

## The Sudan Armed Forces and Prospects of Change

The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has a long history of siding with civil protestors in times of national political crisis. In recent years, waves of popular protests, often called the Arab Spring, have affected political developments across the Arab world. This CMI Insight analyzes what role the military may have, should similar calls for political change also reach Sudan. It does so by examining transformations within the military following the National Islamic Front's (NIF) coup d'état in June 1989, focusing on the rise of Islamism and the military's involvement in the oil-rent economy.<sup>1</sup> The CMI Insight concludes that the current regime has expanded SAF's role in the economy and in business, while at the same time weakening it as a professional army. These features make predicting which role the military may take in political affairs in the future difficult.

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### Introduction

Since its formation in the early 20th century to present time, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has experienced different phases that have shaped the interaction between its internal and external environment. In October 1964 and April 1985, the military sided with civil protests against the military governments of Abboud (1958-1964) and Numeiri (1969-1985). In both cases, this introduced multi-party civilian governments that unfortunately did not last long.

Careful analysis suggests that, considering the combined influence of Islamism and oil rentierism, the historical legacy of stepping in to side with civil protests can no longer be reckoned with. Indeed, the military's vested interests in maintaining the status quo calls into question its role in promoting change in peaceful and democratic directions.<sup>2</sup>

In order to examine these dimensions of contemporary Sudan, this CMI Insight first provides, in

section two, a condensed historic profile of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). In section three, it touches upon the current SAF role in politics and its economic interests, while section four sheds light on competing institutions—i.e., the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), the People's Defense Force (PDF) and the Rapid Support Force (RSF)—asking whether these form a military-security complex/relation system, and looking into the extent to which they can fend off threats to the regime (such as in May 2008 when the Darfur-based Justice and Equality Movement, or JEM, attacked the capital). This section highlights that the role of parallel bodies became more visible during the September 2013 urban protests that were allegedly silenced by RSF using unprecedented ruthless repression and quickly restoring order but at a high cost.<sup>3</sup> From then onwards, RSF was drawn into fighting within the top circles of power. To win them over and ensure their loyalty, the president-led faction publicly defended their role and later succeeded in passing constitutional amendments that seemed

to ensure impunity to the RSF, as further discussed in section five. All these developments lead to speculation on SAF's role and the prospects for change, as discussed in section six.

### A Brief History of SAF

Before Sudan was invaded by the Turko-Egyptian ruler Mohamed Ali in 1821, the country was dominated by mini-states. Each mini-state was characterized by armed groups struggling to maintain their rule and extend their dominance over other neighboring states; a situation that led to continuous inter-state conflicts and wars (Abdelrahim 1978). In the process, some of these mini-states “built standing armies which—like the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria, the Jannissaries of the Ottoman Empire and comparable bodies throughout the history of Islam—were mostly drawn from captives and slaves, with similar outcomes” (ibid., 9-10).

Mohamed Ali sought to build an efficient modern-type army of Sudanese Mamluks, which, he hoped, would enable him to carve out an Egyptian-Arab empire independent from that of the Sultan of Istanbul (ibid.). Throughout this Ottoman-Egyptian period, Sudan was administered largely by military officers. However, excessive repressive measures and over-taxation of local populations drove the latter to rebel. Under the leadership of Mohamed Ahmed bin Abdalla, who proclaimed himself the messianic redeemer of the Islamic faith (*Mahdi*), discontent and minor rebellions soon turned into a *Jihad* (holy war) and into a nation-wide revolution successfully leading to independence and the establishment of the Mahdist state (1885-1898). Following the death of the Mahdi, his successor, Khalifa Abdullahi, assumed the role of *Amir Juyush al-Mahadiya* (i.e., commander-in-chief of the armed forces), aggressively dominating all generals as well as military leaders of the provinces which had neither separate standing armies nor military governors of their own (ibid.). Sudan became a garrison state in which soldiers and generals held central positions in the government and administration of the country (ibid.).

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### The British Period and the Sudan Defense Force: 1925-1956

In 1898, Britain and Egypt joined forces and re-conquered Sudan. The Mahdist state was destroyed and “an autocracy on military lines for civilian purposes” was established (ibid.). From 1899 to 1926, the country was under martial law, and the administration continued to have a military flavor.<sup>4</sup>

The invading army imposed stability, rule of law and order on all Sudanese territories. To cut the cost of administration and to minimize the risk of outbreak of rebellions, the British opted for recruiting a purely Sudanese army to replace the largely Egyptian army. Consequently, the Sudan Defense Force (SDF) was established in 1925. Ex-slaves from peripheral regions, such as the Nuba Mountains, featured as major recruiting sources for middle- and lower-ranking soldiers (Al-Awad 1980). Command

chains and lines of hierarchy reflected those of the wider society: British officers were at the top, followed by Egyptians. Next in rank were officers from central and northern parts of Sudan while middle and junior officers and soldiers were drawn from less developed regions like the Nuba Mountains, Darfur and South Sudan. Military promotions were under the close supervision and control of British commanders. The result, in Abdelrahim's words,

was that the SDF, far from being a seedbed of nationalist rebellion or a source of resistance to the regime, became one of the most dependable prods of the British colonial administration in the Sudan—and beyond. (Ibid.)<sup>5</sup>

### Sudan Armed Forces, from Professionalism to Politicization: 1956-1989

During the Second World War, SDF fought along the British army in North Africa and in the Middle East where it gained both experience and a reputation as a professional army. With the independence of Sudan and the Sudanization of the officers' corps in the early 1950s, Sudan emerged as “...the one African country south of the Sahara...with a modern military establishment possessing the attributes of an independent national army” (ibid., 15).

Following independence in 1956, SDF became the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and vowed to stay away from politics. Bechtold (1976, 120-121) considered the army as one of the modernizing elements in Sudan. He wrote that members of the military had developed a distinct class-consciousness before any other group in Sudanese society, such as workers, farmers or businessmen. This was particularly true of the officer ranks where a new sense of identity, symbolized by the national uniform, had displaced ethnic and sectarian allegiances (ibid.). The strong sense of group identity originated in part from a sense of distinctness from the civilian sector that had been associated with the responsibility of most of the country's problems, but also in part from a proud “nationalist” fighting tradition that went back to the 1920s.

The first post-independence government (1956-1958) suffered from intense rivalry between the two coalition partners, the Umma Party and the People's Democratic party. Consequently, in 1958, General Ibrahim Abboud assumed power in order to put an end to a failing civilian rule. Under his regime (1958-1964), an ambitious Ten Year Socio-Economic Development Plan (1960-1970) was put in place. As this plan unfolded, agricultural and local industrial production expanded greatly, and the urban population increased with signs of relative economic prosperity.

During the 1960s, the army, inspired by the Egyptian model during Nasser's reign there, began to interact with society outside the military barracks. Leaning toward leftist and nationalist ideologies, the so-called Free Officers, a group formed by young

and radical officers, supported anti-government protests that led to the fall of Abboud's military regime in October 1964 (Niblock 1987, 133-138).

A period of parliamentary governments followed, but political squabbles and in-fighting led to yet another military takeover—this time by radical army officers led by Colonel Jafaar Numeiri<sup>6</sup> in May 1969. In July 1971, a group of pro-Communist army officers carried out a bloodless coup and declared their intention to reverse Numeiri's pro-Western policies and to fight neocolonialism. This new regime lasted only three days and was crushed by foreign intervention in which a British company, Lonrho, played an instrumental role in coordination with Sadat's Egypt and Ghaddafi's Libya. Khalil Osman, a Sudanese millionaire businessman with close links to army officers, also played a key role in this event.

After the abortive coup, President Numeiri emerged victorious, signed a peace deal with Southern rebels in 1972 and moved to reconcile with centrist forces.<sup>7</sup> He also introduced a new military doctrine whereby army officers had to take an oath of allegiance to defend the regime rather than the nation. In tandem with this, the Military Economic Corporation was set up to serve a number of objectives, one of which was to transform the army into a "new class" with vested economic interest in defending the status quo. This involved providing consumption goods and cars to top army officers, a change in strategy that effectively was fomenting close links between army officers and the civilian business class<sup>8</sup> (Taisier 1989, 156-157, *see* Ali; Niblock 1987, 133-138). Until then, while leaders of the army had sought to appease recalcitrant ex-army officers by offering them agricultural schemes to divert their attention away from politics, the army as such had not been involved in business.

Against mounting anti-government activities, Numeiri was forced to reach out to Northern opposition parties through the 1977 National Reconciliation brokered by Sudanese businessmen. However, Numeiri's increasingly autocratic style alienated top army officers who in the early 1980s called upon him to curb the growing power of the security organs on which he increasingly relied for the security of his rule. The president then upgraded the National Security Forces (NSC) to guard against mutiny in the army. Furthermore, in order to placate sectarian religious constituencies of the main traditional parties and to outmaneuver the Muslim Brothers and quell potential protests, Numeiri introduced the Sharia laws in September 1983.

However, the opposition gathered forces, although mainly from marginal regions, particularly from South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The SPLA posed a serious challenge to Numeiri's government as the war drove the Chevron oil company (which had found oil mostly in the southern region) out of Sudan and deprived Khartoum of its expected oil rents.

Numeiri was eventually overthrown by a broad-based civil protest movement supported by SAF in April 1985. Immediately, the Islamist influence on SAF became visible, including in organizing public rallies to support the army against the SPLA.

However, the relationship between the core of SAF officers and the democratically elected government of Sadiq al-Mahdi (leader of the Umma party) was tense and eventually led to the army serving the prime minister with an ultimatum that paved the way for the Islamist coup in June 1989.

### Impact of Islamism on the military

The Inqaz regime, a radical, military Islamist government<sup>9</sup>, took power in 1989, governing through the National Islamic Front which was later renamed the National Congress Party (NCP) (Woodward 1997, 95-114). Immediately after assuming power, the regime embarked on wholesale sweeping and unprecedented changes in the organization and military doctrine of the Sudanese army. An attempted coup by sectors of the military in 1990 was ruthlessly repressed, and the coup leaders executed. In addition to doing away with the former professional ethos, Islamization meant laying off hundreds of top- and middle-rank officers, and establishing the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) for fear of the army's reaction to indoctrination and change. The concept of *al-shaab al-mugatil* (fighting people) was introduced, and a *jihad* was announced against the SPLA.<sup>10</sup>

### Changes to the Military Doctrine

With these changes, SAF was now in charge not of defending the nation but the Islamic state; i.e., defending the Islamic regime rather than providing national security as such. This transformation had a number of implications.

First, rebel groups were dubbed anti-Islamic and the *jihad* became the rallying cry for Muslims to join the fight against groups posing internal threats. The overriding principle of *jihad* was a value-oriented act that led to a surge of fanatics joining PDFs heading for South Sudan to fight, seeking either victory or martyrdom. There were, however, critical voices in the army regarding these "emotional devout Muslims" who flooded their ranks and often did not abide by the army command and military tactics (Saeed 2001, 178-192).

Second, the *jihad* was directed not only against internal enemies but also against enemies on the outside, as exemplified by the *al-Mu'tamar al-Shabi al-Arabi al-Islami* (the Popular Arabic-Islamic Conference), when representatives from 45 countries met in Khartoum in 1991 and Hassan Turabi was elected General Secretary. The Conference called for Arab and Muslim movements to rally and support the Islamic state in Sudan.<sup>11</sup>

Third, parallel fighting groups were established in order to join the *jihad*: People's Defense Forces (PDF) and tribal militias in western Sudan. Later, the government upgraded its tribal militias, known as Janjaweed, to Border Guards, and then to a *Gowat Da'ma Sarie* (Rapid Support Force).

Fourth, the lack of confidence in SAF led the regime to eventually consolidate and strengthen the powers of NISS, in many respects at the expense of SAF. Despite its expanding economic engagements, SAF no longer has the monopoly of the means of violence, a development that casts doubts on its future role in the event of regime changes.

### SAF's Current Economic Interests

Before the Inqaz regime, the involvement of the military in the business sector was mainly through purchasing arms and getting scraps from the collection industry (Abu-Shama, personal communication 2013), as well as taking advantage of the provision of social and medical services to officers and their families (Babiker 2008). Today, there are special rewards for officers who move to set up their own business. They are welcomed in crony capitalist networks.

In an, effectively, one-party state it is difficult to locate where the core economic interests of the army lie. However, one important sector is the production of military equipment. This harks back to the formation of the Military Industrial Corporation (MIC). The enterprise, which was established in 1993 through a presidential decree, produces military hardware and ammunition. The background for the formation of MIC was fear that Western countries would stop arm supplies or even advocate for a boycott. Illustrating its nexus to the military, MIC has a board of directors led by a military officer and with a civilian as the executive director (El-Battahani 2016 b).

While the exact nature of interlinkages is difficult to assess, there are also a range of manufacturing, business and service corporations that have some links to SAF.<sup>12</sup> These include the Giad company (cars, trucks)<sup>13</sup>; airports (both civilian and military); Danfoudio (engaged in all sorts of business ventures ranging from furniture to construction); Al-Hiloul al-Mutakamila (in the business of restaurants, cafes, media); and Alaia Pharmacology (medicine and other related pharmaceutical businesses).

### The Post-Secession Economy: How did loss of oil revenue affect SAF?

Propped up by oil revenues, the Sudan economy showed impressive growth during the 2000-2010 period. However, the flip side of this growth was that Sudan evolved into a mono-product economy, with oil contributing over 95 % of exports and about 50 % of government revenues (IMF 2013). Indeed, with the loss of oil revenue after the secession of South Sudan in 2011, non-oil real GDP growth slowed to 4.6 %, reflecting a broad-based slowdown in economic activity. Inflation reached 44.4 % at end-year, largely driven by the monetization of the fiscal deficit and a weakening exchange rate.

Apart from oil, Sudan's main exports—namely, livestock, gum Arabic, sesame, and cotton—took a back seat. The diversification of exports, including the revival of traditional exports such as cotton, and the development of non-traditional, non-oil exports is imperative for sustained growth and employment creation. The government did not invest in the agricultural sector and non-oil exports, missing an opportunity of reinvigorating vital production sectors (Sidahmed 2013, 162).

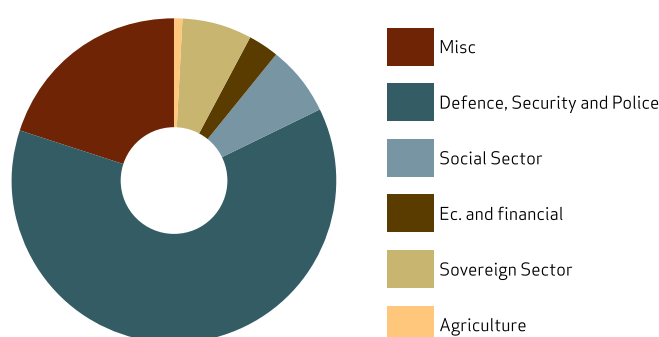
With about 75 % of Sudan's oil revenues generated from southern oil production, the independence of South Sudan in 2011 had immediate negative fiscal implications for Sudan. Sudan is intensifying crude oil extraction from existing fields. It has signed a number of oil concessions, and is providing incentives for exploration of new fields, to raise crude production on its own

territory. The plan is to raise oil production from about 125,000 barrels per day in 2012 to about 325,000 in 2017. Also, incessant efforts are being made to substitute gold for oil<sup>14</sup> (IMF 2013, 11).

Intensifying crude oil extraction from existing fields, together with increasing reliance on gold, shows the government's consistent and systemic reluctance to rehabilitate and invest in the main productive sectors of the economy; i.e., agriculture and industry. This has adverse effects on provision of services and employment. According to the IMF Sudan Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (October 2013), the high level of unemployment has enormous destabilizing potentials. The magnitude of the unemployment problem has soared significantly over the past two decades, from 14.2% in 1990 to 21.6% in 2010; and has kept rising ever since.

### Who benefited from oil?

*Government Expenditure 2012 budget:*



*Source: Ministry of Finance and National Economy, 2012.*

Government spending kept increasing during “the oil decade” between 1999 and 2011. Defense, security and police, and the sovereign sector took the bulk of the budgetary resources; and this spending has continued increasing. Indeed, from 2013 to 2014, spending in these sectors rose from 78% to 88% (al-Sudani, August 2014).

Additionally, oil revenue was spent on lavish government building, financing political networks, and buffing up cronies with contracts and sub-contracts. It is known that economic and business ventures owned by members of the political class receive favorable and preferential exemptions from taxes, loans and access to lucrative business contracts. The Auditor General's annual reports abound with documented cases of so-called “government companies” and ministries and institutions that refused to be audited (Kabaj 2011; Auditor General 2015). In a recent conference organized by the business federation for national investors in Sudan, attendees complained that around 70% of transactions are managed by members of the political class (Altahyeeer, 8 July 2014).

An IMF report questions the effectiveness and efficiency of the government public finance. The report also argues that “...a shallow and undiversified financial sector creates macro-financial vulnerabilities that affect the macro economy and its ability to sustain growth and reduce poverty” (IMF 2013). Not only does

the private sector not receive adequate credit, but the amount received is allocated to those with political connections, including members from the military and security.

### Military-security relations

A number of studies have shed light on the economics of the military in Sudan (Babiker 2008; Abdelsalam 2010, 251-288; Idris 2012, 110-141; El-Daw 2012, 126-154, 299-319), documenting the systematic and increasing involvement of both SAF and NISS in economic and business activities.

With revenues flowing from the oil sector, SAF sought to expand armaments and renovation of its headquarters.<sup>15</sup> With oil rents came rivalries between top-level state functionaries as to who should get what, and for what purpose. The political leadership was not interested in enhancing the professional capabilities<sup>16</sup> of the army and leaned itself more to strengthening security organs, which in turn fueled discontent among army officers. NISS, emerging as a rival to SAF and as the security's long arm in all matters of public affairs, emerged as what was seen as a "professional" power center, something that the top leadership viewed with concern. Due to this feeling of deep insecurity, and also to guard against possible moves by SAF or NISS, the leadership formed and brought in the Rapid Support Force (RSF) to stifle the "first capability strike" (Roessler 2011) and deal with popular unrest. The formation of RSF is regarded as cheap and less threatening to the regime's survival. If RSF can be used against rebels, it can also be used to quell urban unrest, and relied upon to suffocate the "first strike capability" of potential threats to the top leadership in the event of internal Islamist factions turning against each other.

*"At the operational level, the Islamist leadership may be driven by pragmatic logic to cooperate with whoever assists in siding with them against their opponents"*

The relative success of the JEM military incursion into the capital of Sudan in May 2008 fueled an already simmering tension between the SAF and NISS and may have contributed to the demise of the NISS chief in 2009.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned above, tribal militias were upgraded into Border Guards and then into the Rapid Support Force (RSF), and attached to NISS.

At the operational level, the Islamist leadership may be driven by pragmatic logic to cooperate with whoever assists in siding with them against their opponents, as seen in reported cases of cooperation between the Khartoum government and janjaweed in Darfur and the Lord's Resistance Army (Keen 2010).

### The Constitutional Amendments of January 2015

Having been in power for a quarter of a century, the policies of the National Congress Party (NCP) and the vested interests of its riverine, conservative Arab-Islamist constituency remain a major stumbling block to a genuine national dialogue and a just and comprehensive peace deal. Fears of regime change and the personal safety of the leadership are at the top of the NCP's priorities. However, popular protests in urban middle-class neighborhoods in Khartoum in September 2013, and subsequent

defections from within the NCP and the Islamist movement, are signs of fissures within the main constituency of the NCP.

Wary of an intensification of protests, President Bashir announced in January 2014 the government's intention to initiate a National Dialogue with the opposition and rebel groups. The stated goal was to reach lasting solutions to achieve peace, democratic reform, settle identity related conflicts and improve the economy for the welfare of the poor (El-Batthani 2014). However, the government dragged its feet on measures to accommodate

the participation of the opposition. Moreover, Sadiq al-Mahdi (leader of the Umma Party) was arrested following his public critique of RSF for its atrocities in West Sudan. After these polarizing developments, the Umma Party and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) signed the Paris Declaration in August 2014 and, shortly after, the Sudan Call in December 2014. In retaliation, the government went ahead with preparing for elections by amending the constitution (and subsequently security- and

election-related laws), consolidating and expanding the power of the President and conferring impunity to the security forces.

Part of the justification for these constitutional amendments was to assert the power of the central authorities, and to curb centrifugal tendencies seen either in escalating tribal and ethnic conflicts or in the growing powers of governors (*walis*) in some of the states/regions.<sup>18</sup> After the 2015 elections, most governors and ministers, however, have proven to have a security background and seem to be more concerned with the insecurity of the leadership than with curbing the expansion of tribal-ethnic conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

### SAF and the Prospects for Change

In discussing the possible position of the military toward movements for change, as in the Arab Spring, Kaartveit and Jumbert (2014) refer to Bellin's distinction between the military's will on the one hand and its capacity to hold on to power on the other. In so doing, they identify the following factors shaping this tension: (i) Fiscal health of the security apparatus; (ii) the level of foreign support; (iii) the level of institutionalization versus the extension of patrimonialism as the organizational basis for the military/security apparatus; and (iv) the level of popular mobilization. These factors are also relevant to assess the current position, and potential future stance, of the Sudan Armed Forces.

### Fiscal health

It is a widely held assumption that military forces and security services seek to protect their own corporate interests, and will be motivated to overthrow or defect from a ruling regime when their economic interests are violated. Although the secession of South Sudan and the loss of oil revenue have affected government spending, investments in arms and security have not been reduced.<sup>20</sup>

### Level of Foreign Support

Relations with Qatar and China have been particularly important for the current regime's survival. In the wake of South Sudan's secession, and the subsequent loss of oil revenue and economic and financial crisis, the government implemented harsh economic measures, which led to growing popular discontent. It was Qatar's financial assistance that bailed out the government. But Qatar's role is not confined to financial and economic assistance; it includes political tutelage of supporting radical Islamic movements in the region in which Sudan is seen as a pawn. Recent moves by the Sudan government to distance itself from Iran and to support the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen are seen as an effort to improve the image of al-Bashir's regime, and to secure Arab support.

At the international level, and in countering diplomatic and political measures taken by Western countries, the Khartoum government relies to some extent on support from China and Russia, but the Chinese and Russians are more interested in exploring and exploiting opportunities for economic investments than in delivering support to Khartoum in its vendettas against Western countries.<sup>21</sup>

### Institutionalization versus Patrimonialism

While it is difficult to verify the level of institutionalization versus the extension of patrimonialism as the organizational basis for the military/security apparatus, it is well known that NISS's inner circles are dominated by elements from northern and riverine communities. The institutionalized, traditionally meritocratic nature of the Sudanese army has been eroded over time and completely undermined during the Islamist rule (Saeed 2001, 245-272; Mirghani 2002, 305-308; Idris 2012, 110-141). In this regard, the Sudanese army is different from both Tunisian and Egyptian armies, the latter being highly institutionalized, meritocratic, and with well-established paths of career advancement and recruitment (Saeed 2001, 245-272). Continuous purges of army officers, promotion of NISS over SAF and the introduction of RSF into the capital Khartoum to guard against possible popular protests over harsh living conditions, unemployment, hyperinflation and economic conditions are indicators of the lack of trust in SAF by the political leadership.

### Level of Popular Mobilization

The level of popular mobilization is based on the idea that a small mobilization may be easily repressed without too many consequences, yet that a violent repression of a large-scale mobilization is costly in terms of "institutional integrity of the security apparatus, international support, and domestic legitimacy" (Kaartveit and Jumbert 2014). A military force based on a patrimonial system will be more willing to take on this cost than an institutionalized security apparatus, where promotion is based on merit and not family ties or ethnicity. This is related to the perceived costs of giving up power, which is more devastating

for the military and security personnel in a patrimonial system (Roessler 2011).

In Sudan, northerners dominate power, and members of ethnic riverine communities dominate SAF and key security services. It is believed that this strategy serves to prevent, or at least limit, military moves against the leadership. At the same time, Khartoum rulers have deliberately fueled fears of ethnic incursions and persecution by SRF if attacks are made into the central regions.

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Fear of the army officers moving against the government was partly behind the systemic erosion of SAF as a professional army. This suspicion towards SAF was further confirmed by the visible role NISS had in cracking down on opposition and in taking on roles that were usually confined to SAF such as engaging in direct combat with rebel forces. To consolidate its position vis-à-vis SAF, NISS recruited and upgraded Janjaweed into the Rapid Support Force (RSF), further fueling the fear of army officers. There are reports of army officers contemplating

to move against the government.<sup>22</sup> However the fact that RSF and its leaders publically rebuked the army on official media<sup>23</sup> is seen as a clear message to army officers to think twice and not make any military moves. Given the current, intricate power configurations in the country it seems unrealistic to write off SAF's role in shaping Sudan's politics in the near future.

### Conclusion

It is evident that, in Africa and in the Middle East in general, and in Sudan in particular, armies play different roles at different times, depending on power configurations in society at large and pending on corporate interests at the time of intervention. SAF's historic legacy of stepping into the political fray and changing the course of events is now conditioned by a combination of its economic interests, structural changes and the presence of partners and competitors in the military-security nexus that commands the strategic resources of the poor country trapped in protracted conflicts since its independence.

The story of the Sudanese army is, in a way, the epitome of the evolution and decline of state-building institutions in a post-colonial, crisis-ridden society, but also the key to either a chaotic or an orderly regime change. Whether the political maneuverings of the past (1964, 1985) will be replicated in Sudan's transition and in the role likely to be played by SAF, be it when army officers took the side of the people, effectively abstained from an action in defense of their interests, or joined the security forces in crushing protests, remains to be seen. Whatever the position taken, it is now clear that SAF, as well as its relations with the ruling party and other political forces and society at large, remains central to understanding the dynamics of transition in Sudan in the post-Arab Spring phase.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For more elaborate analysis, see El-Battahani, A. (2016 a, b).
- <sup>2</sup> The political ascendancy of the Islamists in Sudan seems to be a precursor of what came later on the heels of the Arab Spring; i.e., the overthrow of President Numeiri in 1985, which benefited the Islamists more than their opponents.
- <sup>3</sup> The government is currently under pressure to undertake an independent inquiry into the killing of an estimated 200 young men and women.
- <sup>4</sup> The traces of this militarization can still be observed in the khaki uniforms and colored stripes of the provincial governors and local government officials.
- <sup>5</sup> Though a mutiny by Sudanese officers in 1924 was later hailed as a predecessor for modern Sudanese nationalism.
- <sup>6</sup> Amongst the three military regimes that ruled Sudan since independence in 1956, the Numeiri regime stands out as an example of the military as a modernizing force in Sudan. This was the view put forward by intellectuals who collaborated with Numeiri during 1969-1985 (Khalid 1990).
- <sup>7</sup> During the 1970s, the Islamists set up the al-Nizam al-Khas (Special System) to provide intelligence and to protect the leadership.
- <sup>8</sup> This was further boosted by the role played by the Faisal Islamic Bank through which the Muslim Brothers under Turabi leadership extended loans to army officers. For more details, see Abdelsalam (2010); and Abdalla (2012).
- <sup>9</sup> For comparative literature see Turshen (2004) and Grare (2006).
- <sup>10</sup> This underscored Turabi's notion that professional armies are a Western invention to control and dominate Muslim societies.
- <sup>11</sup> This was a time when many anti-Western Islamist radicals (such as Osama bin Laden) and "revolutionaries" took refuge in Khartoum.
- <sup>12</sup> NISS also has extensive networks in business, service sectors, sports, media and so on.
- <sup>13</sup> For more details, see <http://www.giad.com/en/> and [www.giadauto.com](http://www.giadauto.com)
- <sup>14</sup> Constitutional amendments and security measures are designed to secure areas for foreign countries who lease them or use them for their gold or for firms' agricultural investments; i.e., land-grabbing.
- <sup>15</sup> According to ALSir Sidahmed (2013), oil revenue was behind the business expansion of SAF, a development that rendered it the third largest army in Africa, an observation disputed by other sources.
- <sup>16</sup> This is sometimes referred to as "coup-proofing," meaning that military autocrats fear a strong army.
- <sup>17</sup> Historically, there was no animosity between SAF and the security sector. Mutual suspicion was sown during the last years of Numeiri when he seemed to rely more on the security sector for his survival.
- <sup>18</sup> MPs have already warned the government that some tribes are in possession of heavy armory, citing fear that this could lead to slow fragmentation of territorial integrity of the state that is already weakened by protracted conflicts (i.e., militarization of tribal and ethnic bargaining).
- <sup>19</sup> Ironically, these conflicts are now being fought on the outer limits of the capital, Khartoum; i.e., recent clashes between Jimo'iyya and Hawaweer.
- <sup>20</sup> Salaries of soldiers and lower-ranking officers became unattractive for new recruits.
- <sup>21</sup> Despite Sudanese officials' high regard of China's role in taking their side vis-à-vis the West, the former continue to give measured and carefully designed diplomatic support to Khartoum. In 2009, China did not take Sudan's side against ICC.
- <sup>22</sup> See ISS reports 2015.
- <sup>23</sup> As uttered by Hemeiti, the leader of RSF, in a press conference 19 May 2014. <http://www.hurriyatsudan.com/?p=176985>



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