



# Ending the April 15, 2023, War and Sustaining Peace in Sudan

Sustained peace and political stability are the strategic objectives of the founders of this group. The group operates under the name of the Core Sudanese Working Group (CSWG) and proceeds and stimulates its vision of being a group of interested, motivated, and concerned Sudanese men and women in dealing with the situation that led to the outbreak of the 15th of April War and its overall implications.

The CSWG believes that the current crisis could also be viewed as an opportunity for state-building through a crystallized, clearly defined, and well-articulated post-war political project to pave the road toward a future of political stability and inclusive civilian rule for Sudan.

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In addition to the mentioned names, the group includes additional Sudanese women and men from diverse backgrounds whose valuable contribution to this paper is appreciated.

#peace\_Justice\_unity  
#peace\_for\_sudan  
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# I. Introduction

1. The group, which operates under the name of the 'Core Sudanese Working Group' (CSWG), calls for an immediate permanent cease-fire to the ongoing war on April 15, 2023. The Group supports all national, regional, and international efforts and endeavors leading to an urgent cease-fire agreement to end the war and pursue durable political solutions. Along a similar line, the group believes that the war is neither a solution nor a reward for a resilient Sudanese society, which has paid a heavy price for decades of civil wars.
2. The history of the civil war in Sudan continues to extend through generations and results in the loss of decades of nation- and state-building. The group's primary mission is to make the ongoing war the last war. On a different note, the group attempts to contribute, enrich, and turn the curse of the ongoing war into an opportunity to shape a better future and strengthen the sense of belonging and pride of being sons and daughters of our beloved country. In this paper, we build on our analysis in several ways: We propose a new approach to post-war peacebuilding success that is more consistent with understanding the drivers of peace in Sudan and the root causes of the war: successful peacebuilding is the achievement of self-sustaining peace and a stable political context.
3. On April 15, 2023, deadly and violent military confrontations erupted between the warring parties, namely the Sudan Arm Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), described by the armed forces as a rebellion to gain control of the political scene. Alternatively, the RSF presented a contrary narrative stating that the leaders of the SAF had betrayed the nation to disrupt the political process whose political framework was signed on December 5, 2022, with the signatures of the leaders of the Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces, the Forces for Freedom and Change, the Central Council, and other allied and non-allied groups.
4. The military confrontations between the warring parties are continuing to date, leaving behind a looming humanitarian crisis, security deterioration, and displacements from the three cities of the capital to the rest of Sudan's states. Other towns in West Darfur and Kordofan also witnessed security chaos and clashes between some societal components. As a result, the state's power was almost completely disrupted. Even though military clashes did not break out in most states, the sense of insecurity is alarming and terrifying.
5. A group of Sudanese men and women, acting in their personal capacity, called for the formation of a national working group. This group transcends partisan, regional, and ideological affiliations to work together to end the war and contribute significantly toward resolving the state of distorted military institution structure.



# I. Introduction

6. The Working Group believes that the ongoing war represents a major challenge threatening the survival of the Sudanese state and the people's lives. It aborts the peacefulness of the Sudanese revolution. The ongoing crisis requires a theoretical underpinning and intellectual and strategic deliberation to contextualize long-lasting political solutions. These processes can be productive if the fighting parties feel adequate and show confidence in the working group's work. This proposed framework will provide a rare opportunity for an effective, nationally led process. The curse of war could be an opportunity for sustaining peace and transforming the political process by shifting the political crisis dynamic from a bewildering dilemma into an opportunity. Pioneering such a sound post-war political process, the Working Group envisions a future renaissance and enlightenment of Sudan as a country where the dignity of its citizens is achieved through economic and political transformation that reduces the risk of a future civil war.

7. The paper is an attempt to mobilize the efforts of national scholars and intellectuals to fill the policy gap, influence the concerned warring parties, and strengthen the role of national content with robust national enforcement mechanisms. Practically, the process of a potential peace agreement offers a rare opportunity for national engagement in the post-war political process, focusing on the structural transformation of politics and the state to be more inclusive and effective in managing diversity and addressing disparities between leading and lacking regions.

## II. Methodology

There is a consensus among all respondents in short interviews and comments that envisioning the future landscape, addressing political failure, and having a successful post-conflict era are prerequisites for a successful political transition. The nature and complexity of the ongoing crisis in Sudan require a multidisciplinary, methodical approach. As such, the paper adopted reviews, utilized opinions through interviews, and used brainstorming sessions before systematically putting all ideas together. The process included consultations with a diverse spectrum of intellectuals, scholars, and opinion leaders and reflections by several members of the working group. All outcomes were then compiled and reformulated, considering the relevant literature. In its final form, the paper will include feedback from various political leaders and regional and international political experts familiar with the Sudanese political situation.

# III. Military confrontations between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces

## 1. Background

This section provides a list of background themes that exemplify the prevalent narratives of the stumbling transitional process that culminated in the outbreak of the armed conflict. Regardless of any judgments or comparisons between the arguments that shaped them, these narratives appear to represent the drivers that stimulate political action by the warring parties as well as divided civilians.

### **1.1 Dissolving the sit-in at Alqiadah (the Army Headquarters) and its role in naming the parties to the transitional political partnership, signing the 2019 Constitutional Declaration, and the subsequent Juba Peace Agreement in October 2020:**

- a) The political partnership between the military and civilian components to manage the transitional period formed the features of a new phase in the path of the peaceful December revolution. After the revolutionaries rejected the statement of Lieutenant General Awad Ibn Auf, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan assumed the presidency of the Transitional Military Council and announced in his first statement on April 12, 2019 his intention to "form a military council to represent the sovereignty of the state and to form a civilian government to be agreed upon by all." and [to lay the foundations for civilian rule]" according to a transitional period of two years as a maximum, during which or at the end of which the rule of the country will be handed over to a civilian government to be formed by the people." With this definition, the Military Council began inviting the various political forces—except the National Congress—to negotiate and present visions for the future of the country, and it communicated with more than a hundred entities in light of tensions that ultimately led to the emergence of two distinct currents, one of which, led by the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, invested in the revolutionaries' sit-in in front of the Army Headquarters. The other was formed under the name "Movement for the Support of Sharia and Law" and made its demonstration destination the Republican Palace.



- b) The efforts mentioned above by the Military Council have failed due to subsequent developments, the most recent and heartbreaking of which was the sit-in dispersal and killing of protesters. The head of the Military Council then retracted his previous announcement and decided, on June 4, 2019, to "cancel the agreement, stop negotiating with the forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change, and call for general elections" within a period not exceeding seven months. The Military Council retracted this decision too because of popular internal pressures (demonstrations of July 30, 2019), external pressures, and regional mediation that ended with recognizing the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change as the sole legitimate representative of the popular will and the formation of a transitional government in partnership between the Military Council and the Forces for Freedom and Change, according to a Constitutional Document signed by the two parties on July 5, 2019.
- c) After the formation of the Sovereign Council and the formation of the Transitional Government, the two parties of the partnership did not complete the establishment of transitional institutions and the Electoral Commission, as they postponed this until after the completion of the peace agreement with the Revolutionary Front and the other armed movements. The Transitional Government signed a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Front to address the roots of the thorny Sudanese issues. These roots are related to issues of equitable development, the philosophy of governance, and the definition of an inclusive national identity.

## **1.2 The Exclusion of Influential Political and Societal Forces from the Political Process and the Confusion It Caused in Understanding the Relationship Between Revolutionary Action and Gradual Democratic Transformation:**

- a) From the perspective of political analysis, the democratic transition that begins with top-down reform, utilizing the space and the praiseworthy rift caused by the revolution in the existing system, does not compromise, prevent, or contradict the gradual parallel work that aims to create a broad national consensus among the influential political groups. Intuitively, the national agreement should include the groups that were in power, if these groups accept and abide by the democratic principles of the revolution and if they represent broad social sectors, except those who committed specific crimes or seek to commit them.
- General observations: In light of these principles, observers note three narratives:

- b) General observations: In light of these principles, observers note three narratives:
  - b.1 The diaries of the popular December revolution did not show serious attempts by the military and civilian partners of the transitional period to secure a broad political consensus. That led to opposition by several civil administrations and traditional communities. In fact, the military component sought, in contravention of the spirit of partnership with the Forces of Freedom and Change, to nurture these parties' sense of injustice, which was utilized before the ultimate unilateral decision to dissolve the partnership.
  - b.2 Some believe that the political decision-making process and commands in the post-revolution era, including two and a half years under a joint military-civilian government, have reinforced fears of forming a totalitarian regime as an alternative to the one uprooted by the revolution. The Islamist political forces, which had split into several groups during the years of Bashir's regime and returned to unite their ranks after the revolution, cited 'exclusion from political participation" by the revolutionary forces as a major grievance. This group viewed the leaders of the Forces of Freedom and Change Declaration as a totalitarian alternative that supplanted them in the system of civilian-military partnership.
  - b.3 The forces of radical change (primarily the Communist Party) and factions of the resistance committees believed that Bashir's regime had an economic and security structure that could not be reconciled with nor could be dismantled gradually. Moreover, these forces thought that they had become isolated by other actors, including civilians within the ruling coalition.



### **1.3 The Growing Power of the Military, the Sovereign Fluidity that Characterized the Administration of the State in the Aftermath of the Popular Revolution, and the Multiplicity of Decision-Making Centers and Sources within the Sovereignty Council:**

1. Although the demand for the dismissal of the military leaders loyal to the Bashir's regime, after his overthrow, in April 2019 led to the removal of the Security Committee that turned against him, it is not yet sufficiently clear the reasons / details of the arrival of the officers of the Military Council which replaced the Security Committee. This is remarkable as suspicions of ties to some regional regimes continued to hover around these officers - especially the head of the Military Council, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and his deputy, Lieutenant General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo. These regional regimes are generally viewed as hostile to revolutions, but appeared to stand temporarily by the December Revolution because it was going against the Islamist trend.
2. The behavior of the military component in the political coalition showed that it adopted a strategy of limiting the objectives of the revolution to getting rid of the June 30th regime and impeding access to the democratic system. As a result, the military monopolized political decision-making despite the formation of the civilian government headed by Dr. Abdullah Hamdok until October 25, 2021.
3. The agreement of the civil and military forces to postpone the elections for a long time may be understood as a political tactic by both the military and civilian parties. From the perspective of the military, the burdens of running the state under conditions of siege and an empty treasury were expected to fail, especially after a revolution in which the demands and expectations of the citizens rose high. Based on this narrative, it was easy for the military to spread fallacies about the failure of "civilians" to run the country and that the military was the only force capable of running it. Nor did the parties, the civil forces, show diligent organizational work with their bases that would raise their readiness for the elections, with exceptions that did not change this general rule. Instead, it worked to invest the postponement of the elections in "cleansing the state" from the "National Congress" supporters and other former regime and Islamist forces.
4. The sovereign liquidity that characterized the administration of the State after the popular revolution led to a multiplicity of decision-making centers and sources within the Sovereignty Council, and this was evident in the dispute concerning who to control foreign relations between the President of the Sovereignty Council, the Commander of the Armed Forces, and his deputy, the Commander of the Rapid Support Forces, on the one hand, and between the military component and civilians, on the other hand.
5. The role of the Rapid Support Forces commander increased exponentially after the December Revolution, as did his wealth, forces, external relations, and deployment in the capital and the states. He assumed security, military, and sovereign positions under the guidance and protection of the President of the Sovereignty Council and the Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief.

#### **1.4 The Ousting of the Civilian Government on October 25, 2021, Led to the Suspension of the Institutions of the Transitional Government Under the Pretext of the Need to Carry Out Reforms in Governance, A Step That The Forces Of The Revolution Considered A Coup Against Democratic Transformation:**

- a) These measures denied civilians the opportunity to lead the remainder of the transitional period as stipulated in the Constitutional Document signed between the Military Council and the Forces for Freedom and Change on July 5, 2019.
- b) These measures kept the armed struggle forces of the peace process in Juba and their parties' stakes in power and alienated the civilian forces.
- c) The revolutionary street faced these measures with continuous protests, resulting in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries, and many missing persons.
- d) The military reached a political agreement framework with civilians on December 5th, 2022, which provided for handing over power to the civilians and taking practical measures to integrate the Rapid Support Forces into the Sudan Armed Forces.
- e) A significant disagreement arose between the leaders of the SAF and the leadership of the RSF over the nature and timing of the integration of these forces into one professional army. Meanwhile, the civilian powers negotiating with them warned of the consequences of resorting to violence to settle the dispute. Still, in practice, the RSF has accelerated to strengthen its deployment in sovereign and strategic locations.

#### **1.5 Military Confrontations Between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces:**

- a) The signing of the framework agreement gave the Rapid Support Forces the advantage of remaining active in the political scene for several years, an advantage that the signatory parties actually agreed upon at the moment of the war on April 15, 2023.
- b) Two of the Darfur movements that signed the peace agreement objected to the Framework Agreement: the Justice and Equality Movement, led by Jibril Ibrahim, and the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Minni Arko Minawi. They refused to recognize this settlement, describing it as a bilateral understanding. The 'Broad Islamic Trend' and the initiative of the people of Sudan to object to the agreement also emerged, in addition to the Communist Party and the Arab Baath Party, despite the latter being a member of the coalition of the Forces for Freedom and Change Declaration.



- c) Before the date set for the signing of the political agreement and in an atmosphere of stumbling in the joint talks between the military parties that signed the political framework agreement regarding the technical aspects of security and the army reform procedures, the Rapid Support Forces moved and were stationed on April 12, 2022, near Marawi airport. Additional forces and fighting vehicles were mobilized in the capital.
- d) On April 15, 2022, fighting erupted between the Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

## **2. Ramification of the War**

1. The war directly affects the growing human loss of lives, physical injuries, and looming humanitarian crises.
2. Terrifying citizens and disrupting their work and livelihood led to massive internal and external displacements.
3. Extensive physical damage to public and private infrastructures and institutions, including hospitals, and increased the risk of starvation and epidemics, with consequent secondary loss of life.
4. Serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including frequent reports of RSF occupying homes, terrorizing and expelling their occupants, looting, killing, raping, kidnapping, occupying hospitals and state institutions, and using them for military purposes.
5. The danger that results from a real political vacuum and the challenges that follow
6. The danger of the war spreading to other regions of the country and beyond to neighboring countries
7. The negative spillover, and perhaps a long-term impact, on societal, ethnic, and regional relations may have implications for the future of Sudan's social cohesion and peace.
8. The exacerbation of political polarization and its implications by the warring parties looking for support and legitimacy
9. Positively, the war offers a last chance to think about the future of political legitimacy, legal references, and the principles of establishing the Sudanese State as guided by consensus, a solid political framework, and theoretical underpinnings.

# IV: Cessation of War, Peacekeeping, and Democratic Transition, Which Includes Two Items:

**1. This policy paper draws its vision from national demands that affirm the principle of rejecting political gain from the current confrontations between the warring parties. The article also adopts an objective and scientific approach to dealing with the current crisis through the following points:**

- a) Rejecting the use of war as a catalyst for national political action or a means to achieve national goals.
- b) Establishing the principles of national reconciliation and fairness that meet the desire of Sudanese men and women to achieve peace and justice and protect their natural right to life.
- c) Avoiding security threats and national risks resulting from the war.
- d) Establishing a new political path through which the country transcends the failures of the distant and recent past and upholds the values of freedom, justice, and equality.
- e) Seeking a democratic transition and beginning to define a precise mechanism for planning free and fair elections under local, regional, and international monitoring watchdogs.

**2. Dealing with the procedures to stop the ongoing war between the fighting parties and sustain peace**

- a) This Working Group is a voluntary, dedicated group with local, regional, and international stakeholders to put pressure on the SAF and RSF to commit themselves to peace, the protection of civilians and civilian objects, and respect for humanitarian law.
- b) The Working Group supports the efforts to involve the mediation of nationals in direct negotiations between the warring parties.
- c) The Working Group, in collaboration with other local, regional, and international interested partners, assists in monitoring the cessation of war, addressing its social and psychological effects, and supporting the government of the day with national experts of knowledge, experience, and integrity.
- d) The Working Group is leading an initiative to put pressure on a sound enforcement mechanism in the existing government to put the state back on track and operational and issue the necessary decisions to deal with the changes that are taking place on the ground, including killings, looting, and unlawfully appropriating public and private property.

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# V. Action Points:

The recommendations include the following points and dimensions:

## 1. Normalization of public life after the cessation of hostilities:

- a) The Working Group calls on the government of the day to secure citizens at residential sites, work sites, and in cases of movement throughout the country.
- b) The Working Group calls for restoring daily life to normal according to an agreed program and monitoring its implementation.
- c) The Working Group calls for restoring the bureaucratic state apparatus (civil and military service) to perform its routine functions related to the daily running of bureaucratic and public works.
- d) The Working Group calls for restoring public services according to a known timetable.
- e) The Working Group calls on the existing government to manage humanitarian affairs in a way that enables it to meet the urgent needs of health, shelter, and relief emergencies and to return the displaced to their places of residence.
- f) Furthermore, the Working Group calls on the incumbent government to protect journalists and media organizations, pledge to protect them, and not violate or compromise its message.

## 2. The Political Agenda and Determinants of the National Political Project for Sudan after the April 15, 2023 War:

- a) The Working Group calls on the entire Sudanese political establishment, as well as the military establishment, to agree on the principles of protecting the sovereignty of the Sudanese State and regional and international cooperation in a way that preserves the unity of the country, its wealth, and human dignity.
- b) The Working Group calls on all political actors, regardless of partisan, regional, and ideological affiliations, to believe in the survival of the state, support its survival politically, in the media, and diplomatically, and not to reconcile with the idea of maintaining a situation that legitimizes the existence of two or more armies with independent authorities and commands.
- c) The Working Group further calls for an immediate and urgent halt to obstructing the work of the state institutions and addresses the Rapid Support Forces about their anchors in the heart of the capital that currently impede access to government offices and stop the wheels of ordinary activities. The party behind this disruption is legally and humanely responsible for the resulting damages and the consequences of that.

- d) The Working Group calls on politicians, opinion leaders, and community leaders to press to form a highly professional commission against corruption, recover public funds from the state's treasury, redress the oppressed, give everyone their rights, and remove any illegitimate empowerment for the defunct regime. Furthermore, to guarantee its neutrality and affirmation, the Working Group calls for extracting credible pledges from the leaders of the armed forces and local and regional stakeholders to respond to the concerns concerning the political crisis and for the adoption of commitments by both parties to distance themselves from the entire political spectrum and obligate themselves to abide by military professionalism as provided for in the constitution.
- e) The Working Group calls for the convening of a round table and a Sudanese-Sudanese dialogue to endorse a political consensus that leads to forming the features of a permanent constitution. The final provisions of the constitution should be characterized by capturing the essence of the governance crises in the country and addressing their roots through a process involving the participation of more diverse and representative parties in the regions and states of Sudan.
- f) The Working Group is working on a theoretical foundation about the features of a system of government that allows the different regions of the Sudan to benefit from its natural resources based on the comparative advantage of each region. Moreover, the exchange of the regional equitable share of the central government allows the region to participate inclusively in leadership in state governance.
- g) The Working Group is lobbying for transitional justice to include, in addition to the previous periods during the Al-Bashir regime and the transitional period that followed it, the current war period to lift the grievances that affected a substantial part of the population.
- h) The Working Group calls on all Sudanese to summon national energies for mobilization, community emergency response, and mutual support and not to be satisfied with receiving humanitarian aid from abroad.
- i) The Working Group is exerting pressure to ensure the independence of justice institutions and the judiciary and to consolidate the principle of separation of powers.
- j) The Working Group calls for strengthening the roles of relevant national third parties to contribute to shaping the post-war political process, focusing on structural transformation in the formations of politics and the state in order to be more inclusive, adept, and effective in managing diversity.
- k) The Working Group calls for developing a road map with the participation of all stakeholders that achieves a smooth and speedy exit for the armed forces from political action after the cessation of war. In parallel, once a broad political agreement that yields the formation of a transitional civilian government is reached and until elections are held, the government of the day should receive support from all parties with no impediment to its mission toward holding free elections that hand over power to the people and their elected government as soon as possible.