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Sudan after Bashir

Regional opportunities and challenges

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Omar al-Bashir's removal from power will have long-term effects on Sudan's political future. Even though domestic considerations forced Bashir's downfall, his extensive involvement in regional issues means his departure will resonate beyond the confines of Sudan's borders. This report explores the regional implications of Bashir's removal and the subsequent role of external actors in Sudan's internal affairs.

Key findings

- The end of Bashir's tenure has created a significant shift in regional power dynamics, offering both opportunities and challenges for the region to grapple with. It is unlikely that the leadership structure that emerges during the transitional process will be able to maintain the same level of influence on Sudan's external relations.
- Bashir's absence raises questions regarding Sudan's role as a guarantor of the South Sudan peace process, in addition to Sudan's future security, political and economic relationships with neighbours Chad, Eritrea and Egypt, among others.
- The 3 June crackdown on civilian protesters was a key turning point, both internally in Sudan and in terms of complicating public displays of support by other countries for the Transitional Military Council (TMC). After the crackdown, Ethiopia took a more active mediating role.
- The approaches of the African Union and Ethiopia initially did not appear to be coordinated. Nonetheless, the two rectified this situation thereafter, combining proposals and mediation in a successful effort to bridge the gap between the TMC and protesters.
- There is now a need for the region and the international community to maximise the opportunities Bashir's exit offer and minimise the emerging challenges in the interests of regional peace and security.

Recommendations

- The specific components of any recommendations depend on each regional context in which Bashir and Sudan were intimately involved. But a key starting point would be an agreement amongst external powers to avoid undue influence on Sudan's internal affairs during the transition period to preclude the development of a new proxy battleground and/or the undermining of civilian roles.
- Making up for Bashir's exit as a guarantor of the South Sudan peace process might require the region to consider the use of another member state of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) which would be generally perceived by all actors as neutral. Overall, a greater role for IGAD, the African Union and other member states as guarantors of the 2018 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) may be necessary to keep the process on track.
- The departure of Bashir also presents Sudan and its neighbours with an opportunity to redefine the relationships between them. One key aspect would be to involve Sudan in any future regional economic integration projects in the Horn of Africa.

Introduction

After three decades as leader of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir was ousted in April 2019 following months of protests that were propelled by a worsening economic situation. The involvement of the army in the run-up to his ouster complicated the political situation after his exit, pitting a popular civilian protest movement against a Transitional Military Council (TMC) that has sought to retain influence.

A crackdown on continued protests on 3 June 2019 was a major turning point, both within Sudan and for its external relations, resulting in Sudan's suspension from the African Union (AU). While the international pressure and mediation that followed resulted in an agreement between the main protest movement and the TMC on 4 August 2019, providing optimism for the way forward during a 39-month transitional period, implementation of the agreement amid an uneasy civil-military relationship remains to be seen.

As the transition period begins, however, it is clear that the end of Bashir's three decades in power will have long-term ripple effects on Sudan's political future in multi-faceted ways. Similarly, even though it was domestic considerations that led to Bashir's removal, his extensive external involvement in regional issues means that his departure from the scene will resonate beyond the confines of Sudan's borders.

This report explores the regional implications of Bashir's removal from the perspective of his relationships and the roles he played in regional processes in both positive and negative ways, as well as the involvement of external actors in Sudan's internal affairs after his exit. His ouster follows a series of significant recent changes in the region, including the ascension to power of Abiy Ahmed as prime minister in Ethiopia in early 2018 and the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea in June 2018, amongst others.[1] These developments have had significant implications for the entire Horn of Africa. The fall of Bashir, a key strongman in the region, is thus another similar event worthy of close attention.

Bashir's engagement in the Horn of Africa and beyond occurred within the confines of both his contribution to regional preventive diplomacy efforts and his meddling in the pursuit of the narrow interests of Sudan's political and military elites.[2] Given his dexterity in oscillating between these two approaches in Sudan's external relationships, his regional stature was significant and became intertwined with key geo-political dynamics.

It is unlikely that the leadership that emerges during the transitional process in Sudan will be able to maintain the same level of influence on Sudan's external relations. The end of Bashir's tenure means a significant shift in regional power dynamics, offering both opportunities and challenges for the region to grapple with.

This report is structured in four sections. It begins by conceptualising a framework for understanding Bashir's exit. That is followed by a section exploring the implications of Bashir's exit from the perspective of an end to his controversial involvement in the search for peace in South Sudan and as host to the AU-led peace initiative in the Central Africa Republic (CAR).

> The end of Bashir's tenure means a shift in regional power dynamics, offering both opportunities and challenges

This is followed by a discussion of the implications of some of the negative roles Bashir played, highlighted by the complex regional relationships he had with Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia and South Sudan. It then explores the involvement of regional Arab countries and the wider international community in post-Bashir Sudan. The report concludes that Bashir's exit will have as powerful an impact in the region as it will have in Sudan itself. There is, therefore, a need for the region and the international community to maximise the opportunities his exit offers and minimise the challenges emerging, in the interest of regional peace and security.

Understanding Bashir's exit

Understanding the implications of the exit of regional strongmen is a difficult and complex exercise. However, the need to understand such a situation is important since these are regular occurrences on the African continent, where some leaders have been in power for so long that they have begun to define the character of their states. Three variables are helpful in understanding changes that might result from the exit of such leaders.

First is the extent to which a particular leader has been able to influence national character and the way his country is perceived by the international community. When leaders take power, especially in very fragile situations, they usually attempt to transform how things are done, either by instituting new processes or by re-orienting the trajectory of national leadership. Such moves have important implications for national character by defining the way the pursuit of national goals is carried out.

Leaders such as Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni have had a major impact on the nature and overall orientation of their respective countries since assuming leadership. The resulting character of their respective states has influenced the way their countries are perceived, in their immediate region and in the international community as a whole.

In the case of Sudan, Bashir's stronghold on power vis-à-vis his domestic political and security choices since 1989 have had enormous implications on the character of the Sudanese state and the perception of the country's identity internationally. The introduction of Islamic Sharia Law, the hosting of Osama Bin Laden, the war with the South and the crisis in Darfur which all happened under Bashir's rule, have had major impact on international perceptions of Sudan which has, in turn, played a role in the kind of allies and foes the country has attracted.[3]

The second variable is the extent of a leader's external roles, involvement and influence in regional processes. This is what defines the external reach of a given leader and his presence in the regional diplomatic space. The leader's influence can either be positive or negative by virtue of his overall contribution to the achievement of regional goals, in terms of security, economic or diplomatic commitments. Bashir has played various roles in regional processes in South Sudan, Chad and in the tripartite process surrounding the Nile River, among others. This thus provides an important framework for assessing the consequences of his exit from the region.

The third variable is the nature of the determinants of the diplomatic and political choices of the leader outside his/her country. Is the leader's drive determined by national interests, the greed of the ruling political elites or the influence of major international powers? These variables are important in understanding whether or not the exit of a given leader might result in drastic changes in the direction of the country's foreign policy.

In most cases, however, the variables that determine the outcomes of political and diplomatic decision-making are not entirely predictable, especially in countries where diplomatic choices are not always defined by what national interests should ideally be, but by a leader who is guided by the dictates of elements of the political marketplace within which domestic transactional political dynamics are sustained.[4]

On the basis of these three key variables, a number of characteristics can be deduced from Bashir's role in the region. First are his roles as both a negative influence and a regional statesman, exemplified by his actions in South Sudan. He played an important part as a guarantor of the peace process that culminated in the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

> A crackdown on protests on 3 June 2019 was a turning point within Sudan and the TMC's external relations

Yet, his relationship with opposition leader Riek Machar and reports of his support for the latter's cause in the war in South Sudan also defines Bashir as an enigmatic leader whose regional choices have vacillated between positive contributions and actions that negatively impact the Horn of Africa.[5] The indictment of Bashir at the International Criminal Court over the Darfur crisis divided regional consensus at the AU level. It was a defining influence on the African position on the sequencing of justice and peace in cases of conflict.

This context provides an important framework for assessing the overall outcomes of Bashir's exit as a continental and regional player along the lines of his regional peacemaking roles and his spoiler roles, as well as the influence of his exit on the choices of other countries jockeying to maximise the benefits or otherwise of his absence, as detailed below. Subsequent sections of this brief employ this framework to inform the synthesis of the opportunities and threats emerging from Bashir's exit.

Sudan and its neighbours

End of Bashir's 'statesmanship' roles

South Sudan in the balance

Since the separation of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011, the relationship between the two countries has been marked by tension. This is exemplified by the 2012 outbreak of conflict in the disputed Heglig area and the suspicions characterised by the operation of armed groups on each other's territories, especially the alleged support Bashir gave to Machar's war efforts in South Sudan. Notwithstanding such developments, however, the two countries remain inseparably linked around many issues vital to their survival, particularly economy and security.

Transit fees from the export of South Sudanese oil through Sudanese oil pipelines currently constitutes about US$1.5 million per day.[6] In the midst of Sudan's prevailing economic hardships after losing a substantial part of its revenue to South Sudan, this has been a major source of finance. The centrality of oil in the relations between the two countries became evident through the inclusion of a provision for the two countries to collaborate on the resumption of oil production in Unity State, which had stalled due to the conflict, as part of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between Parties of the Conflict in South Sudan, facilitated by Sudan in June 2018.

The importance of oil to Sudan's economy was, thus, a key consideration for Bashir's involvement in the South Sudan peace process. After Bashir's exit, oil remains important to both countries. In Sudan, any emerging leadership will need revenue as a source of hard currency to help address the economic concerns of the civilian population. Similarly, oil revenue is central to sustaining peace efforts in South Sudan, particularly efforts to provide a peace dividend to citizens.[7]

> The impact of Bashir's exit on the relationship between South Sudan and Sudan will be felt in the security arena

The impact of Bashir's exit on the relationship between South Sudan and Sudan will be most felt in the security arena. This is due to Sudan's role as one of the two guarantors (along with Uganda) of the R-ARCSS. Sudan became a key player in the peace efforts in South Sudan after the first round of the revitalisation process led by

the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) failed to achieve its intended goals. Subsequent face-to-face talks between Machar and President Salva Kiir, as directed by the IGAD Committee of Ministers and hosted by Ethiopia, led to the Khartoum peace process facilitated by Bashir and Museveni.

The process ultimately culminated in the Revitalised-ARCSS, which is currently the main framework for peace efforts in South Sudan. Bashir's role in the peace process was particularly important because of his deep understanding of the South Sudan crisis, the inherent entry points to peace in the country and the shared interest in securing oil flows through Sudan.

With Bashir's exit also comes a vacuum in South Sudan

Since the signing of the agreement in September 2018, progress has been made on certain provisions of the agreement, but little has been achieved on the most contentious elements related to unifying existing security forces and the settling of internal state boundaries. The implementation of the R-ARCSS has thus far been so fragile that key milestones could not be met at the end of the pre-transitional phase in May 2019, necessitating a six month extension.

Central to the failures during the pre-transitional period is a lack of political will on the part of major stakeholders, particularly the incumbent government which currently holds significant sway over the direction of the process. The exit of Bashir, a key facilitator of the process, makes it unlikely that much more might be accomplished before the deadline, given any additional role he played has now been truncated. Even Kiir expressed scepticism on whether the November 2019 milestone marking the end of the pre-transitional period will be met.

This throws into question the sustainability of the agreement itself.[8] It is not just Bashir's departure which complicates matters, but that of key personnel around him who understood South Sudan and were important sources of institutional memory for Sudan's involvement. Key amongst such people is former head of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), Salah Gosh, who had deep political connections in South Sudan.

Machar, in particular, will likely feel Bashir's departure more strongly than the Kiir administration, given his closeness to Bashir. Until his departure, Bashir was Machar's main ally in a region which collectively sidelined the opposition leader from the first round of the revitalisation process and supported his house arrest in South Africa in mid-2017. Bashir's exit therefore means that Machar has lost a key source of regional support with implications for his political choices and trust in the ongoing peace process.

With Bashir's exit also comes a vacuum which may lead to increased responsibilities for Uganda's president. However, Museveni's well-known ties to the Kiir government raise questions as to his acceptability to some members of the opposition. If Uganda assumes a greater role in the absence of the Sudanese co-leadership, there is no indication that he will be able to translate the close relationship between himself and Kiir into the requisite leverage and pressure to get South Sudanese parties to fully commit to the implementation of the R-ARCSS in a way that speeds up the push for peace in the country. Given existing perceptions of Uganda's partiality, an increased role for Uganda in post-Bashir South Sudan would be divisive.

Making up for Bashir's exit, thus, might require the region to consider the use of another IGAD member state generally perceived by all actors as neutral to take up the role Sudan played, so as to maintain balance. The South Sudanese government has also expressed concern that Sudan's suspension from the AU, and thus its inability to participate in AU activities, could affect implementation of the R-ARCSS as well, further demonstrating the need for additional guarantors.[9]

Ethiopia, which initially showed leadership under its prime minister in forcing a face-to-face meeting between Bashir and Kiir, is an option. Although Abiy did hand over the process to Bashir after that meeting failed to secure a major breakthrough, in March 2019 he visited Juba in the company of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, during which the peace process was discussed. This shows Ethiopia's continued interest in stability in South Sudan and its readiness to contribute. Kenya has also recently appointed an envoy for South Sudan, and thus might assume a greater role in the process.[10]

The importance of political developments in Sudan to the conflict in South Sudan is such that prior to Bashir's

fall, Kiir supported Bashir at the height of the protests in Sudan. After his fall, South Sudan has sought to ensure that relations with the new Sudanese leadership remain intact. In April, less than a week after Bashir's removal, a delegation of South Sudanese officials, including the petroleum minister and security officials, met Sudan's TMC.[11]

According to reports, the delegation expressed Kiir's readiness to mediate between the TMC and protestors in Sudan,[12] a stark role reversal only a few months after Bashir was working on securing cessation of hostilities in South Sudan through the Khartoum process. This was followed by a visit from TMC leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to Juba in late May 2019 as part of a regional tour, and the visit of another delegation representing Kiir to Khartoum in mid-June 2019.

The delegation re-iterated its potential to mediate, this time with armed groups in Sudan – a key objective of the transitional structure in Sudan to achieve during its first six months. This move has since seen talks between the TMC leadership and elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N) in Juba in late July 2019.[13]

Will the CAR peace deal be affected?

A prime example of Bashir's oscillation between destabilisation followed by statesmanship in matters concerning Sudan's neighbours came just months before his fall, when in February 2019, 14 armed groups from the CAR signed a peace agreement with their government in Khartoum. In comparison, Sudan under Bashir had previously supported the Seleka militants in the CAR, especially during their 2012-13 military campaign.[14]

Even though the signing of the agreement itself had little to do with Bashir, the hosting of the venue demonstrated his ability to play a useful role in regional efforts to mitigate violent conflict, despite a significant history to the contrary. The uncertainties that characterised the immediate period after his fall and the likely emergence of a more inwardly focused new Sudanese leadership (at least initially during the transitional period) will thus deprive the region of an actor that at times, and when in its own interests, played the role of regional peacemaker.

Nonetheless, Sudan's overall influence in the CAR case is more limited than elsewhere; the peace deal is less dependent on Bashir's personal status, with key actors like the AU more invested in overseeing its implementation.[15]

Managing complex relations with Chad

Sudan has had a complex relationship with Chad under Bashir, marked by bouts of serious tension. Yet after an agreement to cease supporting each other's rebel movements in 2010, relations between the two dramatically improved.[16] The conclusion of the proxy war ended a key cycle of insecurity in the region at a state-to-state level. Yet the border area remains fragile, with an ongoing low-level conflict in Darfur on the Sudanese side and an insecure eastern Chad, where previous successful rebel movements have emerged. While the Déby–Bashir agreement resulted in a pact to avoid destabilising each other, it did little to address the true sources of insecurity on either side of the boundary.

> Sudan's relationship with Chad under Bashir was marked by bouts of serious tension

With the exit of Bashir, Chad under President Idriss Déby has been concerned about the level of attention to the border and the retention of the previous status quo.[17] Any lax enforcement on the Sudan side, or even a resumption of support to non-state groups, would provide an opportunity for existing insecurity between the two countries to re-emerge as a regional security concern. This possibility became of heightened importance with the rise in influence of TMC deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (known as Hemeti) in Khartoum after Bashir's exit. Hemeti hails from the Mahariya Rizeigat Arab tribe and commands the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a militia originating from the Darfur region.[18] He has reportedly retained ties to Chadian Arab tribes, who may also be opposed to Déby.[19]

Nonetheless, the TMC to date has sought to reassure Chad that the previous status quo will remain intact.[20] TMC leader Burhan visited N'Djamena in mid-June 2019 to discuss border security.[21] Perhaps more importantly, however, on 27 June 2019, Déby facilitated a meeting in N'Djamena between Hemeti and representatives of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudan

Liberation Movement – Minnawi faction. The discussions centred on an agreement to maintain a ceasefire and undertake future negotiations.[22]

The role of Déby in this process likely solidifies his relationship with the TMC and a continuation of the policy for both states to avoid supporting non-state actors in each other's territory. This also demonstrates Déby's utility, in addition to South Sudan, in terms of outreach to Sudan's armed movements.

In this sense, the departure of Bashir is unlikely to result in a resumption of tense dynamics between the two countries at this time, as both have sought assurances to maintain the previous status quo. But it highlights an area of prospective insecurity populated by a number of non-state actors who harbour deep-seated issues that have not been resolved.

A chance to redefine regional linkages

The Ethiopia–Eritrea rapprochement

The sudden and dramatic warming of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea in mid-2018 has had a major impact on the Horn of Africa. Among other aspects, it has underpinned a push from the leadership of both nations for wider regional economic integration. While this quest has proceeded at varying levels among the different states with regards to engagements with Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti, Sudan was notably absent from this project during the time of Bashir.

This was tellingly illustrated when the Sudanese government announced that the Ethiopian prime minister and the Eritrean president would briefly visit Khartoum en route to Juba in March 2019, a visit that never transpired. Part of this likely lay in the tense relationship between Bashir and Afwerki.

Eritrea and Sudan have a deep and complex relationship, oscillating between close ties and adversarial relations, often driven by the status of each other's relations with Ethiopia.[23] The level of previous Eritrean involvement in Sudanese affairs is clear from both the negative role it played in terms of sponsoring rebel movements in eastern Sudan, but also the positive role it played in brokering the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (EPSA) in 2006, in addition to an attempt to mediate between the government and the SPLM-N in 2012.[24] Nonetheless, despite multiple visits between the two regional leaders between 2009 and 2014, the relationship between Bashir and Afwerki had recently soured.

In January 2018, Sudan closed its border with Eritrea, deployed troops to the area and declared a state of emergency in the neighbouring areas of Kassala and North Kordofan. Explanations for this included unsubstantiated rumours that Egyptian troops might be present in Eritrea and a response to general insecurity along the border between the two countries, specifically to the need to conduct a campaign against the smuggling of arms and human trafficking in the area. The lack of clarity compounded the situation, with Eritrea angrily shutting down its border in retaliation, while complaining that Sudan was collaborating with Qatar to destabilise it.[25]

> The spread of the regional peace dynamics between Ethiopia and Eritrea largely ignored Sudan

Cross-border trade and smuggling between the two countries has been a key economic lifeline, up to the point of reliance, for Sudanese populations based in Kassala, but also for the flow of material goods into western Eritrea.[26] The closure of the border, at a time before Eritrea's lengthy border with Ethiopia was opened, practically isolated parts of the country, worsened the economy of the border communities and resulted in what one regional official described as an 'unforgiveable' action in the eyes of Afwerki.[27] In January 2019, however, at the height of the pressure to oust him, Bashir announced the re-opening of the border during a visit in Kassala, likely aimed at shoring up local support as the protest movement against him gathered steam across the country. Nonetheless, it appears Eritrea did not reciprocate.[28]

The ensuing spread of the regional peace dynamics between Eritrea and Ethiopia throughout the Horn largely ignored Sudan, perhaps due to the level of personal animosity between Bashir and Afwerki. This is ironic, given that Sudan claims to have pushed for such a regional economic integration project just a few years earlier without much success.[29]

In this sense, the exit of Bashir and those close to him removes the impetus for any Eritrean veto over Sudan's inclusion in the unfolding regional economic integration project. Thus, the departure of Bashir presents Sudan and its neighbours with an opportunity to redefine their relationships. Along these lines, Eritrea has been cultivating close ties with the new TMC leadership in Sudan.

> Ethiopia has taken a pro-active role since the ouster of Bashir, while in the TMC's entreaties, Ethiopia has clearly been identified as a key country to influence

The visit of Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and presidential adviser Yemane Gebreab to Khartoum on 19 May 2019 is a telling indication of this, especially in the context of the aborted Afwerki/Abiy visit to Khartoum in March, but also ongoing regional jockeying for influence in post-Bashir Khartoum. This was followed by:

- 14 June 2019 – a visit from TMC leader Burhan to Asmara
- 24 June 2019 – another visit from Gebreab and Saleh to Khartoum
- 2 July 2019 – a trip by Hemeti to meet Afwerki in Asmara
- 8 July 2019 – Gebreab's presence in Khartoum again on 8 July 2019, where he met Burhan, Hemeti and the civilian opposition.

The flurry of activity is emblematic of a new phase in Eritrean–Sudanese relations, punctuated by an agreement between Hemeti and Afwerki to re-open their common border and form a joint committee to supervise implementation.[30]

Interestingly, however, Eritrea's newfound engagements in Sudan have contrasted with the role of other African actors, such as Ethiopia and the AU. While Eritrea has advocated for a peaceful transition process, it also came out strongly against the AU's role in Sudan, following its suspension of the country after the June military crackdown on protestors.[31] This stance pits it against not only the continental body, but potentially against an emerging common African consensus, led by Ethiopia (see below).

In this sense, the Eritrean re-engagement of Sudan clearly provides new opportunities to move beyond some of the thorny regional relationships created under Bashir and permits an opportunity for greater unity in the Horn of Africa, especially ahead of an increasing focus on regional integration. Yet this process must also be managed to ensure that new fault lines do not emerge amid divergent approaches to the Sudanese transition.

AT LEAST FIVE HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS BETWEEN ERITREAN AND SUDANESE OFFICIALS HAVE OCCURRED SINCE BASHIR'S REMOVAL

Ethiopia takes charge

Ethiopia has taken a pro-active role since the ouster of Bashir, while in the TMC's entreaties, Ethiopia has clearly been identified as a key country to influence.

The Ethiopian prime minister quickly issued a statement after Bashir's overthrow expressing support for the protestors, while 'appreciating' the military council for overseeing the transition. The first foreign delegation from the TMC visited Addis Ababa, and held talks with both the Ethiopian Government and the AU. Newly appointed Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew also visited Khartoum in early May and held meetings with both the TMC and the Declaration of Freedom and Change civilian opposition.[32] Furthermore, TMC leader Burhan stopped in Addis Ababa on 28 May 2019, as part of his first major trip abroad.[33]

Despite this level of activity, the response from the Abiy government was initially more cautious than many would have expected, given the fact that his administration rose to power on the backs of a street protest movement as well. Yet in the aftermath of the June military crackdown on civilian protestors and the AU's suspension of Sudan, this changed.

Abiy's visit to Khartoum on 7 June 2019 and an appointment of special envoy Mohamed Dirir in the wake of the AU's suspension of Sudan signalled this more robust approach, eventually contributing to the 4 July 2019 transitional power-sharing agreement. Yet the role assumed by Ethiopia in mediations between the TMC and the protestors, under the rubric of Ethiopia's chairmanship of IGAD, also raised the prospect of confusion amid a proliferation of similar initiatives, giving rise to concerns regarding the coordination of various actors involved in ensuring that Sudan's transition stays on track (see below).

Bashir was also a key Ethiopian ally in its contestation with Egypt over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile. With his exit and an increasing role for Egypt vis-à-vis Khartoum, Ethiopia will also be careful not to lose a key partner, something which would have implications in the balance of power along the Nile.

Role of external powers in post-Bashir Sudan

External actors have taken advantage of the political uncertainty in Khartoum following Bashir's fall. In the contestation between the TMC and the civilian opposition prior to the 4 August agreement, this crystalised into support for either side, drawing foreign influences into Sudan's internal affairs in a manner not witnessed during Bashir's tenure. In the midst of Sudan's multiple divisions and multi-layered political and security challenges, the role of external powers has added another layer of risk for both the transition process and the stability of the country in the post-Bashir environment.

Emergence of a new 'Troika'

Despite ignoring Bashir's pleas for economic support ahead of his removal, a new 'troika' of sorts consisting of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged, even if not always seeing eye-to-eye. They appear to have stepped up their engagement in Sudan since Bashir's removal, in an apparent attempt to influence the outcome of the transitional period in favour of the TMC.[34] In this sense, while Arab powers may have seen it useful to move on from Bashir during his time of greatest need, this has not signalled any reduced interest in Sudan as a whole.

> While Arab powers may have seen it useful to move on from Bashir, this has not reduced interest in Sudan as a whole

The entry points for the interference of Arab powers has hinged largely on Sudan's weak economy and the existing relationship between key leaders in the TMC and Arab powers. Consequently, Saudi Arabia and the UAE pledged a US$3 billion economic package announced less than two weeks after Bashir's departure.[35]

The influence of this bloc has been demonstrated in less overt and more personal manner as well. Both Burhan and his deputy Hemeti retain previous ties to this bloc through the involvement of Sudanese troops in the Yemen war effort.[36] The UAE has also hosted delegations of various Sudanese movements, such as a faction of the SPLM-N, to shore up support for the TMC.[37]

The TMC has, in turn, assured there would be no removal of its troops in Yemen as part of the transition, although the UAE itself has begun a drawdown of its own forces in western Yemen.[38] Rather, the TMC has gone further to demonstrate that RSF forces will still be available at this bloc's behest. Local news outlets reported in late

July 2019 that up to 1 000 soldiers had arrived in Libya to support General Khalifa Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, aligning with Saudi, UAE and Egyptian interests in the country.[39]

During his first trips abroad as TMC leader, Burhan chose to visit Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, in addition to neighbouring Ethiopia and South Sudan. Hemeti also travelled to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in late May 2019. The selection of these destinations is a clear signal in terms of which countries are priorities for the TMC's external relations. It also reaffirms the significant involvement and interest of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt in Sudan's affairs in the post-Bashir context.

The rise in the involvement of Arab powers in post-Bashir Sudan is linked to a number of key regional issues which pre-date the current situation in Sudan. First is the spillover effect of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis, in which the UAE–Saudi Arabi bloc has been in keen contestation with Qatar, but also Turkey, for influence in the Horn of Africa.

Bashir attempted to play a neutral role, while extracting concessions from both sides. As an example, Bashir provided troops in support of the Saudi cause in Yemen, while at the same time obtaining a multitude of investments from Turkish–Qatari partnerships, including a US$4 billion project to restore the old Ottoman port of Suakin. This move, however, spurred concerns from countries like Egypt that the project is actually an entry point for a Turkish military presence along Sudan's Red Sea coast.

The ensuing political uncertainty after Bashir's exit has thus exposed Sudan to a continuation of the contestation for influence. Currently, Turkey and Qatar have both been largely silent, signalling the ascent of Saudi Arabia and UAE at their expense.[40] The announcement by Hemeti that in the days after the ouster of Bashir Qatar's foreign minister was denied entry to Sudan, in addition to the closure of Al-Jazeera's office in Khartoum in May 2019, signal how quickly the TMC broke from Bashir's policy and chose to throw its lot in with the Saudi–UAE bloc.[41]

Bashir had been able to play off both sides in the GCC dispute in a manner no other Horn of Africa nation has been able to. This was in part because of his leverage around the deployment of troops to Yemen to support the Saudi Arabia–UAE coalition against Houthi forces. Yet, Bashir's departure raises the stakes for Sudan to avoid becoming wrapped up in the exportation of the GCC's internal disputes to the Horn of Africa, despite its recent ascent towards the Saudi–UAE bloc.

This competition has manifested itself with devastating consequences in other parts of the Horn of Africa and thus remains a concern for the transitional period, if Sudan is to become involved in such external considerations.[42] Such an outcome would place undue pressure on the country during a pivotal time, as outside actors attempt to influence the outcome of the transition period in their favour.

> Bashir played off both sides in the GCC dispute in a manner no other Horn of Africa nation has been able to

Another motivation for the involvement of Arab powers beyond pushing to extend their influence in the Red Sea is linked to the fact that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt all have interests in preventing the re-emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan. There are also likely desires to mitigate the successes of a popular street movement. They are also driven by concerns that such aspects could serve as inspiration for internal challenges to the longevity of their own rule.

These concerns follow the playbook of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in reaction to popular protests during the Arab Spring. Egypt was a key site of these machinations, which resulted in the popular toppling of military dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011, but which was followed by the overthrow of the elected Muslim Brotherhood-aligned government by Saudi Arabia and UAE-backed military leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in 2013. This example led to an eventual victory for the Saudi Arabia–UAE bloc and is likely on the minds of both the protest movement and the external Gulf actors, as both sides attempt to prevent a repeat scenario in the region.

Egypt and the AU

Egypt has played an important role in Sudanese affairs since the ousting of Bashir and retains special interests

beyond those of the Saudi–UAE bloc, including security over its common border in the event of any prolonged crisis in Sudan. Egypt expressed sympathy for the protestors following Bashir's removal, but actions since Bashir's ouster have also revealed support for the TMC.[43] This has increasingly become evident via Egypt's influence on the AU's stance on the situation in Sudan, which has succeeded in buying time for negotiations with the TMC.

The AU initially strongly condemned the TMC, describing its role in the toppling of Bashir as a military takeover and in violation of continental guiding principles against military coups. On 15 April, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) communiqué demanded the TMC hand over power to a civilian administration within 15 days, or risk suspension from the union. Notwithstanding the AU's position, Egypt in its position as 2019 chair organised a consultative summit of regional partners in Egypt on 23 April. The outcome of the meeting called for a three-month transition period instead.

> The AU's suspension of Sudan from the continental bloc demonstrated its strong commitment to civilian rule in Sudan

The TMC also sent a delegation to meet with AU Chairperson Moussa Faki in the meantime as part of its charm offensive, while Faki paid a two-day visit to Khartoum. Combined, the result was an extension of the 15-day deadline given by the PSC by an additional two months upon its expiration on 30 April.[44] Egypt thus assumed a pivotal position in the Sudanese transition process, not only as a concerned neighbour with specific interests, but also as an influential actor within the AU. To date, this influence has been utilised in terms of securing an elongated time period and role for the TMC, an indication of where Egypt's support in the transition lies, and its overriding concerns regarding the potential for instability in Sudan.[45]

The June crackdown on protesters by the RSF and Sudan's subsequent suspension from the AU, however, altered the public profile of the Arab powers. For example, UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash called for dialogue and an investigation into the events just days after.[46] Egypt also organised another meeting of Sudan partners in Addis Ababa on 20 June 2019, which supported a resumption of dialogue between the military and protest movement.[47] Such dynamics symbolise how the June crackdown has been a key turning point, internally in Sudan and also in complicating support towards the TMC.

Egypt's interests in Sudan are also driven by a complex long-term relationship between the two neighbouring countries, complicated by developments during Bashir's tenure, but based on key considerations that are likely to continue. Ongoing disputes over territorial control of the Halayeb triangle, Egyptian concerns over the presence of Muslim Brotherhood remnants and/or anti-Egyptian government actors in Sudan and Sudan's switch in stance to support construction of the dam on the Blue Nile are key issues that underpinned the differences during Bashir's rule.

Relations have ebbed and flowed, but despite strong trade dynamics, tit-for-tat manoeuvres in 2017, such as visa restrictions and bans on importing products, demonstrated a low point. A series of high-level diplomatic visits in 2018 overcame these differences and Bashir even visited Egypt in January 2019 during the height of the protest movement against him.[48] Yet the major outstanding areas of contention remained, and in concert with a view that a continued strong military apparatus may be able to stave off any chaos in Sudan which would have ramifications across their common border, they seem to provide motivation for Egypt's interests in post-Bashir developments in Sudan.[49]

AU and IGAD – eventual coordination

The AU has applied significant pressure in favour of a transition towards civilian rule, but had also demonstrated signs of accommodation with the TMC by its extension of the deadline to hand over power (see above). Despite the evident influence of key powers such as Egypt in what appeared to be an AU accommodation of the TMC's sluggish response to the continental demand to hand over to civilian rule, the June crackdown forced its hand. The AU's suspension of Sudan from the continental bloc thereafter demonstrated its strong commitment to civilian rule in Sudan. The previous deliberations pit the organisational norms and principles of the AU against the interests of some important member states, but the

violence against civilian protestors made the continuation of an ambivalent response untenable.

This tension between organisational norms and the interests of other actors was readily apparently in a PSC communiqué on Sudan on 27 May 2019. The statement was strongly in favour of a transition to civilian-led rule and called for an 'African-led process' in conjunction with IGAD. Yet it also called on all others to fall in line with the African approach to Sudan, and crucially called on 'external actors to refrain from any interference that could further complicate the already challenging situation in The Sudan'.[50]

> Both the US and the AU have two of the biggest levers of pressure to apply in Sudan

The AU PSC statement thus demonstrated the primacy of its approach to Sudan, but also highlighted, without naming countries, the tensions it faces vis-à-vis external actors. In this sense, while Sudan risks becoming the site of a GCC proxy battle, it also risks becoming the theatre of a showdown between the organisational principles of the AU and the interests of Middle Eastern actors.

The June crackdown and AU suspension also changed the nature of IGAD's involvement. IGAD had been relatively quiet over the developments in Sudan. A statement from the organisation on 12 April simply noted that it was monitoring developments and ready to stand by Sudan.[51] IGAD followed that up with a brief mention of Sudan during a Council of Ministers meeting in Juba on 7 May 2019, and another statement emphasising support for the AU process on 10 days later. It appeared from IGAD's reference to the AU leadership that the organisation seemed to be deferring to the AU framework on the political transition.

Ethiopia took a lead role in mediations after the crackdown, which was legitimized through its capacity as IGAD chair. This appeared to be more of an Ethiopia-driven action than one emerging from within IGAD itself, but a Council of Ministers meeting on 19 June 2019 re-asserted the organisation's involvement in Sudan under the principle of subsidiarity and signalled acceptance of the Ethiopia mediation process on its behalf.[52]

The approaches of the AU and Ethiopia initially did not appear to be coordinated; the TMC even complained about the divergent proposals and the need to unify them.[53] This raised concerns about a proliferation of initiatives in Sudan and the prospect of 'forum shopping'. Nonetheless, the two rectified this situation thereafter, combining proposals and mediation in a successful effort to bridge the gap between the TMC and protesters, resulting in the 5 July announcement of power-sharing agreement.[54] Despite the initial discrepancies, credit should be given to the prioritisation of coordination between the AU and the Ethiopia mediation effort afterwards, in order to prevent a situation whereby disinterested actors could play one off the other, while delaying the emergence of an agreement.

A watchful international community

The prolonged negotiations in Sudan over the transition to civilian rule drew the interest of a variety of other actors, many of which also appointed special envoys to represent their respective organisations. Nonetheless, the majority have sought to support the primacy of the AU–Ethiopia process, rather than compete with it.

The United Nations engagement is being managed through the appointment of Nicholas Haysom as Special Adviser on Sudan. Haysom served as the UN's Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan from 2016 to 2018, indicating a deep familiarity with the context. Yet, in his new role, Haysom was tasked to assist the AU's mediation efforts, another indication of the primacy of the AU in Sudan's transition process.

The Arab League has been a more recent entrant into the process, especially after the crackdown on civilian protests. On 8 June 2019, the Arab League called for restraint in Sudan, followed by high-level visits to Sudan in both mid-June and early July.[55] These meetings focused on achieving consensus and resuming negotiations over the handover of power to civilians.[56] Voicing the same objectives of the AU–Ethiopia process, officials have insisted that the organisation is not seeking to play a competitive role, but rather coordinate with the AU.[57]

Both the United States and European Union (EU) applied pressure on the TMC in order to give way to civilian rule.

The EU stated it would not recognise the TMC, while the US has suspended negotiations on the removal

of Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism.[58] The latter development was ongoing at the time of Bashir's removal and includes Sudanese concessions on aspects such as human rights and regional peace initiatives.[59] The restrictions associated with this list affect the banking sector, and the removal may improve Sudan's economic outlook, signifying them as a key source of leverage.

The US interest in Sudan was exemplified through a US State Department delegation visit by Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Africa Makila James in late April, but also by heightened activity that occurred after the June crackdown. This was followed by a visit by US Secretary of State Tibor Nagy to Khartoum on 12 June 2019, and the appointment of long-time State Department official Donald Booth as Special Envoy for Sudan. Booth undertook a four-day visit to Sudan in late June 2019 while also visiting with the Arab League in Cairo.[60] The US has also used its position to engage Middle Eastern allies Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in order to find a common position on the transitional process in Sudan.[61] In this sense, the US response has helped sustain pressure in favour of civilian rule, while working towards pressuring others in favour of this. A key aspect will be maintaining such pressure in the aftermath of the 4 August agreement.[62]

The US, along with the United Kingdom and Norway, also form The Troika, a historically relevant bloc in Sudan, and one that since Bashir's ouster has consistently advocated for the TMC to give way to a civilian-led transitional authority.[63] The Troika organised a meeting on Sudan in Berlin on 21 June 2019, which also included Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, in a further bid to harmonise positions.[64] A Troika statement on 29 June 2019 also stressed its support for the AU–Ethiopia-led mediation process.[65]

The role of these external actors has largely consolidated around supporting the AU–Ethiopia mediation process while applying pressure both internally and externally for Sudan to transition to civilian rule. In line with this objective, both the US (state-sponsored terrorism list) and the AU (return from suspension) have two of the biggest levers of pressure to apply in Sudan to ensure adequate implementation of the 4 August agreement between the military and the protest movement.

External pressure also appears to have played a role in ensuring Arab support for the transitional agreement. Yet, it remains to be seen during the transitional period if the levers of pressure from the AU and US in favour of the civilian movement can outweigh backing, especially financially, for the military from the Gulf, and in turn influence the trajectory of decision-making during the transitional period to ensure full implementation of the agreement.

Conclusion

Bashir's removal from power is a victory for Sudan's civilian population, which has held serious economic and political grievances for decades. The 3 June 2019 crackdown served as another turning point for both internal and international action in Sudan in favour of a civilian-led administration. The implementation of the resulting 4 August power-sharing agreement is now a crucial aspect to ensure that Sudan's transition remains on track.

> Bashir's departure represents an opportunity to re-make regional relationships in a positive manner

Yet regardless of that outcome, the emerging leadership in Sudan is unlikely to replicate Bashir's influence on regional dynamics in the Horn of Africa and beyond, indicating a new era full of both opportunities and serious challenges. Even if many of the institutions utilised by Bashir remain in place, the transitional agreement raises questions as to their future role, and thus influence on external relations. A key challenge will be the ability to resist external pressure or influence in Sudan's internal affairs, as any new leadership will likely be less able than Bashir was to manage this aspect.

For better or worse, Bashir's external dealings also have had a major impact throughout the region. His meddling generated conflict and tension, such as along Sudan's borders with Chad, South Sudan and Eritrea. Yet his diplomacy and statesmanship also contributed to the regional quest for peace when it suited his strategic interests. The overseeing of recent peace deals with armed actors in South Sudan and the CAR is a testament

to this. Bashir's track record in the region is decidedly mixed, but his removal means a change in the status quo, requiring a great degree of management in repositioning Sudan regionally.

Yet, Bashir's departure also represents an opportunity to re-make regional relationships in a positive manner, moving on from some of his more negative machinations and failures. The key is to limit negative implications and internal meddling associated with Bashir's removal, while channelling other impacts in a positive manner.

This means the vacuum following the departure of Bashir's influence in the region needs to be managed by the region in a way that will lead to filling it in a productive and progressive manner, rather than allowing it to provide an opportunity for actors with vested interests whose choices might be unchecked. Such a regional agenda will ensure that Sudan itself is not the recipient of negative post-Bashir meddling from external actors, especially given the divergent approaches different blocs have demonstrated with regards to the future of the country.[66]

The specific components depend on each regional context in which Bashir and Sudan were intimately involved. But starting points would be an agreement amongst external powers to avoid undue influence on Sudan's internal affairs during the transition period to preclude the development of a new proxy battleground and/or the undermining of civilian role, a greater role for IGAD, the AU and other member states as guarantors of the R-ARCSS agreement in South Sudan to keep the process on track, and considerations of Sudan's involvement in any future regional economic integration projects in the Horn of Africa.

Sudan's post-Bashir transition will be an uneven ride, given the uneasy balance of power between the military and civilian components, and the needed economic reforms to get the economy back on track. Yet the regional implications of a post-Bashir region may also be just as dramatic – both in terms of the loss of a regional role outside of Sudan's borders, and the greater presence of competing external actors within them. There is a need for a greater appreciation of such dynamics now, so that appropriate action can be taken to re-orient a post-Bashir Horn of Africa in a positive manner, making up for gaps while pursuing new opportunities.

Appendix A: Appointed Envoys, Mediators and Advisers for Sudan

Organisation	Envoy	Appointed
African Union	Mohamed Belaich Lebatt	March 2019
United Kingdom	Robert Fairweather	March 2019
United Nations	Nicholas Haysom	April 2019
Ethiopia/IGAD	Mahmoud Dirir	June 2019
European Union	Pekka Haavisto	June 2019
United States	Donald Booth	June 2019
Arab League	Khalil Al Thawadi	June 2019

Appendix B: International Travel by TMC Leadership

Date	City	Country	Leader
24 May 2019	Jeddah	Saudi Arabia	Hemeti
25 May 2019	Cairo	Egypt	Burhan
26 May 2019	Abu Dhabi	UAE	Burhan
27 May 2019	Juba	South Sudan	Burhan
28 May 2019	Addis Ababa	Ethiopia	Burhan
30–31 May 2019	Mecca	Saudi Arabia	Burhan
14 June 2019	Asmara	Eritrea	Burhan
17 June 2019	N'Djamena	Chad	Burhan
27 June 2019	N'Djamena	Chad	Hemeti
2 July 2019	Asmara	Eritrea	Hemeti
28 July 2019	Juba	South Sudan	Hemeti
29 July 2019	Cairo	Egypt	Hemeti

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Notes

1 Other significant developments in the region include the peace accord between major warring factions in Sudan in October 2018, the increasing involvement of Middle Eastern nations in Horn of Africa affairs and concerns of Great Power competition with the US and Chinese military presence in Djibouti.

2 It is important to note that during Bashir's rule in Sudan, the line between political and military elites was blurred because of his reliance on and use of the army in the implementation of his policies and his military background as well as the overall involvement of the army in the politics of the country.

3 Bashir's hold on power can be divided into two major dispensations. Many, including Sudanese scholar Professor Atta El-Battahani, argue that the first dispensation constituted the era between 1989 and 1999 during which Bashir was basically 'a chess piece' in Hassan al-Turabi's grand scheme 'to set up an *Islamic Internationale* from which to spread the message of Islam'. [View shared via email correspondence, 26 July 2019]. This policy brief's reference of 1999 considers it as the beginning of Bashir's real attempt to consolidate power away from the influence of the Islamic movement.

4 For detailed discussion of the Political Marketplace Theory, see Alex de Waal's conceptualisation The Political Marketplace: Analyzing Political Entrepreneurs and Political Bargaining with a Business Lens, Framework and Background, World Peace Foundation, October 2014, https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2014/10/17/the-political-marketplace-analyzing-political-entrepreneurs-and-political-bargaining-with-a-business-lens/

5 See, for instance, reports of Sudanese arms supplies to the SPLA-IO, in Conflict Armament Research, Weapon Supplies into South Sudan's Civil War: Regional re-transfers and international intermediaries, November 2018, www.conflictarm.com/reports/weapon-supplies-into-south-sudans-civil-war/ pp.30–33.

6 This is estimated at the rate of 170 000 bpd of production as of May 2019, an estimated 10 000 barrels of which consists of Nile Blend from Unity fields and the rest are Dar Blend. As per the 2012 Agreement on oil between Sudan and South Sudan, pipeline fees for Dar Blend and Nile Blend are at US$9/barrel and US$11/barrel, respectively. This estimate does not include the transitional financial arrangement (TFA) of US$15/barrel payment towards the total of US$3.02 billion.

7 The United Nations Sanctions Committee Expert Panel estimates that the South Sudanese government is currently earning US$50-60 million per month from oil sales; Panel, 30.

8 *VOA*, South Sudan's Kiir: More Time Needed to Form Interim Government, 8 May 2019, www.voanews.com/a/south-sudan-kiir-more-time-needed-to-form-interim-government/4909509.html

9 Gov't concerned about peace deal after AU suspended Sudan, *Eye Radio*, 19 June 2019, https://eyeradio.org/govt-concerned-about-peace-deal-after-au-suspended-sudan/

10 Ethiopia also still retains the chair position of IGAD, despite indications in June 2019 from the Abiy government that it was prepared to give it up; Capital News, Uhuru appoints Kalonzo his Special Envoy to South Sudan, 3 July 2019, www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2019/07/uhuru-appoints-kalonzo-his-special-envoy-to-s-sudan/

11 Sudan's military council reiterates commitment to strong relations with South Sudan, *Sudan Tribune*, 17 April 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67391

12 South Sudan offers to mediate political transition in Sudan, Reuters, 18 April 2019, https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1RU0OH-OZATP

13 Priority during the first six months of the transitional period in Sudan is being given to achieving internal peace, which includes dialogue with armed groups. Kiir sends delegation to mediate political stalemate in Sudan, *Eye Radio*, 28 June 2019, https://eyeradio.org/kiir-sends-delegation-to-mediate-political-stalemate-in-sudan/; Military Council, SPLM-N Agar agree on measures ahead of peace talks in Sudan, *Sudan Tribune*, 28 July 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67846; The talks in July was held between the TMC's Deputy Chair, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, and SPLM-N leaders from Blue Nile and South Kodofan, including Abdelaziz Adam Al-Hilu https://www.france24.com/en/20190727-sudan-generals-protest-leaders-meet-rebel-chief-ssudan

14 Yannick Weyns, Lotte Hoex, Filip Hilgert and Steven Spittaels, *Mapping Conflict Motives: The Central African Republic*, International Peace Information Service (IPIS), November 2014.

15 Will the AU-led peace deal in the Central African Republic hold?, 6 March 2019, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) PSC Report, https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/will-the-au-led-peace-deal-in-the-central-african-republic-hold

16 Prior to that, rebel forces sponsored by each country had audaciously attacked N'Djamena in both April 2006 and April 2008, and Khartoum in May 2008, spooking both administrations and leading to a rupture in ties.

17 Some concerns regarding the future of the non-aggression agreement stem from the fact that it was highly personalised between Déby, Bashir and a few key officials, rather than reflecting wider support; Jérôme Tubiana and Marielle Debos, Déby's Chad, United States Institute of Peace, 2017, 20.

18 Alex de Waal, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagolo 'Hemedti', World Peace Foundation, 1 July 2019, https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2019/07/01/general-mohamed-hamdan-dagolo-hemedti/

19 Jérôme Tubiana; Aly Verjee, *Chad, and Darfur, After Bashir*, International Peace Information Service (IPIS), www.usip.org/publications/2019/05/chad-and-darfur-after-bashir

20 Sudan's Hemetti, Chadian envoy discuss bilateral relations, *Sudan Tribune*, 13 May 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67502

21 Head of Sudan's TMC, Chadian Déby discuss border security, *Sudan Tribune*, 17 June 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67653

22 Sudan's TMC, two armed groups agree to uphold ceasefire in Darfur, *Sudan Tribune*, 28 June 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67692

23 Historically, Eritrea supported the SPLM during its struggle, and maintained linkages with the JEM in Darfur.

24 In a regional game of proxy battles, Eritrea supported the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions rebels prior to the 2006 agreement; Eritrea Seeks to Facilitate Talks Between Sudan and SPLM-N Rebels, Allafrica, 19 August 2012, https://allafrica.com/stories/201208200286.html

25 *Shabait*, Eritrean Ministry of Information Press release, 22 March 2018, www.shabait.com/news/local-news/26002-press-release

26 Interview with researcher, Khartoum, March 2019.

27 Interview with regional official, April 2019; the main border crossing points with Ethiopia have since been reported closed as well.

28 The governor of Kassala state participated in Eritrean Independence Day celebrations with the local Eritrean community in Kassala in late May 2019. During the event, he stated 'We are looking forward to the opening of the joint border and doing business as it was', Wali (governor) of Kassala State Affirms Firmness of Sudanese–Eritrean Relations, *Sudan News Agency*, 29 May 2019, http://suna-sd.net/en/single?id=280242

29 Interview with former Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Khartoum, March 2019.

30 President Isaias meets Deputy Chairman of Sudanese TMC, *Shabait*, 2 July 2019, www.shabait.com/news/local-news/28839-president-isaias-meets-deputy-chairman-of-sudanese-tmc- ; Mr Yemane Gebreab holds talks with Sudanese TMC chairman, *Shabait*, 8 July 2019, www.shabait.com/news/local-news/28873-mr-yemane-gebreab-holds-talks-with-sudanese-tmc-chairman

31 Press Release; AU stance may exacerbate the situation in the Sudan, *Shabait*, 5 June 2019, www.shabait.com/news/local-news/28655-press-release

32 Fana, Foreign Minister Gedu meets Sudanese Forces of Declaration of Freedom and Change, 6 May 2019, https://fanabc.com/english/2019/05/fm-gedu-meets-sudanese-forces-of-declaration-of-freedom-and-change/; while a new face, Andargachew previously was the President of Amhara region in Ethiopia, which shares a border with Sudan.

33 He also visited Cairo, Abu Dhabi, Juba and attended an Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (IOC) summit in Saudi Arabia, in that order.

34 The UAE in particular may have been motivated to move on from Bashir due to his reluctance to suppress Muslim Brotherhood elements, despite generous financial support; Abandoned by the UAE, Sudan's Bashir was destined to fall, *Reuters Special Report*, 3 July 2019, www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/sudan-bashir-fall/

35 An amount of US$500 million is reportedly a cash infusion into Sudan's central bank, while the remainder will be provided through the form of oil, food and medicines. The fact that Sudan is receiving oil and wheat is a telling indication of its economic situation at this juncture, given its status as a transit hub for South Sudanese oil, and previous attempts to turn vast swathes of agricultural land in the country into an 'Arab breadbasket'. An amount of US$250 million from Saudi Arabia was deposited into the Sudanese Central Bank on 20 May 2019; Saudi Arabia deposits $250m into Sudan central bank, *Sudan Tribune*, 20 May 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67532

36 In addition, speculation around the recent return to Khartoum of Sudanese national Taha Osman al-Hussein, who was in the Bashir government but fled to Saudi Arabia under suspicion he was spying for the country, is rife, as a signal of Saudi Arabia's intention to influence the transition. Upon his arrival in Saudi Arabia, Taha was appointed as adviser on African affairs, Amid U.S. Silence, Gulf Nations Back the Military in Sudan's Revolution, *The New York Times*, 26 April 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/04/26/world/africa/sudan-revolution-protest-saudi-arabia-gulf.html

37 Amid U.S. Silence, Gulf Nations Back the Military in Sudan's Revolution, *The New York Times*, 26 April 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/04/26/world/africa/sudan-revolution-protest-saudi-arabia-gulf.html

38 Sudanese troops to remain in Yemen: military council, Sudan Tribune, 15 April 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67376; Elana DeLozier, UAE Drawdown may Isolate Saudi Arabia in Yemen, The Washington Institute, 2 July 2019, www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/uae-drawdown-in-yemen-may-isolate-saudi-arabia

39 1 000 Sudanese militiamen arrive in Libya, *Radio Dabanga*, 25 July 2019, www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/1-000-sudanese-militiamen-arrive-in-libya; Jared Malsin and Summer Said, Saudi Arabia Promised support to Libyan warlord in push to seize Tripoli, *Wall Street Journal*, 12 April 2019, www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-promised-support-to-libyan-warlord-in-push-to-seize-tripoli-11555077600

40 In late May 2019, the Qatari news agency Al-Jazeera had its office closed in Khartoum, where it was quite active in reporting on the situation in Sudan. The Sudanese ambassador to Qatar was also recalled for consultations. Qatar's foreign minister afterwards stated that relations with Sudan were normal, but that high-level contacts with the TMC had not materialised; Sudan closes Al-Jazeera office in Khartoum: channel, *Digital Journal*, 30 May 2019, www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/sudan-closes-al-jazeera-office-in-khartoum-channel/article/550961; There are no high-level contacts between Qatar and Sudan: FM, *Sudan Tribune*, 3 June 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67599

41 Hemetti says Sudan's TMC refused to receive Qatar's Foreign Minister, *Sudan Tribune*, 27 June 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67690; Al-Jazeera has been quite active in covering the protests and negotiations with the military council.

42 Somalia is the most pertinent example of this dynamic. For more on that and how the GCC dispute played out with devastating consequences for the country, see https://issafrica.org/iss-today/how-the-gulf-crisis-is-destabilising-somalia. The example of neighbouring Egypt should also not be forgotten, as Qatar initially seemed ascendant following the election of Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi in 2012, only for him to be overthrown in a UAE and Saudi backed coup in 2013.

43 Egypt's Sisi offers support to Sudan, AA, 17 April 2019, www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/egypts-sisi-offers-support-to-sudan/1454351

44 It is also worth pointing out that current AU Chairperson Moussa Faki was Chad's minister of foreign affairs from 2008 to 2017, and thus dealt closely with Sudan in this capacity. It is unclear, however, if this has played a prominent role in influencing the AU's response. Yet it means that the AU chair in Egypt, and its chairperson in Faki, which are the main instruments driving the AU's response, both have a deep history in Sudan.

45 Interview with regional diplomat, Addis Ababa, 5 August 2019.

46 UAE backs investigation of massacre in Sudan, *Gulf News*, 8 June 2019, https://gulfnews.com/world/mena/uae-backs-investigation-of-massacre-in-sudan-1.64474506

47 Sudan's regional partners call to resume talks on 'pending aspects' of transitional authority, *Sudan Tribune*, 21 June 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67667

48 Some have attributed the warming of ties to the replacement of the heads of intelligence in both Egypt and Sudan in early 2018, as they were seen as part of the problem, interview with a regional diplomat, Addis Ababa, 5 August 2019.

49 Sudan's al-Bashir to visit Egypt on Sunday, *Sudan Tribune*, 27 January 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article66976

50 African Union PSC Communique, DCCCXLII, 27 May 2019, www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.852.comm.sudan.27.05.2019lll.pdf

51 IGAD Press Release, IGAD statement on Sudan, 12 April 2019, www.igad.int/attachments/article/2101/04-12-19%20Press%20Release-IGAD%20on%20Sudan.pdf

52 IGAD, Communique of the 68th Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers on Sudan and South Sudan, 19 June 2019, https://igad.int/communique/2155-communique-of-the-68th-session-of-the-igad-council-of-ministers-on-sudan-and-south-sudan

53 Ethiopian, African Union mediation needs to be unified – Sudan military council, Reuters, 23 June 2019, www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics/ethiopian-african-union-mediation-needs-to-be-unified-sudan-military-council-idUSKCN1TO0SD

54 The prominence of both the role of Ethiopia rather than IGAD in driving its mediation effort, in addition to the prioritisation of coordination with the AU, was demonstrated by a joint Ethiopia–AU statement on the situation in Sudan, following a meeting between Prime Minister Abiy and AU Chairperson Moussa Faki on 2 July 2019; PMOEthiopia Tweet, Joint Communique of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the African Union Commission on the Situation in Sudan, 2 July 2019, https://twitter.com/PMEthiopia/status/1146077837641867270/photo/1

55 Arab League calls for restraint in Sudan, *Sudan Tribune*, 8 June 2019, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67621

56 Arab League delegation begins Khartoum meetings, junta-opposition negotiations continue, *Dabanga*, 4 July 2019, www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/arab-league-delegation-begins-khartoum-meetings-junta-opposition-negotiations-continue; Arab League calls for a civilian government in Sudan, *Dabanga*, 17 June 2019, www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/arab-league-calls-for-a-civil-government-in-sudan

57 Interview with regional diplomat, June 2019.

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