads the transitional governance process. There is clear progress in implementing the security arrangements of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA). Conflict decreases in Darfur and elsewhere, and protests largely cease. International financial support slows the economic decline. Livelihoods generally improve, although land rights and access to water continue to cause conflict in Darfur. Food, water, and medical needs remain high, but food prices stabilise. Many, especially IDPs, remain in need of protection despite reduced active conflict. The environment becomes more permissible of humanitarian access.

SCENARIO 2

Return of a one-party state; harsh repression of revolutionary voices



The ruling military and former regime elements assume increasing control of national governance. Those calling for civilian governance, especially the local resistance committees (LRCs), face increasingly violent oppression. Although open dissent decreases in rural areas, protests in Khartoum and other cities increase. JPA non-signatories drive and increase conflict in Darfur.

The economy further declines, although limited trade with sympathetic states and the continuation of some developmental aid prevent total collapse. Goods and services remain available but at very high prices. Crime rates increase. The number of people in poverty continues to increase. Food, medical, protection, shelter, and WASH needs increase as state service provision declines. Humanitarian access is severely controlled.

SCENARIO 3

Internal split in government; fragmentation of armed groups; sudden widespread conflict



A fracturing of alliances within the Sudanese military results in violent, albeit short-lived, clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum. It also causes a prolonged increase in conflict in the regions as armed groups take advantage of the lack of central leadership. Mass killings and reprisals occur in Darfur. There is widespread displacement countrywide. Pro-revolution civilian organisations also exploit the situation and increase calls for full civilian governance. Protests increasingly disrupt imports and exports. Investors lose confidence, and the economy collapses. Food prices and criminality rise. Food and protection needs are a priority, especially for IDPs and both urban and rural poor. Humanitarian access faces severe constraints.

SCENARIO 4

Rapid elections inflame discontent and conflict



The military alliance of convenience persists, confirming presidential elections for 2023 to strengthen and legitimise their hold on power. Armed groups, political groups, and civilian resistance committees disagree on how to engage or oppose the process. Conflict escalates in Darfur. Protests increase in many locations and are contained but not suppressed. Tensions rise, especially among the more politically engaged in urban areas. The frequency and violence of protests and civil unrest escalate. Disruptions to livelihoods for those in urban areas increase. Imports and transport of goods are also increasingly interrupted. The economy further declines. Food prices and criminality rise. Food and protection needs are a priority, especially for IDPs and the urban poor. Localised insecurity constrains humanitarian access.

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INTRODUCTION

What scenarios are and aren't

The four scenarios consider four different yet plausible futures for Sudan over the coming 12–18 months. These scenarios do not describe the imagined futures in detail but consider key differences in governance, economic, security environments and the extent to which, and how, people's safety and ability to access essential goods and services might change. They are not forecasts but describe situations that could occur. They are designed to highlight the possible impacts and humanitarian consequences of each scenario.

Intended purpose and audience of the report

The primary purpose of the report is to support strategic planning, create awareness, and promote discussion among humanitarian policymakers, practitioners, and donors. It aims to provide an understanding of the possible ways in which humanitarian needs may or may not end up being met – whether intentionally or unintentionally. See the [Methodology](#) section for more information on the development of these scenarios.

Problem statement

For most of its independent history, conflict has beset Sudan. With a population of almost 47 million, Sudan is one of the largest and most diverse countries in Africa. It sits at the crossroads of sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. The transitional government, formed to steer the country to democratic elections following the ousting of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in April 2019, collapsed following a military coup in October 2021. Civilian resistance to military rule, including frequent protests, continues. There is widespread distrust of the military, and civilian grassroots movements reject power-sharing. Although the military remains the most powerful political unit, there are signs of division between the leaders of the SAF and RSF, and the balance of power is far from stable.

The large budget deficit drives the deterioration of Sudan's economy. Lost revenues (most notably from oil exportation) when South Sudan became an independent state in July 2011, the introduction of economic reforms to secure international funding, and the subsequent suspension of international funding compound this decline. The economic situation has been driving inflation (over 300% as at February 2022) and humanitarian needs since 2018.

The conflict in Darfur shows no signs of abating, conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile simmer, discontent in the east is on the rise, and neighbouring countries are in various states of collapse.

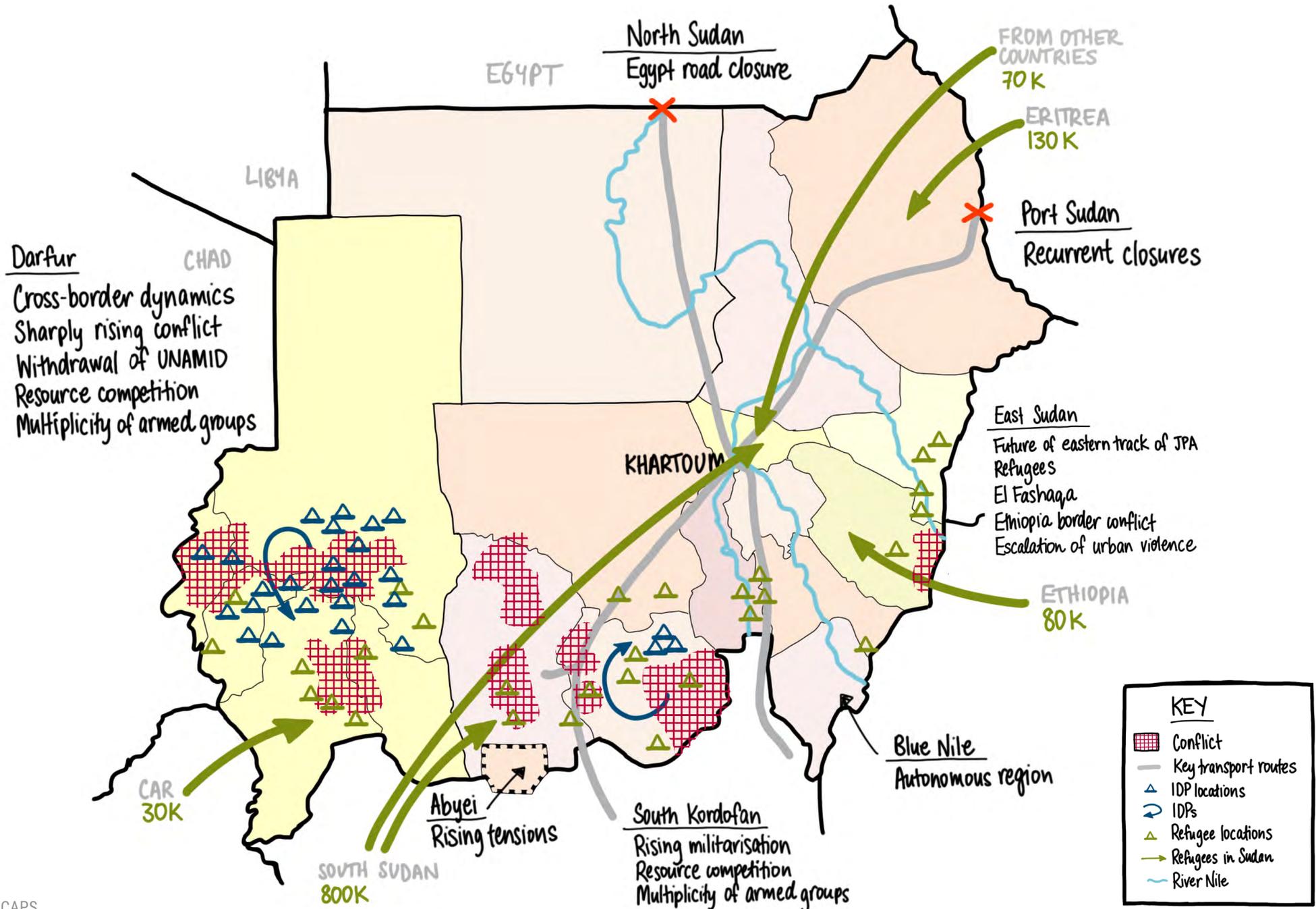
The rapidly shifting context in Ethiopia has the potential to inflame regional tensions, while conflict could trigger further displacement to Sudan. The political stand-off in Libya also has the potential to reignite widespread conflict.

Divisions within the Sudanese security forces, the rising discontent among the civilian population against military rule, and the increasing economic crisis have the potential to significantly change the political and economic future of the country. Given a range of variables affecting living conditions in Sudan, the four scenarios consider how people's safety and ability to meet basic needs might change until mid-2023 and any potential humanitarian consequences.

Scenarios are based on a clear understanding of the current situation and the principle of 'how we are where we are'. Annex A summarises the current situation, and Annex B presents a brief synopsis of some of the key players. It is advisable for readers unfamiliar with the Sudanese context to read both before exploring the scenarios.

Annex C is a table of events that may help trigger the scenarios.

CONTEXT OVERVIEW



Source: ACAPS

1. Pathway to civilian governance



Military and pro-democracy civilian groups negotiate an entirely new transitional governance agreement and election dates. Within the proposed structure of governance, the cabinet comprises competent technocrats. There is an assurance of civilian oversight of the military and other security institutions. This gives confidence to political parties and civilian resistance groups that the proposed plan does not perpetuate a civilian-military partnership but limits military participation to the Security and Defence Council. There is agreement over a pathway for free and fair elections; the election date allows sufficient time to ensure a conducive environment and a fair and inclusive process. There is clear progress in implementing the security arrangements of the JPA.

Most pro-democracy civilian groups support the agreement, recognising it as the only way out of the political impasse. As a result, most demonstrations in Khartoum and across the country end. JPA signatories feel a sense of reassurance over the implementation of the security components of the agreement. Non-signatories are more open to engaging in a peace process with a civilian-led transitional government. The frequency and intensity of clashes between armed groups in peripheral regions significantly decrease but do not stop entirely.

Alongside political progress and reduced conflict, the economy begins to see some level of growth, spurred by a partial resumption of access to funding from international financial institutions (IFIs), debt relief, more non-humanitarian bilateral aid, and foreign direct investment primarily from the Gulf states. Trade deals with Saudi Arabia on food and agricultural goods start to generate revenue. Limited state assistance resumes in urban areas.

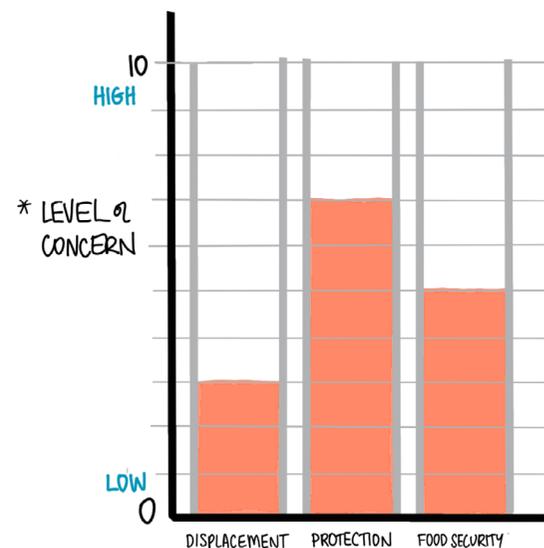
Possible triggers

- Talks begin on amnesty or an exit strategy for senior military generals.
- Senior military generals resign.
- The Sudanese political process facilitated by UNITAMS and the African Union (AU) makes progress.

- Sanctions are imposed on individual members of the Sudanese military.
- Protests calling for a transition to democracy intensify.
- International condemnation of the Sudanese military grows.
- Gulf states withhold financial assistance because of pressure from the EU, Norway, the UK, and the US to stop actively supporting the military government.
- Pro-democracy civilian groups, resistance committees, civil society groups, and political parties become more united and develop a joint road map on the way forward.
- There is inclusive dialogue leading to the formation of a 'revolutionary legislative council'.
- LRCs receive foreign support to build capacity.
- Russia provides additional wheat at reasonable cost.

Impact

The state of emergency is lifted, political detainees are released, the General Intelligence Service (GIS) loses its powers of arrest and detention, and violent repression of peaceful protests stops. Protests diminish, and civic space begins to enlarge.



MOST IMPACTED STATES



* Based on discussions with expert participants in ACAPS' seminar building workshops ≠ KII's.

Source: ACAPS

JPA non-signatory leaders of armed movements in Darfur and South Kordofan actively engage in a new peace process. This development spurs a sense of hope among the population, who begins to more actively engage with the LRCs in Khartoum and across the country. Such an engagement results in a stronger sense of unity among the civilian bloc and growth in political dialogue at the subnational level. More women also begin to actively participate in political forums, and gender parity is likely to see a sustained improvement. Local administrative structures and traditional leaders play a more constructive role in bringing stabilisation and justice. Sudan is readmitted to the AU.

The relative calm in urban areas allows businesses to function with limited interruption. Protests along the northern border with Egypt cease, allowing trade to resume as normal. As tensions also lessen around Port Sudan, increased trading activity generates local revenue. With the slight increase in international funding and investment, this revenue stalls further economic decline. Living conditions for most of the population do not immediately improve, but their situation does not significantly deteriorate.

Clashes over access to land and limited resources, particularly in contested and strategic areas (i.e. with the presence of minerals), continue and even escalate in some areas. The central government in Khartoum no longer emboldens groups affiliated with the former regime and the RSF. Sporadic violent shows of force that lead to civilian casualties result as armed groups 'defend' their control over lands. The security arrangements of the JPA deter the massive escalation of conflict. Consequently, attacks against civilians decrease but only slightly, and new displacement occurs, albeit at lower levels and often only temporarily. In urban areas, hospitals and medical services are no longer subject to attacks by military forces.

The transitional government affirms its commitment to facilitate the return of IDPs, but localised insecurity, the lack of basic services, and disputed land claims in areas of return prevent any significant return movement. The perception of this more genuine commitment in the longer term amplifies tensions among local Arab populations anxious about impacts on their current land claims.

Localised drought in South Kordofan and Red Sea continue to drive conflict and poverty, while significant returns to Blue Nile increase pressure surrounding limited resources.

Humanitarian consequences

The deterioration of the humanitarian situation slows, but needs remain high. Civil unrest in urban centres dramatically decreases. This development allows for improved and uninterrupted access to livelihoods, but the slow pace of recovery and continued high level of needs fuel discontent in many areas. Teachers, civil servants, business owners, and other community members are able to resume work, and state salaries are paid. Purchasing power increases for many of the employed in urban areas, although continuing inflation offsets this capability. In rural areas, the reduction in armed violence allows for improved access to agricultural land and increases crop production, although food security continues to deteriorate at a similar rate to 2020/21.

While there is a decrease in displacement, needs among protracted IDP populations remain high and far outstrip the level of services available. Attacks against medical facilities cease, but medical services remain underfunded, and the facilities lack basic medical supplies. Although the availability of services remains limited, the more stable and secure environment allows for more freedom of movement, improving access to existing services. Services previously unable to function, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programmes, are able to resume.

Operational constraints

While humanitarian needs remain high, the positive change in political direction allows for a more permissible operating environment, including a reduction in bureaucratic constraints to enter the country and in the practical implementation of programmes. Security-wise, movement around Darfur in particular becomes easier, and there is no longer a need for a security escort. While the looting of humanitarian assets remains a risk, related incidents become less frequent. Demands for fees and incentives from authorities decrease, and INGOs are able to work more independently from authorities. The more secure environment increases the ability to implement cash modalities of response.

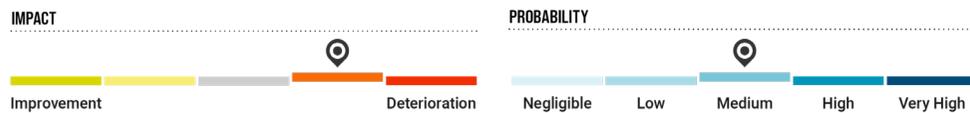
Estimated additional caseload

An additional one to two million people (aside from the current 14.3 million) are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Geographic areas of most concern

Darfur

2. Return of a one-party state; harsh repression of revolutionary voices



The balance of power across Sudan decisively shifts in favour of the military, as those currently holding power overcome their differences and maintain control over income sources and privileges. The military and hard-line Islamists assume increasing control over national governance while being careful to appear as a moderate Islamic government acceptable to international backers. Those calling for civilian governance, especially the LRCs, face increasingly violent oppression. Despite the situation, they become more unified, and the frequency and size of protests increase.

The transition process for an elected government is set in motion despite being rejected as a sham by all but pro-military parties and JPA signatories. While the JPA is held as foundational to the process, it is not implemented. There is no progress made on security sector reform. IFIs, such as the World Bank, continue to withhold financial support.

The 'government' adopts increasingly Islamic policies to strengthen security apparatuses, relying on al-Bashir's old patronage networks for support. The re-establishment of the public committees for popular security (heavily politicised neighbourhood governance mechanisms) further restricts freedom for many. As resurgent Islamist factions directly target LRCs and ruthlessly quash dissent, most rural areas remain calm. Existing conflict in Darfur and the two states worsens as dissenting groups seek to undermine the central authorities.

The economy further declines, although limited trade with sympathetic states and the continuation of some developmental aid prevent total collapse. Goods and services remain available but at very high prices. Crime rates increase. The military remains dependent on continued economic clientelism for support.

Possible triggers

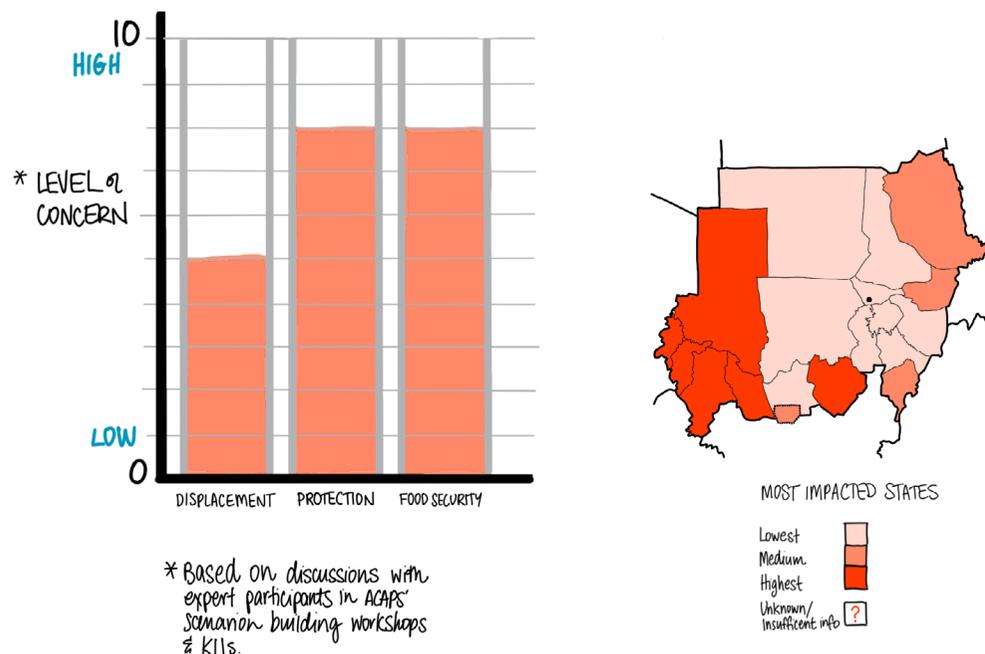
- International and Sudanese facilitation efforts are inconclusive.
- The leaders of the RSF and the SAF maintain their alliance of convenience, which is motivated by a shared fear of accountability and a desire to protect their economic gains.
- General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Islamists solidify their power, appointing more National Congress Party (NCP) and former regime elements to positions of influence and government.
- Intelligence services continue to split civilian figures, weakening opposition to military rule.
- The government receives political and military support from sympathetic states (including Egypt, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), who are in denial about the extent of Islamist influence of this government).
- The government receives financial support from Gulf states.
- Russia provides additional wheat at reasonable cost.
- The revenue from transit fees on oil exports from South Sudan increases.
- Increased calls for transitional justice and targeted sanctions prompt generals to unify.
- Increased funding to the SAF equalises the SAF-RSF power balance.

Impact

As the regime adopts increasingly conservative and restrictive policies, there is a reversal of many of the recent gains in women's rights (including legal rights, access to justice, and business opportunities) and an increased violation of human rights. Arrests and detention of pro-democracy activists increase, and employment opportunities for women decrease. Corruption within the state increases, including bribery and disproportionate fines by the police and judiciary.

Authorities become less accommodating of the UN, ignoring UN demands that human rights and humanitarian principles be upheld. Humanitarian funding slightly decreases, while delivery costs increase, reducing overall service provision. Humanitarian space and delivery decrease, driving people in need's frustration at, and mistrust of, humanitarian organisations. As state service provision further declines, the UN and INGOs are increasingly seen as sources of income, fuelling the politicisation of aid. Aid distribution becomes a source of conflict. Intercommunal conflict increases as needs rise.

Despite increased revenue from transit fees on South Sudan's oil exports, continued income from the sale of mining licenses, and some funding from the Gulf states, the economy



Source: ACAPS

continues to decline as most budgetary aid remains suspended. Domestic taxes increase, and hyperinflation continues, fuelling discontent and the black market countrywide. Western countries introduce sanctions against individuals and companies associated with the regime.

Despite stronger coordination between state and federal administrations, security in some states – specifically Darfur and Southern Kordofan – further deteriorates as JPA non-signatories resist Khartoum’s attempts to sideline them. Fuelled by a lack of progress in the implementation of the JPA, some signatory armed groups fragment and ceasefires fail. Conflict in Darfur and Blue Nile and South Kordofan significantly escalates. Banditry and the smuggling of arms and people increase as border controls largely cease.

Humanitarian consequences

The number of people in poverty rises, while increased conflict drives displacement in the west and south. Conflict continues to drive some displacement, while other people move to access the limited humanitarian assistance concentrated in accessible areas.

Humanitarian assistance becomes heavily politicised, with aid delivery subject to multiple conditions from donors and national authorities.

Food needs rise across the country. In Darfur, household income decreases as disputes over land and the stealing of produce increase. At the same time, increasing inflation and taxes decrease the spending power of households countrywide. As a result, education and healthcare access become increasingly difficult for many, especially in rural areas. Health services also further deteriorate as household debt increases. Urban poverty increases across the country.

There is a diversion of government funds to maintain evolving and rebuilt patronage networks. The conflicting directives and goals of the patchwork SAF-RSF group also create increasing inefficiencies and points of failure. These developments cause existing service provision mechanisms to deteriorate, significantly increasing WASH, shelter, health, and education needs.

Protection needs escalate, particularly among activists and protesters, journalists, human rights advocates, displaced people, and other vulnerable groups, while humanitarian protection activities significantly decrease. The gradual restriction of women and girls’ access to employment, education, justice, and healthcare by authorities reverses gains made in women’s rights. Incidences of child marriage and SGBV increase.

Operational constraints

Increased insecurity and corruption reduce humanitarian access. At both capital and state levels, government interests steer the granting of visas and permits. Authorities maximise revenue by increasing the cost of, and requirements for, permits and escorts, increasing operational costs for national and international humanitarian organisations. The deterioration of security in Darfur and Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan further restricts access, limiting aid delivery to major population centres. As human rights deteriorate, NGOs critical of the authorities or who report protection concerns are expelled or have staff declared as personae non gratae. There are severe restrictions on protection and advocacy programmes. International donor funding decreases. Targeted sanctions restrict humanitarians’ use of national companies.

Estimated additional caseload

Up to five million people (aside from the current 14.3 million) are in need of humanitarian assistance mostly outside Khartoum.

Geographic areas of most concern

Central Darfur and South Kordofan

3. Internal split in government; fragmentation of armed groups; sudden widespread conflict



A fracturing of the military alliance between the SAF and RSF results in a short but disruptive conflict for control over Khartoum. The SAF gains control of Khartoum thanks to its military superiority in terms of artillery and air power, but the RSF remains a threat in Darfur and some of the peripheries. Other armed groups around the country take advantage of the disruption to locally extend their power. Violence significantly escalates across the country as all groups seek to extend or solidify their areas of control.

While the 'new' military command rejects an alliance with the RSF and seeks to engage in a peace process, pro-revolution civilian organisations exploit the weakened military government. LRCs and civilian political parties intensify their demands for a complete withdrawal of the military from politics. Protests increase. The JPA fails as new leaders emerge in the regions; local ceasefires with non-signatory movements collapse; and violence increases. Additional groups align against the government, while the new commander of the SAF solicits regional support to restore order, which provides some security in Khartoum. Conflicts in Darfur and South Kordofan and Blue Nile intensify as armed groups split and form new alliances. Conflict erupts in the east. Conflicts also begin to spill towards neighbouring states.

The conflict in Khartoum, although short-lived, has devastating effects on the economy. Investors lose confidence, and there are disruptions in air travel and overall business. Minimal development aid continues, albeit via different modalities, while IFI funding remains withheld. Demonstrations and conflict outbreaks disrupt Port Sudan and the primary route to Egypt, significantly reducing imports and exports. This reduction results in a shortage of food and other essential items in much of the country. Inflation soars, prices rise, and the economy collapses. Diminished foreign revenues are sufficient only to pay security forces. Crime increases.

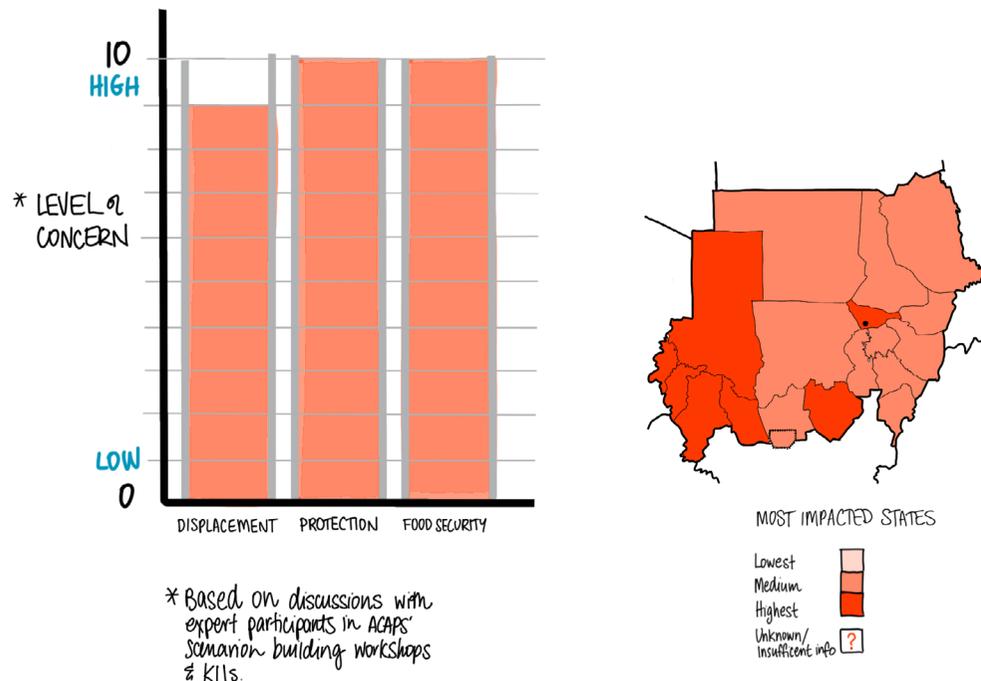
Possible triggers

- The SAF moves against General Hemedti to curtail the growing power of the RSF.
- General al-Burhan is replaced as commander of the SAF.
- General Hemedti moves against the SAF and attempts to oust General al-Burhan, prompting a counter-move.
- JPA signatories attempt to oust General al-Burhan.
- The NCP regains increasing influence within the government.
- External funding to the SAF does not increase.
- Economic hardships increase discontent among junior and mid-level SAF officers.
- The RSF becomes better equipped and more professional, sparking fears that it could acquire air power and become more powerful than the SAF.
- There is no progress in implementing JPA security arrangements.
- The international community continues to withhold debt relief and economic aid.
- Gulf states withhold aid because of hostility to the growing influence of the Society of the Muslim Brothers.
- The economic collapse affects military companies, and official government income further decreases.

Impact

The conflict between the SAF and RSF destabilises many previously stable urban areas. The large-scale presence of both SAF and RSF forces in the national capital produces mass civilian casualties in Khartoum. It also triggers the LRCs to become more vocal and demonstrative in calling for civilian governance. Some become more militarised and engage in conflict at the local level. As law and order break down, banditry and criminality rise, extremist groups become more active, and conflict dynamics increase the reliance on tribal identities. Armed groups (both JPA signatories and non-signatories) increase conflict with the SAF and RSF in the regions, increasing conflict in Darfur and South Kordofan. Casualty rates increase, and there are reports of mass killings – although they remain unverified. Significant displacement into 'safer' states (e.g. Al Gezira and White Nile) occurs. Active conflict and protests block major transport routes, significantly decreasing imports and exports.

The proliferation of arms and absence of rule of law, especially in Darfur, result in increased reprisals at the individual and community levels, especially over land ownership.



Source: ACAPS

While the number of refugees in eastern Sudan does not increase, tensions rise with host communities as pressures regarding decreased services and high inflation hit the population. Long-standing unresolved tensions between Beni Amr and Hadendowa groups in Red Sea and Kassala states, compounded by the JPA, spark intense intercommunal and tribal violence.

Humanitarian consequences

The surge in conflict across the country worsens the already challenging humanitarian environment. Access decreases while needs increase.

Many poorer Sudanese in Khartoum and other urban areas lose assets or livelihoods either as a direct consequence of urban fighting or because of the resultant reduction in investment and economic collapse.

There is a steady and widespread movement of individuals and households away from areas with prolonged localised fighting, such as Blue Nile, Darfur, and South Kordofan. In these areas and those into which people displace, protection is a high concern, as incidents of physical attacks, SGBV, robbery, and abduction increase. The reduction of humanitarian operations also contributes to decreasing individual protection. Rising humanitarian needs

include shelter and WASH, although food remains the priority. Severe disruptions in markets and livelihoods and very high prices lead many of the poorest to adopt harmful coping strategies. Aid is concentrated in accessible areas, encouraging further displacement. Irregular migration northwards towards Europe increases, while there is moderate refugee movement to Chad.

Operational constraints

Escalating widespread conflict severely constrains humanitarian access, restricting many programmes to major population centres. Incidents of looting, carjacking, and kidnapping rise. Increased distrust of humanitarian organisations also increases bureaucracy. Access negotiations occur at very local levels and are subject to frequent changes as local power dynamics shift. Overall costs increase as escort costs rise and many international organisations reduce their presence outside Khartoum. A weakened central authority reduces the risk of expulsion for international staff and organisations.

While humanitarian funding is available, the difference between official and unofficial exchange rates result in unsustainably high programming costs. The provision of food and protection activities become the priority. There are differing perspectives within the humanitarian community on what constitutes principled humanitarian response.

Conflict and demonstrations on main importation routes result in a shortage of humanitarian goods.

Estimated additional caseload

Up to 10 million people (aside from the current 14.3 million) are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Geographic areas of most concern

Darfur, Khartoum, South Kordofan, and, to a lesser extent, Abyei

SCENARIOS

4. Rapid elections inflame discontent and conflict



In a bid to shore up power and legitimise a government amenable to the military, the SAF, JPA signatories, and political parties who supported the coup strengthen their alliance and announce a date for parliamentary elections in mid-2023. The military appoints a compliant chair of the National Elections Commission and uses an election law, voter registration system, and constituency boundaries that serve their own interests. General Hemedti continues to use his vast business fortune to buy support from tribal chiefs. The Islamist-controlled security service throws its weight behind candidates linked to the old regime. Civic space and media freedom remain very limited. This attempt to solidify military rule remove the immediate threat of a revolt within the security apparatus itself. Senior generals, along with their respective forces in Khartoum, who retain their privileges and personal economic gains.

Political parties differ about participating in an election process they consider illegitimate, quickly splitting the country between pro-military parties supporting the election process and those in the opposing pro-democracy movement. State security forces, JPA signatories who supported the coup, remnants of the al-Bashir regime currently in government, and a minority of political parties and civilian groups seek to promote the process. Most others oppose and boycott the process. Tensions rise – especially in urban areas where the population is more politically engaged.

Civilian opposition to military rule weakens, as some political parties engage with the election process, and some civil society groups in the peripheries are co-opted. Some JPA signatories in the peripheral regions see the elections as an opportunity to gain influence and support the process (despite the JPA provision insisting that IDPs and refugees must be able to return to their original lands before the elections). On the other hand, non-signatories see it as a further attempt to exclude them from power and seek to disrupt the process. Islamists also become more active in attempting to secure areas of control. Overall, the situation leads to an escalation of conflict. This conflict spreads across the country as armed groups try to destabilise the process while the military and old regime elements seek to manipulate votes.

Protests in Khartoum and elsewhere continue as the pro-democracy movement strongly mobilises against the elections.

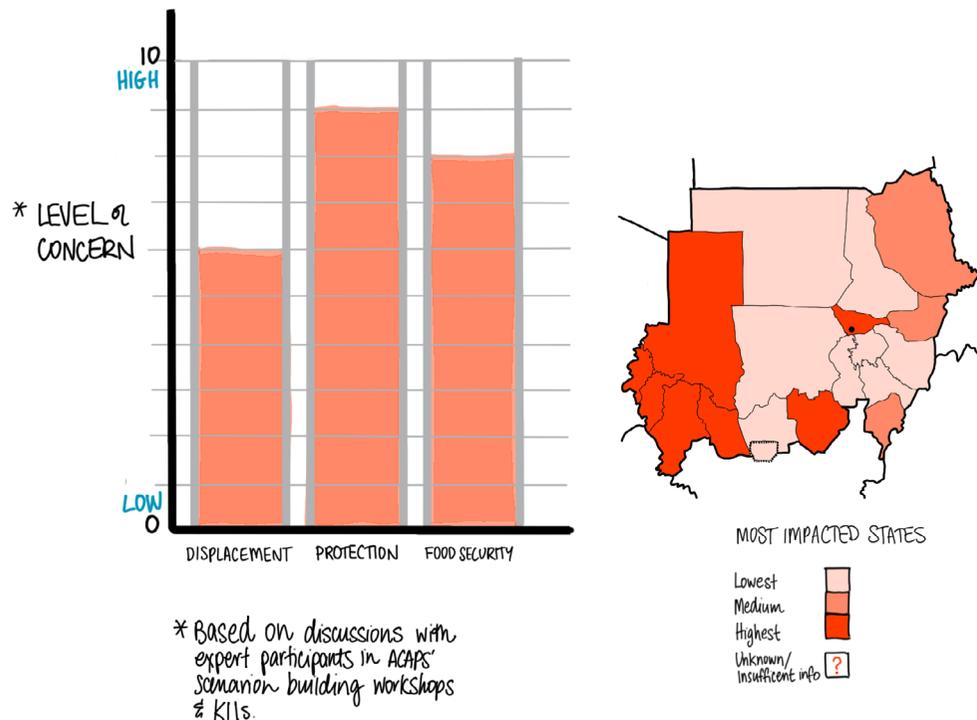
The elected authorities lack legitimacy in the eyes of much of the international community. They have neither capacity nor will to deliver policies that result in any form of positive economic change, and international financial support remains minimal. Consequently, the economy reaches a point of near-total collapse.

Possible triggers

- International or Sudanese facilitators fail to achieve a mediated settlement.
- The international community and pro-democracy forces fail to block the early elections in the absence of a conducive environment.
- The AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development support the early elections and offer to provide election monitors.
- The military administration has enough capacity to organise and manipulate the presidential elections.
- Increased calls for transitional justice and threats of targeted sanctions prompt generals to unify.
- There is no effort made to appease JPA non-signatories.
- The international community continues to withhold debt relief and economic aid.

Impact

As campaigning gathers momentum and the election date approaches, most LRCs become increasingly active and vocal. Some also become more militarised. Protests become more frequent and are met with increasing force by state security forces, escalating conflict in urban areas, especially in Khartoum. In some areas, civil society groups are co-opted into supporting the election process, aggravating tensions within local communities. Areas with high concentrations of IDPs who fear being excluded from the process are especially tense, resulting in frequent outbreaks of violence among an already vulnerable population. The militarisation of communities increases in Darfur and the Two Areas does not stir an immediate reaction among the civilian population, as people have traditionally been more concerned with meeting their basic needs, particularly in terms of security, health, and education. The exception is South Kordofan, where people see the elections as major provocation by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N), precipitating major conflict.



Source: ACAPS

Aid becomes politicised in many areas. Humanitarian assistance is used as a tool to coerce people to vote for a particular candidate or move away from an area where they may otherwise vote unfavourably for those seeking to secure power.

Outbreaks of local violence in many rural areas increase as political and armed groups vie for power. Traditional native administrations and LRCs vie for influence, and intercommunal violence over land ownership and resources worsens.

The escalating frequency and violence of protests and civil unrest also increasingly disrupt access to livelihoods for those in urban areas, as well as imports and the transport of goods. Declining purchasing power continues to affect most of the population. Rural populations have more robust coping capacities than urban populations, who are increasingly hit by the rising cost of living.

Humanitarian consequences

Living conditions in some areas slightly improve. On the other hand, armed groups and security forces attempt to curry favour by providing increased access to services. Consequently, the increasingly unstable political environment, associated conflict and intercommunal violence, and deteriorating economy worsen humanitarian needs countrywide.

Protection risks are of particular concern. Targeted attacks, including the burning and looting of homes, increase against people of certain tribal affiliations. SGBV incidents increase. As security forces and armed groups pursue a recruitment drive, child recruitment rates rise across the country. The number of people assaulted, wounded, or detained rises as protests increase and are more violently suppressed.

As access to food decreases, many rural and urban families adopt negative coping mechanisms. Reduced income restricts access to healthcare for many, while the disruption to supply chains reduces health service provision.

Outbreaks of violence reduce access to education.

Operational constraints

Bureaucratic impediments for humanitarian actors do not decrease, but state authorities or armed groups make no further attempts to deliberately hinder aid delivery. Conflict continues to hinder access; sporadic violent clashes frequently, albeit temporarily, restrict movement.

Estimated additional caseload

An additional two million people (aside from the current 14.3 million) are in need of humanitarian assistance mostly outside Khartoum.

Geographic areas of most concern

Urban centres where populations are most vulnerable to economic decline, Darfur (especially around IDP settlements), Jebel Mara, and South Kordofan

COMPOUNDING FACTORS

Irrespective of which scenarios the actual future resembles, several other factors have the potential to significantly affect basic needs.

Drought

Drought is a frequent hazard in Sudan, where 69,000km² of land, which produces 90% of cultivated food crops, is drought-prone. Drought mostly affects western Sudan, including Darfur, and it is the primary driver of conflict in the region. The current harvest is underway. It is, overall, expected to be lower than that of last year but is close to the five-year average. While Sudan has not suffered a major drought in recent years, the cumulative effect of regular poor rains and lower agricultural productivity as a result of poverty is driving food insecurity. There is a forecast of poor rains for 2022. Any drought would further reduce income for those dependent on agriculture and worsen herder-farmer conflict and poverty (FEWS NET 01/02/2022).

Floods

On average, floods affect about 200,000 people every year, except in 2020 when it affected 875,000 people. The new Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) will affect water flows in Blue Nile; there is a risk for sudden releases to flood much of the most productive agricultural land in the southeast. The most affected states are Abyei, Khartoum, and White Nile (OCHA 19/12/2021).

Conflict in neighbouring states

Libya has been unstable since the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 and the subsequent split, in 2014, between rival governments in the east (Tobruk) and west (Tripoli). A ceasefire negotiated in October 2020 is becoming increasingly fragile with the repeated delays in elections, which was scheduled as part of the UN-sponsored peace process. On 1 March 2022, the House of Representatives in Tobruk elected a new interim prime minister, Fathi Bashagha. The sitting prime minister, Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah, has refused to cede control, claiming the process to have been fraudulent. Conflict looms as both sides escalate actions to exert control (ICG 03/03/2022; Reuters 03/03/2022).

Any failure of the Libyan peace arrangements and consequent descent into anarchy would likely lead to a renewed short-term movement of mercenaries from the armed groups out of Darfur. In the longer term, returning fighters who fail to find alternative livelihoods would destabilise Darfur. A resumption of conflict in Libya would contribute to this destabilisation, especially in conjunction with scenario 3.

Ethiopia and Sudan have long contested an area of agricultural land, the al-Fashqa Triangle, which Amhara farmers have occupied since 1993. Since 2008, Ethiopia has acknowledged al-Fashqa as part of Sudan, while Sudan has permitted the Amhara to continue farming there. Since the start of the Tigray crisis in Ethiopia, relations have become strained because of SAF troops deployed to the border area attacking Ethiopian army outposts and destroying Amharan crops to reclaim the area.

As at 31 January 2022, more than 59,500 Ethiopians had fled violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia since 1 November 2020 (UNHCR 31/01/2022).

Two risks exist:

- The further deterioration of the Ethiopian conflict in Tigray (especially if military confrontation increases in its western zones) could lead to a large-scale refugee influx into Gedaref and Blue Nile states and complicate Eritrean Beja tribe dynamics.
- Direct conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan over the al-Fashqa Triangle would destabilise the eastern region. The withdrawal from Abyei of Ethiopia's 5,000 troops, who comprise the totality of the UN peacekeeping force, could lead to the eruption of conflict.

There is also the potential for Sudan to permit Ethiopian dissenting groups to operate from eastern Sudan.

South Sudan is witnessing significant intercommunal conflict, which has already spilled over into Sudan. Increased conflict along the border and significant refugee inflows are highly possible. On the other hand, **Abyei** is becoming increasingly unstable, with more frequent violent incidents between the Ngok Dinka in the south and the Misseriya in the north, including the burning of the Amiet Peace market – one of the few places communities from north and South Sudan can interact. Any further eruption of violence might give the SAF and Misseriya tribal militia a chance to enter and annex the area under the pretext of restoring calm, taking advantage of the departure of Ethiopian peacekeepers from UNISFA. Such a scenario is more likely if old regime elements gain increased influence in Khartoum. The overall situation could result in conflict with South Sudan (UNISFA 9/03/2022, Abei Radio 27/01/2022, Concordis International 08/02/2021).

Chad, which has historical ties with Darfur and its tribes, is also a major source and pathway for smuggling. The border with Darfur is very porous. Instability, even if only political, has the potential to significantly affect the political and security context in Darfur.

Humanitarian funding

With donor countries struggling to economically recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, global humanitarian funding is expected to decrease in 2022. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also diverted western attention and, along with Afghanistan, will likely be a priority for humanitarian funding in 2022–2023. A war between Russia and Europe remains at risk of further diverting international attention and funding. Should humanitarian funding for Sudan drop significantly in 2022–2023, humanitarian presence would decrease, and many needs would remain unmet.

There is also a forecast of a global shortage of wheat, which could significantly affect Sudan. Global wheat prices have already risen. Further increases would compound the already high food prices. Any shortages that result from reduced imports would further fuel price rises and inflation (FT 04/03/2022).

Disease

Sudan is subject to multiple disease outbreaks, including dengue fever, chikungunya, malaria, and COVID-19. Most outbreaks are relatively contained, although the impact of COVID-19 is unknown because of poor reporting. Any major disease outbreak would compound needs, especially given how weak the healthcare system already is.

METHODOLOGY

ACAPS uses the chain of plausibility approach to scenario-building, as outlined in our [guidance note](#). We developed these scenarios during two workshops in Khartoum and through bilateral discussions. The main sessions involved:

- agreeing on the research question and current situation and mapping a wide array of variables that affect people's safety and ability to meet basic needs
- creating mini scenarios from seven of the 27 different combinations of assumptions on how the three main variables (the balance of political power, economy, and safety and security) might change in the next 12–18 months
- reviewing and further developing the four most interesting scenarios
- considering the humanitarian consequences and operational constraints should each scenario materialise
- considering which factors not specifically considered in any scenario might contribute to future developments (compounding factors).

Key terms used throughout the scenario-building process and the report are:

- **variable:** a development or event likely to cause a change in a situation
- **scenarios:** a verbal picture of a possible future state based on a number of assumptions (which may be more or less probable) on how certain key variables will change; scenarios describe both a future state and any impacts and consequences it may have on people and society
- **triggers:** possible events that may contribute to a scenario materialising
- **compounding factor:** a development that can occur in parallel to any of the above scenarios and may significantly change the nature of humanitarian response.

A combination, but not necessarily all, of the triggers are required to reach any given scenario.

The given caseload for each scenario estimates the additional caseload that could result should that scenario unfold. They are designed only to give an order of magnitude and are based on current trends in number of people in need of humanitarian assistance.

The estimated probability is subjective and based on the views of individual participants. It is most useful as a guide to compare the relative probabilities of the scenarios.

Limitations

Scenarios can seem to oversimplify an issue as the analysis balances details against broader assumptions. Scenario-building is not an end in itself; it is a process for generating new ideas that should, in turn, lead to changes in project design or decision-making.

These scenarios focus primarily on:

- the potential movement of people within, to, and from Sudan
- the potential change in the ability of the population to meet their basic needs and stay safe.

Sudan is a vast country with many political and social movements seeking either local or national influence, control, or change. These scenarios are differentiated primarily by the change in control in Khartoum. Events at a local level in one or more regions could unfold independently of events in the capital, meaning different scenarios may play out in different areas simultaneously.

THANK YOU

These scenarios were developed in March 2022 with input from 33 humanitarian, donor, and academic organisations and independent experts who contributed by participating in workshops, bilateral meetings, and reviews. ACAPS would like to thank all the organisations that provided input to these scenarios.

ANNEX A - CURRENT SITUATION

With a population of almost 47 million, Sudan is one of the largest and most diverse countries in Africa. It sits at the crossroads of sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Sudan has long been mired in conflict driven by ethnic and land issues. In recent years, political organisations have also begun transcending traditional ethnic and social divisions. Current conflicts include those in Darfur (which started in 2003) and Blue Nile and South Kordofan, as well as a dispute with Ethiopia over al-Fashqa. Since 2019, political activism has significantly grown around the country, manifesting in largely peaceful protests.

Governance

Central governance structures built around the power of the military have existed in Sudan for over 60 years. Most notably, 30 years of oppressive Islamist dictatorship by Omar Hassan al-Bashir (marked by political oppression, human rights abuses, and alleged genocide) ended in April 2019, when a military coup following four months of nationwide peaceful protests and growing economic hardship removed him. In October 2019, a transitional government with shared military and civilian leadership was installed, and in October 2020, the government and some of Sudan's conflicting parties signed the JPA.¹ The international community hailed these developments as a success and pledged to increase support to Sudan via economic aid and debt relief. The transitional government made significant achievements in securing Sudan's removal from the US list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, structural economic reforms, and the unification of the exchange rate. Despite such successes, there was very little progress in setting up key transitional institutions, such as the Transitional Legislative Council, or in implementing the JPA, while the military component in the Sovereign Council continued to encroach on the powers of the civilian-led Council of Ministers. In October 2021, the military ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who represented the civilian component of the transitional government, in a coup, citing the lack of progress in establishing crucial institutions resulting from political infighting. International condemnation of the coup led to Hamdok's reinstatement in November 2021. He resigned two months later, stating the unmet demands from the civilian side, including the end to lethal force against peaceful protesters. These events, including a continuing wave of arrests against activists, have upended hopes of a shift to democracy and triggered deep political uncertainty. International parties have withheld funding, and Sudan's economic crisis has continued in a downward spiral. The military's ability to maintain security in the peripheries and exercise effective centralised command broke down following the removal of al-Bashir. With military forces currently

not united, their hold on power is fragile. On the other hand, the civilian resistance remains active, and large protests calling for a complete withdrawal of the military from politics and a transition to democracy continue across the country, undeterred by the violent response of security forces² (Chatham House 11/11/2021; NYT 07/02/2022; BBC 03/01/2022).

Juba Peace Agreement

The JPA, signed in October 2020 by the transitional government with the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and an alliance of armed groups, is based on the principle of equal citizenship without discrimination. It aims to address the causes of marginalisation by giving a greater share of political power and wealth to the peripheries and introducing a more decentralised form of governance. The JPA includes provisions on security sector reform, transitional justice, fiscal decentralisation, land issues, nomads and herders, and the facilitated return and compensation of IDPs and refugees prior to an election (IDEA 21/04/2021).

While the JPA continues to be regarded as a foundational document to the structure of the government, there was little progress made in its implementation prior to the coup. The few implemented provisions include some power-sharing arrangements, initial steps to organise the National Governance Conference, and the establishment of the Joint High Council on Security Arrangements and the UNITAMS-chaired Permanent Ceasefire Committee in Darfur. Two of the largest armed groups remain non-signatories to the agreement.³ There is also the perception among much of the population that the agreement grants a degree of power to leaders of armed groups that do not represent the interests of their civilian base (Reuters 31/08/2020; RVI 04/02/2022).

There is an assumption that the implementation of the JPA would lead to an overall improvement in the security situation, as signatories would largely feel appeased. This assumption does not consider long-standing intercommunal tensions between communities that do not feel represented by the agreement. The facilitated return of IDPs is particularly contentious, as there are concerns around increased intercommunal tensions between IDPs and those who have moved to the land they would be returned to (KII 23/02/2022).

Divisions within the military

As at March 2022, the leader of the coup and commander of the SAF, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, heads the central government. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, is his deputy. Hemedti is the commander of the RSF, the Darfur-based paramilitary group.

¹ See section on JPA.

² Since the coup, around 80 protesters have been killed and hundreds of others wounded. There have been reports of detentions, home raids, the use of live ammunition, and incidents of sexual abuse. Over 100 people, including politicians, journalists, and activists, are currently in detention without charge (HRW 03/02/2022; Al Jazeera 17/02/2022).

³ The groups that signed the deal include the JEM and the SLA-MM. Two key groups are not part of the deal: the SLM-AW and the largest of the two factions of the SPLM-N (see section on stakeholder analysis).

It was established in 2013 and made part of the regular armed forces in 2017, although it retains its own budget command structure. When al-Burhan assumed power, he positioned the RSF firmly within the transitional government structure to keep check of and minimise potential opposition.

Not all SAF members supported the decision to appoint Hemedti as Deputy Chair of the Sovereign Council, which was one reason some armed groups did not engage in peace negotiations with the transitional government. Consequently, the decision tarnished al-Burhan's standing within the SAF. His decision to appoint Islamist elements, including former NCP members, to senior government positions since the coup has also affected his popularity. Though supported by Islamist officers within the SAF, the appointments have caused tensions with the RSF, much of the wider population, the international community, and some neighbouring countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, who are all opposed to the return of the Muslim Brothers (KII 07/03/2022).

The alliance between al-Burhan and Hemedti is fragile, and they would appear to operate independently from one another. They rely on different patronage networks and secure finances via different means, although both have close links with some JPA signatories. While the national budget funds SAF salaries, al-Burhan relies on military-controlled companies in the Military-Industrial Complex to generate revenue for other military expenditures. His political support base relies on linkages with certain tribes, Sufi leaders, and some minor political parties. Hemedti has a private business empire (the al Junaid group) and a stronger network of informal alliances providing him with greater flexibility to manage his patronage system. Hemedti and the RSF have been heavily involved in gold extraction as a source of revenue, working in collaboration with Russian mining companies and the Wagner Group (which also provides military training and advice to the RSF). Since the coup, Hemedti has also been unilaterally pursuing an active international agenda by undertaking unannounced trips to Abu Dhabi, Addis Ababa, and Moscow (the latter organised by the Wagner Group in February 2022 on the day Russia started invading Ukraine).

These differences may influence who from within the broader security apparatus aligns to each of them, particularly amid a deteriorating economic situation where funds are increasingly harder to source. While the two generals use their respective strengths to each other's advantage, they can engage in a working relationship of mutual convenience. On the other hand, these differences can also be a source of friction, particularly given reported resentment within the SAF towards the RSF. This dynamic is central to what is ultimately a military ruling coalition fraught with factions, mistrust, and uncertainty (CFR 22/11/2022; ACW 22/02/2022).

Civilian opposition and resistance

Opposition to military rule is strong and widespread, but while it is unified in demanding a transition to democratic rule, it is not a cohesive bloc. When it was formed in early 2019, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) represented a broad alliance of opposition groups. This alliance included most of the main political parties: the Sudanese Professionals Association, which played an important role in organising protests in the early days of the revolution; civil society organisations; and an alliance of armed groups from the peripheral regions.⁴ The political parties in the FFC incurred some criticism when they entered a power-sharing agreement with the military in mid-2019. They formalised this agreement in the August 2019 Constitutional Document. They also fell out with the SRF, which was largely excluded from these negotiations. Internal disagreements within the FFC over economic policies and the Juba peace talks further weakened the FFC and led to the resignation of the Sudanese Communist Party, while the Umma Party froze its membership. The FFC was also blamed for internal political squabbling and the failure to establish the Transitional Legislative Council and independent commissions. In September 2021, a number of FFC political parties, including the Umma Party and some JPA signatory movements and civil society groups, united to sign a political declaration. In opposition, other JPA signatory movements joined forces with some minor political parties to form a rival FFC backed by the military. By the end of 2021, a third FFC group had been established. This fragmentation has seriously weakened the cohesion of civilian political actors, losing the trust of the population. Currently, the priority objective of the pro-democracy movement is to rebuild a united popular front so they can present a coherent and agreed vision of the way forward.

The **LRCs** have played a leading role in the organisation of demonstrations across the country. Young people dominate the committees, which transcend ethnicity, age, class, and, in many cases, political party affiliation. Women have played a leading role, representing a relatively new dynamic in Sudanese society. There are hundreds of LRCs across the country. This loose civilian alliance lacks a clear leadership structure but provides a strong basis for a resistance movement. It also maintains an important space within the current political landscape (NYT 07/02/2022; Al Jazeera 09/02/2022; CFR 22/11/2021).

Shrinking civic space: during the two-year period of the transitional government, civilian space started opening. Growing opportunities for women to engage more openly with public life were particularly significant, and an increasing number of women-led businesses began to appear. Civic space has been significantly reduced since the coup, and there has been increased encroachment on press freedoms. There are fears that should the military remain in power and revert to hard-line Islamic policies, there will be a reversal of the gains made during the recent transitional period of governance. Since the failure of the transitional

⁴ See the stakeholder analysis section.

government, the military has been reimposing repressive measures for which the previous dictatorship was notorious. These measures include reviving the powers of the former National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and reinstating loyalists of the previous regime (CMI 2020; Just Security 18/01/2022).

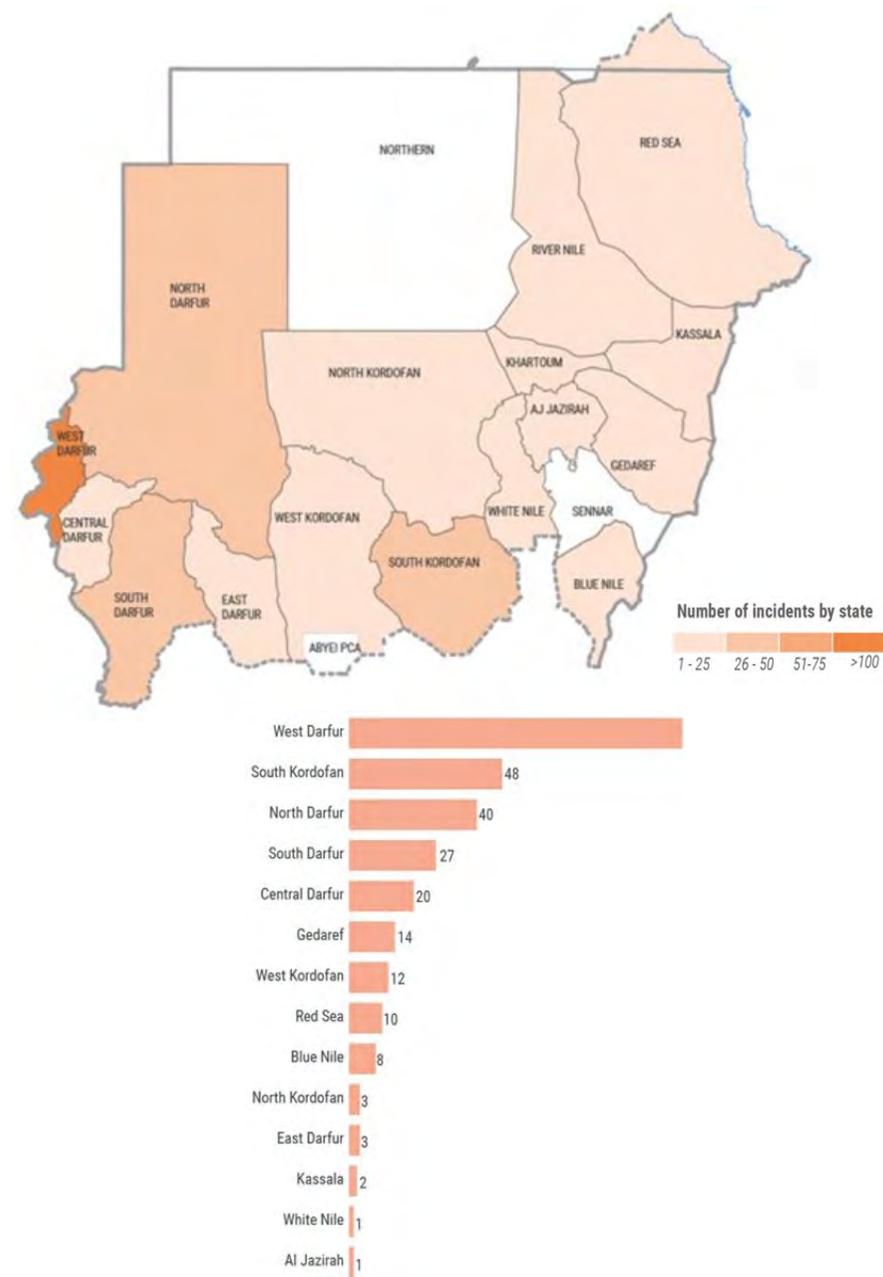
Conflict dynamics

Darfur: the security situation in Darfur has deteriorated even further since the removal of al-Bashir in 2019 and particularly since the 25 October 2021 coup. The absence of the rule of law, non-implementation of the security arrangements of the JPA, and growth of criminality have created a security vacuum. The withdrawal of the joint AU-UN peacekeeping force, UNAMID, has compounded this situation. In some respects, the JPA has become a driver of conflict, as different communities and armed groups see it as an opportunity to strengthen their political positioning and reassert their right to land. Darfuri armed groups that had long been operating in neighbouring Libya have returned to Darfur with supplies of cash and weaponry, as have members of the RSF who were serving in Yemen. The RSF, JPA signatory movements, and various militias have been recruiting on a large scale, and all communities have been arming themselves because they cannot rely on the government's security forces to protect them. Notable areas of conflict include the Al Geneina, Jebel Moon, and Kereneik localities in West Darfur, the Azum locality in Central Darfur, and the Al Fasher locality in North Darfur (OCHA 09/12/2021).

South Kordofan: in April 2019, after the departure of al-Bashir, SPLM-N announced a suspension of hostilities in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. In March 2021, the dominant faction of the SPLM-N (led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu) signed a Declaration of Principles with the transitional government, having previously boycotted the JPA. Any further negotiations were suspended in June 2021. Since the October 2021 coup, any chance of readjourning peace talks has appeared slim. South Kordofan has also become increasingly militarised and awash with arms. Government systems and the levers of power appear to be in the hands of former acolytes of the al-Bashir regime. Security entities are gaining more salience, and there are more bureaucratic impediments to and increasing surveillance of humanitarian work (CSF 19/04/2021; KII 11/12/2022; Reuters 15/06/2021; Al Jazeera 28/03/2021).

Blue Nile: with the JPA, Blue Nile became an autonomous region. The security situation in Blue Nile is relatively more stable than in South Kordofan or Darfur. There has been some very limited implementation of the security arrangements of the JPA, but because of the accelerating economic crisis and the suspension of much international funding since the coup, there is no funding available to support the delivery of peace dividends to the population (KII 11/03/2022).

Inter-communal Conflicts and Armed Attacks (January - December 2021)



Source: OCHA

East Sudan: instability in the east has increased as Beja tribes protest more frequently. Poor economic conditions in the area, as well as the belief that the Eastern Track of the JPA excludes them from power and a share of the region's wealth, drive calls for the abolition of the JPA. The rising instability has led to recurrent Port Sudan closures, significantly affecting trade. There are also tensions on the border with Ethiopia caused by disputes over al-Fashqa, where Ethiopian farmers cultivate fertile land claimed by Sudan. There have been sporadic clashes between the two sides in recent years (AI-Monitor 22/10/2021; Dabanga 20/10/2021).

North Sudan: since January, a new wave of resistance has emerged in the north of the country, where protesters have prevented lorries from transporting agricultural goods and livestock to Egypt. Hundreds of people have blocked the highway to protest rising electricity costs. Initially, protestors did not demand an end to military rule but called for investment in the north of the country that they claim has long been forgotten. As calls for a civilian-led government grow, these protests are becoming increasingly political. The protests have led to intermittent border closures, affecting trade routes in and out of Egypt (Reuters 24/01/2022).

Aside from internal conflicts, the war in **Yemen** also affects Sudan. Many RSF members are sent as mercenaries as paid by Saudi Arabia, then return with more experience and wealth that, should they remain loyal to Hemedti, increase the strength of the RSF. Some leave and use their newfound wealth to pursue a life of banditry. **Libya** has been a similar training ground for the RSF in the past (MEE 02/10/2020; Al Jazeera 06/02/2022; France 24 04/02/2022).

International relations

The October 2021 coup derailed progress made with the international community during the years of the transitional government. The **AU** immediately suspended Sudan's membership from the regional bloc. The **EU and US** supported this suspension. Specifically, the Biden administration has withheld a previously promised USD 700 million in economic aid and reversed the decision to clear much of Sudan's debt. Although there was a removal of sanctions following the ousting of al-Bashir, there are still discussions about reimposing them in light of renewed military rule (DW 27/10/2021; AI Monitor 25/10/2021).

Considering these decisions made by the west, Sudan is increasingly looking towards **Russia** for funding and military support. In February 2022, General Hemedti travelled to Moscow accompanied by a ministerial delegation. The outcome of the visit is unclear, but the RSF already has close relations with the Wagner Group, which is reported to have around 3,000 personnel in Sudan. There is speculation that plans are in motion to reignite an agreement, signed between Russia and the al-Bashir regime, to build a Russian naval base on the Red Sea. This visit is in line with Russia's strategic interest to develop a stronger presence in Africa and gain a foothold on the Red Sea (Africa News 03/03/2022; Reuters 03/03/2022; VoA 24/02/2022).

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have traditionally been strong allies of Sudan. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have previously promised aid to Sudan in return for military support to the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis in Yemen. Egypt has an interest in retaining Sudan's support in negotiations with Ethiopia over the GERD. All three countries are also keen to prevent the return of the Muslim Brothers to political power in Sudan. Sudan's neighbours have traditionally believed that a military-dominated government is the best guarantee of stability – and hence of their own interests (CMI 2021; MEE 02/10/2020; KII 11/03/2022).

Israel: the Trump administration put a lot of pressure on Sudan to normalise diplomatic relations with Israel, taking advantage of Sudan's financial difficulties. Al-Burhan strongly supported the policy of normalising relations with Israel as he saw the benefits of military and intelligence cooperation, whereas former Prime Minister Hamdok stressed the need to proceed with caution because of the historical sensitivity of the issue to Sudanese public opinion. Considering progress between the two countries, the US has appealed to Israel to pressure Sudan's military leadership not to obstruct the transition to democracy (Haaretz 09/02/2022).

Ethiopia: aside from territorial conflict over the al-Fashqa border region, there are tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia resulting from a dispute over Ethiopia's GERD on Blue Nile. Ethiopia has begun filling the reservoir, triggering concern in neighbouring countries that any disruption to the natural flow of the Nile River will affect their access to water resources. There have been threats of military action should a peaceful and legal negotiation be unsettled. The presence of over 72,000 refugees in Sudan from Ethiopia's conflict-affected area of Tigray amplify these tensions (Al Jazeera 22/01/2022; UNHCR 07/02/2022).

South Sudan: since South Sudan's independence in 2011, relations with Sudan have been tense. The Sudanese government has historically supported the armed opposition forces in the South Sudan civil war, while the South Sudanese government has supported armed groups in Sudan. The end of al-Bashir's rule marked a turning point, and Sudan and South Sudan have sought closer cooperation, including acting as a mediator to each other's active peace processes. Their reliance on oil also links them to each other; South Sudan relies on Sudan to export its oil, while Sudan is a key consumer of South Sudanese oil. In September 2020, a deal was signed to resume production after a long period of inactivity. Tensions between the countries still exist, most notably over the disputed Abyei region on the border of South Kordofan. Since the beginning of 2022, intercommunal conflict in the area has escalated. Abyei has a dedicated UN peacekeeping force (DW 15/11/2019; UNSC 26/04/2021; Dabanga 27/09/2020).

Libya: armed groups from Darfur have a strong presence in Libya, where they support the UEA-backed Libyan National Army. In return, they received significant financial and logistical support throughout 2021. Since October 2020, Libya has seen relative peace, which has led to a reduction in payments to Darfur armed groups (Al Jazeera 06/02/2022; France 24, 04/02/2022).

Socioeconomic situation

Prior to the secession of South Sudan in 2011, oil was the main export from Sudan. At present, gold is the primary export, although most production and trade are illicit and not reliably quantified. They are estimated to account for 70% of Sudan's exports, mostly to the UAE. The second-largest export sector is livestock to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, while lesser-value exports include cotton, Arabic gum, sesame, groundnuts, and animal hides. The main imports are manufactured goods, machinery, and food, primarily from China, Egypt, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE (Trading Economics 2021; The Africa Report 13/01/2021).

Losing 75% of oil revenues after 2011 dramatically weakened the Sudanese economy and decimated the Sudanese currency. Before 2011, Sudan was the second-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa, after Nigeria. The economy also suffered from US sanctions from 1997 until the ousting of al-Bashir in 2019. The ending of sanctions has not had a stimulus effect on the economy, and economic growth remains weak, with further currency depreciation. The black market offers better exchange rates than any official channel. Sudan's inflation rate rose to 359.09% in 2021, up from 163.26% in 2020 (FT 17/10/2011, Reuters 16/01/2022).

Sudan's deteriorating economy is driven by its large budget deficit of over \$900m, which in turn fuels inflation. This is not new to Sudan, but rather a re-emerging occurrence that has been driving inflation and humanitarian needs since 2018, increasing the humanitarian caseload from 5 million people to 14 million people over this time. Compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, strict IMF conditions intended to lower national debt in exchange for financial support have further depressed growth. Austerity measures have included higher taxes on a shrinking tax base, higher energy costs, and the removal of subsidies on bread and fuel, further weakening consumer purchasing power, especially in urban areas and with the most impact falling on the middle class. Crime has also risen during a prolonged recession (OCHA, 28/10/2020; Asharq al-Awsat, 26/01/2022, KII 10/03/2022).

Sudan is heavily reliant on wheat imports from Russia. Typically, Sudan imports 70–80% of its requirements of wheat, maize, and rice. Like much of Africa, Sudan will be hit by rising commodity prices, with wheat as the prime example, as a result of the war in Ukraine (Le Journal de l'Afrique, 28/02/2022; Down to Earth, 25/02/2022; Dabanga 17/04/2-2020).

Another concern is repeated droughts affecting food production across 14 million hectares, adding to food insecurity. Agriculture accounts for 30% of the gross domestic product and 70% of employment. 2022 harvest prospects are poor, including for staples like sorghum and millet, despite these crops being relatively well adapted to drought conditions. (WB 29/9/2021; KII 09/03/2022)

The deteriorating economy has been a huge motivating factor for widespread protests in cities across the country, while, in turn, they have also led to further economic disruption. Protests in the north have disrupted trade with Egypt, which accounts for 10% of Sudan's

exports. To the east, demonstrations around Port Sudan, where 60% of trade passes, have also periodically led to significant delays in the shipment of essential goods, aggravating shortages of food and medicine across the country (France 24, 28/10/2021).

Demographics and displacement

Sudan has a young population, with 41% of its total population under the age of 15 and 50% under the age of 54. Around 70% of Sudan's population is rural. The urban population is spread among a few cities and towns, almost all of which lie along the Nile River or one of its tributaries or along the Red Sea coast (World Population Review, 2022; Worldometer, 2022).

Ethnic and tribal groups: Sudan's population is a mix of indigenous Africans and Arabs. The Arabs, who introduced Islam to the country, began migrating to Sudan in the 14th century. Since the secession of the predominantly Christian south in 2011, approximately 90% of Sudan's population has been Arab, and the majority is Muslim. The Arab population is historically divided into over 300 tribes based on ancestral descent. The non-Arab populations mostly live in peripheral areas: Nubians live along the Nile in the far north and the Beja people live in the Red Sea Hills to the northeast. The Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups mostly live in Jebel Mara in Darfur. All these groups are Muslim. The majority of the Christian and animist populations live in the south: the Nuba live in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, and the Dinka live close to the South Sudan border. Borders with neighbouring countries cross tribal and ethnic lines and are incredibly porous. Historically, the government has been Arab and has politically and economically marginalised the non-Arab populations. This marginalisation is one of the key underlying causes of conflict (CIA World Factbook, 02/03/2022; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 26/01/2022).

Nomadic pastoralist communities are both Arab and non-Arab and comprise around 10% of the total population. There is often conflict between groups over pasture, particularly in times of drought when resources are limited. Climate change has caused nomads to increasingly adopt a mixed approach of semi-pastoralism and farming, resulting in more people progressively settling on lands they have occupied. The cross-border migration of nomadic tribes regularly occurs, particularly with South Sudan (UNDP 2006; Tufts University 30/06/2012; OCHA 09/12/2021).

Internal displacement: an estimated three million people are internally displaced in Sudan, the majority of whom are in Darfur and Blue Nile and South Kordofan. There is very limited spontaneous return of IDPs, while displacement is very often secondary (IOM accessed 06/03/2022).

Over the past year, rising conflict has significantly increased displacement in Darfur. Since January 2021, over 500,000 people have been displaced. This number represents the highest level of displacement since the height of the Darfur conflict ten years ago (NRC 08/12/2021; IOM 01/02/2022).

Refugees: Sudan is both a transit and destination country for refugees and migrant populations. There are approximately 1.1 million refugees, 75% of whom are from **South Sudan**. In 2021, there were over 81,200 new arrivals from South Sudan, constituting the largest refugee crisis of that year (UNHCR 31/01/2022).

Khartoum and White Nile states host two-thirds of all South Sudanese refugees in the country. There is an additional 25,000 South Sudanese who, after South Sudan's independence, have been unable to return to their country and lost their Sudanese residency. They have since resided in informal settlements primarily on the outskirts of Khartoum, but they are not registered as refugees and have difficulty accessing services (NRC 30/07/2021).

Eastern Sudan hosts around 128,000 **Eritrean** refugees, most of whom are in a state of protracted displacement, as well as over 72,000 **Ethiopian** refugees. The number of arrivals from Ethiopia spiked dramatically in November 2021 after the escalation of violence in Tigray. In February 2021, Blue Nile state also received new refugees fleeing intercommunal violence from Benishangul Gumuz region in Ethiopia.

Sudan hosts around 94,000 refugees from **Syria**, 28,000 from the **Central African Republic**, 4,000 from **Chad**, and 2,000 from **Yemen** (UNHCR 07/02/2022).

ANNEX B - BRIEF OVERVIEW OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Sudanese Armed Forces: the SAF comprises the Ground Force, Navy, and Air Force. Estimates of the size of the SAF vary among sources and range from 80,000 to over 100,000. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan commands the SAF, and he has been the head of state since the ousting of al-Bashir. Historically, Russia and China have provided the SAF with financial support and arms.

Rapid Support Forces: the RSF was formally established in 2013 under the NISS. It emerged from the paramilitary force known as the Janjaweed established by the government in the 1990s to target the non-Arab populations in Darfur. It comprises around 30,000 troops.

The RSF is effectively an autonomous military group only loosely allied to the SAF, but its commander, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as General Hemedti, was appointed deputy of the SAF, alongside its current head of state and commander. The RSF is widely accused of being responsible for most attacks against civilians during the protests that have been flaring since 2018. The RSF acquires funding via the sale of smuggled gold and, after members of the group joined the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, from Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Al Jazeera 06/06/2019; TIMEP 29/05/2019).

Sudanese Revolutionary Front: the SRF is an alliance of armed groups formed in 2011, with the shared goal of overthrowing al-Bashir's NCP. It remains mostly intact and has engaged with the FFC in the shared goal of achieving democratic transition. The SRF comprises the SPLM-N and Darfur's three main armed groups: the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and both Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) groups led by Abdel Wahid Al Nur (SLM-AW) and Minni Arkou Minnawi (SLM-MM). In 2020, some of these groups signed the JPA, but the SLM-AW and a faction of the SPLM-N did not (CSF 18/02/2021; Dabanga 11/08/2020; EASO 13/10/1988).

Justice and Equality Movement: The JEM, led by Jibril Ibrahim, is one of two significant groups from Darfur to sign the JPA. The group comprises mostly non-Arabs who took up arms against the government of al-Bashir in 2003, complaining that Darfur was marginalised. The JEM has historically had strong links to Chad, up until more recently when the JEM ranks inside Darfur decreased, as many fighters went to Libya to fight alongside forces aligned with Tripoli's Government of National Accord (Reuters 31/08/2020; Britannica accessed 03/03/2022; EASO 13/10/1988).

Sudan Liberation Army Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) in Darfur: The SLA-MM is the Zaghawa faction of the former SLM. The group has traditionally been more associated with fighting against Arab militias in Darfur instead of focusing on political change in Khartoum. Along with the JEM, many SLA-MM fighters have been very active in Libya in recent years (Reuters 31/08/2020; EASO 13/10/1988).

Sudan Liberation Army Abdel Wahid (SLA-AW) in Darfur: The SLA-AW is the Fur faction of the former SLM and the most active armed group in Darfur, also traditionally focused on fair resource distribution to their specific home regions and ethnic communities. The group is known for often recruiting from within displaced populations. It has not signed the JPA and has a reputation for refusing to sign previous deals on the grounds that the security situation is unstable and that the military overly dominates negotiations (Reuters 31/08/2020; EASO 13/10/1988).

Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North: The SPLM-N was formed during the civil war of independence for South Sudan. When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between Sudan and South Sudan was signed in 2011, the SPLM-N was aggrieved that South Kordofan and Blue Nile were not granted special concessions, triggering significant recruitment into the SPLM-N after South Sudanese independence. The SPLM-N continues to operate in South Kordofan and Blue Nile and under the umbrella of the SRF as part of the FFC alliance.

In 2017, the SPLM-N split into two dominant factions. One is led by Malik Agar and Yasir Arman, who have sought wider autonomy for the south. This faction is a signatory to the JPA. The other faction led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, and by far the more dominant, has rejected the agreement, claiming it does not meet his ambitious demand of a secular Sudan (Reuters 31/08/2020; Al Jazeera 28/03/2021; EASO 13/10/1988).

Forces of Freedom and Change: The FFC is an alliance of civilian opposition groups, including traditional political parties; the Sudanese Professionals Association; a group of doctors, health workers, and lawyers, who mainly organise protests; and active armed group movements that are united under the SRF umbrella.

The FFC is a fragile alliance, unified in its demand for a transition to democracy but divided in how to achieve this. In July 2019, the FFC negotiated a power-sharing plan with the Transitional Military Council for a transition to civilian governance. This plan weakened the credibility of the FFC among certain members, since some, primarily armed groups that fall under the SRF banner, are willing to negotiate with the military while others reject it entirely (Dabanga 11/08/2020).

Local resistance committees: LRCs, sometimes referred to as neighbourhood committees, are locally organised groups of civilians that have been leading the organisation of protests calling for a transition to democracy. The alliance of LRCs originally surfaced in response to the deteriorating economy under al-Bashir. Over time, it has become increasingly concerned with politics as spurred by the recent coup. There is no hierarchy, and they deliberately operate under a decentralised structure. They are mostly led by young people and transcend class, age, and ethnicity. The LRCs have, on the whole, steered away from resorting to violence and reject closed-door negotiations and the traditionally male-led, top-down approach to Sudanese politics. There are hundreds of LRCs across the country, although they are primarily active in urban areas. Increasingly, there are suggestions that some of the LRCs, particularly in the peripheral regions, are being co-opted by armed groups or tribal leaders (NYT 07/02/2022).

ANNEX C - SCENARIO TRIGGERS

Scenario 1 = Pathway to civilian governance

Scenario 2 = Return of a one-party state; harsh repression of revolutionary voices

Scenario 3 = Internal split in government; fragmentation of armed groups; sudden widespread conflict

Scenario 4 = Rapid elections inflame discontent and conflict

TRIGGERS	SCENARIO			
	1	2	3	4
POLITICAL				
The Sudanese political process facilitated by UNITAMS and the AU makes progress.				
There is inclusive dialogue leading to the formation of a 'revolutionary legislative council'.				
International condemnation of the Sudanese military grows.	X			The US and the EU, among other nations, have been very vocal in condemning the coup and a return to military rule (Al Jazeera 25/10/2021).
LRCs receive foreign support to build capacity.	X			LRCs are a network of volunteers closely linked with traditional neighbourhood service committees. They largely rely on donations from local communities and from Sudanese living abroad (TNH 14/12/2021).
Pro-democracy civilian groups, resistance committees, civil society groups, and political parties become more united and develop a joint road map on the way forward.	X			Pro-democracy civilian groups are not a cohesive bloc, and while they share a vision for a democratic Sudan and are united in their opposition to military rule, there is little agreement on the way forward.
There is inclusive dialogue leading to the formation of a 'revolutionary legislative council'.	X			
Protests calling for a transition to democracy intensify.	X			
Talks begin on amnesty or an exit strategy for senior military generals.	X			Senior military generals are unlikely to relinquish power without assurance that they will not face prosecution.
Senior military generals resign.	X			
Increased calls for transitional justice and targeted sanctions prompt generals to unify.		X		X
General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Islamists solidify their power, appointing more National Congress Party (NCP) and former regime elements to positions of influence and government.		X		Some members of the NCP and the former regime have been appointed to administrative positions in governance, raising concerns of a slip back towards Islamist rule (Reuters 11/11/2021).
The government receives political and military support from sympathetic states (including Egypt, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), who are in denial about the extent of Islamist influence of this government).		X		A primary concern among traditional supporters of Sudan is stability. Political, financial, and military support is often provided to bolster the hold of those in power, although they do not favour a return to Islamist rule (MEMO 15/11/2021; IISS 16/11/2021).
Intelligence services continue to split civilian actors, weakening opposition to military rule.		X		The NISS was the intelligence body during the al-Bashir period. In July 2019, it was rebranded and named the GIS. A constitutional amendment also meant the GIS was no longer authorised to arrest and detain people without trial, which does not seem to be the case in practice (Radio Dabanga 30/08/2020; BBC 05/02/2022).
International and Sudanese facilitation efforts are inconclusive.		X		

TRIGGERS	SCENARIO				
	1	2	3	4	
The leaders of the RSF and the SAF maintain their alliance of convenience, which is motivated by a shared fear of accountability and a desire to protect their economic gains.		X			
Increased funding to the SAF equalises the SAF-RSF power balance.		X		Hemedti's power grows as he pursues his own international agenda and continues to assert himself as a central figure in governance. Increased direct funding to the SAF would likely help al-Burhan equalise power relations with Hemedti (KII 06/03/2022).	
The SAF moves against General Hemedti to curtail the growing power of the RSF.			X	There are increasing doubts as to whether the power balance between the SAF and RSF will be maintained as Hemedti increases his position of influence, increasing the risk of an attempt to remove Hemedti and the RSF from government (KII 06/03/2022).	
JPA signatories attempt to oust General al-Burhan.			X		
General al-Burhan is replaced as commander of the SAF.			X	SAF members did not support General al-Burhan's decision to appoint Hemedti. This lack of support has had a detrimental impact on al-Burhan's popularity. He risks further losing favour because of his appointment of elements of the former regime to positions in government, indicating a shift back towards an Islamist ruling. It may become increasingly likely that others within the SAF no longer see al-Burhan's leadership as tenable and seek to replace him (KII 06/03/2022; ACW 22/02/2022).	
General Hemedti moves against the SAF and attempts to oust General al-Burhan, prompting a counter-move.			X		
Increasing numbers of Sudanese mercenaries return from conflicts abroad.			X	Members of Sudan's armed groups have long held a presence in neighbouring countries and supported these armed conflicts. Most notably, large numbers of fighters from armed groups in Darfur have been in Libya and were paid to support the Libyan National Army. Since the signing of the JPA, some have returned to Sudan to reassert their hold on territory (France 24 04/02/2022; IISS 17/01/2020).	
The NCP regain increasing influence within the government.			X	Since the October 2021 coup, al-Burhan has appointed a number of former regime elements to senior positions in government (Reuters 11/11/2021).	
Economic hardships increase discontent among junior and mid-level SAF officers.			X		
There is no progress in implementing JPA security arrangements.			X	The JPA includes provisions on security sector reform, transitional justice, fiscal decentralisation, land issues, nomads and herders, and the facilitated return and compensation of IDPs and refugees prior to an election. There has been very little progress made on its implementation (IDEA 21/04/2021).	
There is no effort made to appease non-JPA signatories.			X	X	Two key groups are not part of the deal: the Sudan Liberation Movement faction led by Abdel Wahid Mohamed al-Nour and the largest of the two factions of the SPLM-N (Reuters 31/08/2020).
International or Sudanese facilitators fail to achieve a mediated settlement.				X	
The international community and pro-democracy forces fail to block the early elections in the absence of a conducive environment.				X	
The AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development support the early elections and offer to provide election monitors.				X	
The military administration has enough capacity to organise and manipulate the presidential elections.				X	

TRIGGERS	SCENARIO				
	1	2	3	4	
Increased calls for transitional justice and threats of targeted sanctions prompt generals to unify.				X	
ECONOMIC					
Gulf states withhold financial assistance because of pressure from the EU, Norway, the UK, and the US stop actively supporting the military government.	X				
Sanctions are imposed on individual members of the Sudanese military.	X				
Russia provides additional wheat at reasonable cost.	X	X			
The revenue from transit fees on oil exports from South Sudan increases.		X			
The government receives financial support from Gulf states.		X			A primary concern among traditional supporters of Sudan is for the country to remain stable and become too political that financial and military support has often been provided to bolster the hold of military leaders in power (MEMO 15/11/2021; IISS 16/11/2021).
The SAF is unable to pay soldiers.			X		
External funding to the SAF does not increase.			X		
There is no interest from Gulf states or elsewhere to directly invest in Sudan.			X		
Gulf states withhold aid because of hostility to the growing influence of the Society of the Muslim Brothers.			X		While the Gulf states have been traditional allies to Sudan, they do not support a return to Islamist rule. During al-Bashir's rule, they begin to increase pressure to have Islamist factions removed from government (POMEPS 2020).
The economic collapse affects military companies, and official government income decreases further.			X		
The international community continues to withhold debt relief and economic aid.			X	X	With support from the EU, the Biden administration has withheld a previously promised USD 700 million in economic aid and reversed the decision to clear much of Sudan's debt (Deutsche Welle 27/10/2021; Al-Monitor 25/10/2021).