



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**AFRICAN CONFLICTS AND THE AFRICAN UNION
RESPONSE: THE CASE OF SUDAN SINCE 2019**

**Thesis Submitted to College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
Department of Political Science and International Relations in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of
Art in International Relations and Diplomacy**

By: Hailu Alebachew

Advisor: Dr. Yonas Ashine

Addis Ababa Ethiopia

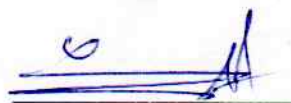
May 2026

Addis Ababa University
College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
Department of Political Science and International Relations

Approval Sheet of the Thesis

Approve by the Board of Examiners:

1. Dr. Yonas Ashine



Jun 2026

Advisor

Signature

Date

2. Dr. Hussein Jemma



June 2026

Internal Examiner

Signature

Date

3. Dr. Andargachew Tilahun



June 2026

External Examiner

Signature

Date

Disclaimer

This thesis is prepared exclusively for academic purposes. The views, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this thesis are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or policies of Addis Ababa University, its faculty, or any other institution with which the author may be affiliated.

Any errors, omissions, or interpretations contained in this work remain the responsibility of the author.

Acknowledgment

At the outset, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Almighty God for granting me strength, patience, wisdom, and perseverance throughout this academic journey. His grace and guidance sustained me through the challenges of research and writing, and without Him, the completion of this work would not have been possible.

I am profoundly grateful to my advisor, Dr. Yonas Ashine, for his invaluable guidance, and consistent encouragement from the very beginning of this study to its final stage. His intellectual insights, rigorous feedback, and thoughtful supervision greatly strengthened the quality of this thesis. I sincerely appreciate his dedication and mentorship.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my beloved wife, whose sacrifice and unwavering support made this achievement possible. During the demanding period of this research, she carried the weight of responsibilities at home, filled my absence with patience and understanding, and devoted herself to taking care of our children. Her strength, encouragement, and quiet sacrifices gave me the peace of mind necessary to focus on my studies. I remain deeply grateful for her love and commitment.

I am equally thankful to my family for their continuous prayers, encouragement, and moral support. Their belief in me has always been a source of motivation and strength.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to all those who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the successful completion of this thesis.

Contents

Acknowledgment	
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	
Abstract.....	1
Chapter One: Introduction.....	2
1.1 Background of the Study.....	2
1.2 Problem Statement.....	4
1.3 Core Argument of the Thesis	6
1.4 Objective of the Study.....	6
1.5 Research Questions	7
1.6 Research Methodology, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis.....	7
1.6.1 Research Methodology	7
1.6.2 Instruments of Data Collection	8
1.6.3 Methods of Data Analysis.....	9
1.7. Ethical considerations	9
1.8. Significance of the study	10
1.9. Scope of the Study	10
1.10. Limitation of the Study.....	11
1.11. Organization of the Thesis	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Conceptual Definitions.....	12
2.2.1 Conflict	12
2.2.2 Conflict Resolution.....	13
2.2.3 Mediation.....	13
2.2.4 Preventive Diplomacy	13
2.2.5 African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).....	14
2.3 Theoretical Perspectives	14
2.3.1 Realism.....	14
2.3.2 Liberalism	14
2.3.3 Neorealism.....	15
2.3.4 Neoliberal Institutionalism.....	15
2.3.5 Constructivism	16

2.3.6 New War Theory	16
2.3.7 Justification of choice of the Theoretical Perspectives.....	16
2.4 Empirical Literature Review	17
2.4.1 Evolution of African Conflict Management: From OAU to AU.....	17
2.4.2 Evolution of Conflict in Africa	17
2.4.3 Sudan Conflict and AU Response	18
2.5 Literature Gap	18
2.6 Chapter Conclusion	20
Chapter Three: The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA): Assessment of Institutional and Conflict Response capacity	21
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 Principal APSA Institutions and Their Role in Conflict Resolution	21
3.2.1 African Union Commission.....	21
3.2.2 Panel of the Wise	22
3.2.3 Continental Early Warning System (CEWS).....	22
3.2.4 Peace and Security Council (PSC).....	23
3.3 APSA in Practice: Selected Experiences in Conflict Resolution.....	24
3.3.1 APSA's Response to the Darfur Conflict.....	24
3.3.2 APSA's Response to the Democratic Republic of Congo Conflict	25
3.4 APSA: Achievements and Challenges.....	26
3.5 APSA, Theory and Contemporary Conflict	27
3.6 Chapter Conclusion	28
Chapter Four: Sudan since 2019: Evolution and Contemporary Characteristics of the Conflict	29
4.1. Introduction	29
4.2. Background	29
4.3. Major Political Turns since 2019	31
4.3.1 The 2019 Transitional Arrangement	31
4.3.2 The 2021 Coup and the Country's failed Transition to a Democratic Political System	32
4.3.3 The Political Framework Agreement of 5 December 2022.....	34
4.3.4 War Outbreaks in April 2023: Cause, Nature of the conflict and Dynamics of Actors	37
4.3.4.1 War outbreaks	37
4.3.4.2 Early years of the Conflict: RSF gaining upper hand	37
4.3.4.3 SAF retook Khartoum and the Establishment of Parallel Government by the RSF	38
4.4 Assessment of the Cause of the conflict and its character	39
4.5 Actor Analysis: Interests, Evolving Objectives and Competing Visions of Peace.....	41

A. Primary Actors	41
Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)	41
Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	42
B. Secondary Actors	42
Domestic Political and Armed Movements	43
Gulf Countries	43
Neighboring Countries	43
C. Tertiary Actors	44
African Union (AU)	44
Major Powers	44
4.6 Evolution of Actors and Interests Across the Conflict Phases (2019–2025)	45
A. The Post-Revolutionary Transition (2019–2021)	45
B. The Post-Coup Period (2021–2023)	46
C. The Civil War Period (2023 up to Present)	46
4.6 Comparison of the nature of the war with other African conflicts	48
4.7 Chapter Conclusion	51
Chapter Five AU's Response to the Sudan Conflict.....	53
5.1 Introduction	53
5.2 AU's Diplomatic Engagement in the aftermath of the 2019 Revolution	53
5.3 AU's Response to the 2023 Civil war	55
5.4 Appraisal of Efforts led by IGAD.....	59
5.5 Major Achievements of AU in the Mediation of the Sudan Conflict	60
5.6 Challenges to AU's approach	61
5.6.1 The multiplication of geopolitically motivated mediation Initiatives	61
5.6.2 The Problem of neutrality and a divided AUPSC and AU	64
5.6.3 External support complicates the mediation process	65
5.6.4 Fragmentation of Internal Political Forces.....	66
5.6.5 The Suspension of Sudan from the AU	67
5.7 Assessment of APSA's Involvement on Sudan	68
5.8 Chapter Conclusion	70
6. Conclusion	72
References	lxxiv
Appendices.....	xciii

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMIB	African Union Mission in Burundi
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
AUPD	African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur
AUSSOM	African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CAR	Central African Republic
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
CISSA	Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa
CSCPF	Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework
CSVRA	Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment
CSVMS	Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FFC	Forces for Freedom and Change
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NCP	National Congress Party
NUP	National Umma Party
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCRD	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
PSC	Peace and Security Council
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SLM/A	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
TMC	Transitional Military Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCG	Unconstitutional Change of Government
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur
US	United States of America
VOA	Voice of America

Abstract

This thesis examines the changing character of contemporary African conflicts and assesses the effectiveness of the African Union's (AU) conflict-response mechanisms using Sudan since 2019 as a case study. Despite the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the AU's expanded role in conflict management, violent conflicts continue to persist across the continent. The study finds that the Sudan conflict reflects key features of contemporary African conflicts, including fragmented authority, militarized politics, external intervention, and conflict economies that sustain violence. While the AU possesses a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for conflict resolution, its response has been constrained by weak compliance, limited enforcement capacity, competing mediation initiatives, and external support to belligerents. The findings suggest that AU-led responses face growing challenges in addressing conflicts characterized by fragmented authority and extensive external involvement. The study argues that strengthening APSA requires reforms aimed at enhancing enforcement capacity, improving coordination among peace actors, and addressing the political and economic incentives that sustain conflict. Without such reforms, the effectiveness of AU-led responses to complex conflicts such as Sudan is likely to remain limited.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Africa has experienced conflicts of varying forms since gaining political independence from colonial rule. The causes of these conflicts are complex and include exclusionary governance, weak state-building processes, identity-based politics, economic inequalities, and external intervention (Dunne & Tian, 2017; Harris, 2024). Many scholars trace these challenges to the legacies of colonialism, which institutionalized political exclusion, manipulated social identities, and established arbitrary state boundaries that continue to generate tensions across the continent (Sandbrook, 1985; Guest, 2004).

The nature of conflict in Africa has evolved over time. During the Cold War, many conflicts were shaped by superpower rivalry and external ideological competition (Tshitereke, 2003). Following the end of the Cold War, conflicts became predominantly intra-state in nature, characterized by civil wars, struggles for state power, identity-based violence, and challenges to state legitimacy (Godfrey, 2004). More recently, contemporary African conflicts have become increasingly complex due to the involvement of non-state armed groups, fragmented political actors, and renewed external intervention by regional and international powers. The ongoing conflict in Sudan illustrates these dynamics, where external actors have significantly influenced the trajectory of the war (International Crisis Group, 2024).

In response to persistent conflict on the continent, the African Union (AU) and its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), developed various mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. The AU's commitment to peace and security is enshrined in its Constitutive Act, which identifies peace, security, and stability as essential conditions for development (AU, 2000). To operationalize this mandate, the AU established the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and a broader institutional framework known as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), comprising the PSC, the AU Commission, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force, and the Peace Fund (AU, 2002).

Through APSA, the AU has undertaken numerous mediation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding initiatives across the continent, including interventions in Somalia, Sudan, and other conflict-affected states (Okorie, 2024). Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of APSA continues to face challenges related to limited resources, sovereignty concerns, external interference, and varying levels of political commitment among member states (Amani Africa, 20225a).

Sudan provides a particularly important case for examining these challenges. Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has experienced recurrent civil wars, political instability, and repeated military coups, leading some scholars to characterize it as a “laboratory of coups” (ISS, 2020). The roots of Sudan's conflicts are often linked to colonial legacies, unequal power distribution, identity-based exclusion, and authoritarian governance structures (Mamdani, 2009).

The 2019 Sudanese Revolution, which resulted in the removal of President Omar al-Bashir after three decades in power, generated optimism for democratic transition. Following mediation efforts led by the African Union and Ethiopia, civilian and military actors agreed on a transitional arrangement intended to lead Sudan toward democratic governance (Al Jazeera, 2019). However, tensions between civilian and military actors persisted, culminating in the October 2021 military takeover and the subsequent collapse of the transition process. These tensions eventually escalated into full-scale armed conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023 (Soliman, 2023).

Since the outbreak of the conflict, the African Union has launched various diplomatic and political initiatives through the Peace and Security Council and the AU Commission aimed at facilitating dialogue, promoting a ceasefire, and supporting a political settlement (PSC, 2024a). However, the mixed outcomes of these interventions raise important questions regarding the effectiveness of APSA in addressing contemporary African conflicts characterized by multiple actors, external involvement, and competing mediation initiatives.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the nature of contemporary conflicts in Africa and evaluates the effectiveness of AU-led multilateral responses, using the Sudan conflict since 2019 as a case study.

1.2 Problem Statement

The African Union (AU) has established one of the most elaborate regional peace and security frameworks in the world through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Through institutions such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, the African Standby Force, and the Peace Fund, APSA was designed to help member states of the African Union to prevent, manage, and resolve violent conflicts (AU, 2002). Despite these institutional and normative advances, Africa continues to experience persistent and increasingly complex conflicts. Terrorism and violent extremism, unconstitutional changes of government, civil wars, external intervention, and failures of political transitions continue to undermine peace and security across the continent (ISS, 2024e). This raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of APSA in responding to contemporary conflicts that differ significantly from those that informed its establishment.

The conflict in Sudan provides a particularly important case through which to examine this challenge. Sudan is selected as a case for examining AU-led multilateral conflict response for three reasons. First, it represents one of the most severe and protracted conflicts on the continent in the post-2019 period. Second, the AU has been directly and continuously engaged through its various institutional mechanisms through mediation initiatives, diplomatic interventions, Peace and Security Council deliberations, and coordination efforts aimed at ending the conflict. Third, the Sudan case encapsulates broader trends in contemporary African conflicts, including militarized politics, fragmented armed actors, external interference, competing mediation initiatives, and contested political legitimacy.

Following the 2019 Sudanese Revolution, the country embarked on a fragile political transition supported by the African Union and other international actors. However, the transition collapsed following the October 2021 military takeover and eventually descended into full-scale civil war in April 2023 between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (Soliman, 2023). Since the outbreak of the conflict, the AU has undertaken various diplomatic and political initiatives through the PSC and the AU Commission, including mediation efforts, the adoption of communiqués, and the endorsement of a Roadmap for the Resolution of the Conflict in Sudan

(PSC, 2023a; PSC, 2023b). Nevertheless, these interventions have thus far failed to halt the violence or facilitate a sustainable political settlement.

Existing studies offer several explanations for the limited effectiveness of the AU's response. Some scholars emphasize institutional and resource constraints, arguing that the AU lacks the financial, military, and political leverage necessary to influence the behavior of conflict parties (Khadiagala, 2023). Others highlight the role of external actors whose political, financial, and military support to the warring factions has complicated mediation efforts and reduced incentives for compromise (Idris & Daqash, 2024; Kiros, 2024). Additional studies point to competing peace initiatives, divisions among AU member states, weak political commitment, and coordination challenges among mediation actors as key obstacles to effective conflict resolution (International Crisis Group, 2025; Abdelwahab, 2024).

While these studies provide important insights, they tend to focus on individual explanatory factors in isolation. Consequently, the existing literature offers only a partial explanation of why AU-led conflict resolution efforts have struggled to produce meaningful outcomes in Sudan. Moreover, much of the literature examines the African Union's response primarily from an institutional perspective without sufficiently considering how the changing character of contemporary African conflicts may affect the effectiveness of existing conflict management mechanisms. Contemporary conflicts are increasingly characterized by fragmented armed actors, competing sources of legitimacy, external intervention, transnational dimensions, and multiple overlapping mediation processes. Yet limited attention has been paid to how these evolving conflict dynamics interact with APSA's institutional design and operational approaches.

This study argues that the limited effectiveness of the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict cannot be adequately explained by resource constraints, external interference, institutional weaknesses, or competing mediation initiatives alone. Rather, it reflects a broader mismatch between the changing nature of contemporary African conflicts and the modalities through which APSA seeks to manage and resolve them. Understanding this relationship is essential for explaining both the achievements and limitations of AU-led multilateral conflict response.

Hence, the study seeks to fill two important gaps in the existing literature. First, it contributes to the growing scholarship on contemporary African conflicts by examining how the evolving character of conflict in Sudan has shaped the prospects for conflict resolution. Second, it provides a comprehensive assessment of APSA's effectiveness by analyzing not only the African Union's interventions but also the political, institutional, and structural factors that influenced their outcomes. Unlike existing studies that focus primarily on a single explanatory factor, this research adopts an integrated analytical framework that examines the interaction between conflict dynamics, institutional responses, member-state politics, and external intervention.

Furthermore, given the relatively recent and ongoing nature of the Sudan conflict, scholarly literature on the African Union's response remains limited and fragmented. By examining developments from the 2019 revolution, through the 2021 coup, to the civil war that erupted in 2023, this study seeks to contribute new empirical and analytical insights to the literature on African conflict management, multilateral diplomacy, and the effectiveness of APSA in addressing contemporary conflicts.

1.3 Core Argument of the Thesis

This thesis argues that the limited effectiveness of the African Union in resolving the conflict in Sudan since 2019 is not primarily the result of inadequate legal authority, normative backing or institutional architecture, but rather stems from the interaction between evolving conflict dynamics, fragmented political authority, weak political compliance, and limitations in AU-led multilateral conflict-response mechanisms.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The General Objective of the study is to assess the effectiveness of the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in responding to the Sudan conflict since 2019 and examine what this reveals about the capacity of the African Union to address contemporary conflicts in Africa.

Specific Objectives include:

1. To assess the extent to which APSA is institutionally equipped to respond to contemporary African conflicts.

2. To examine the evolution of the Sudan conflict since 2019 and assess the extent to which it reflects the characteristics of contemporary African conflicts.
3. To analyze the political, institutional, and structural factors that have influenced the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict since 2019.

1.5 Research Questions

The core research question of this study is that how effective has the AU/ African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) been in responding to the Sudan conflict, and what does this reveal about the capacity of the African Union to address contemporary conflicts in Africa? The study also attempts to answer the following specific research questions.

1. To what extent is APSA institutionally equipped to respond to contemporary African conflicts?
2. How has the nature of the Sudan conflict evolved since 2019, and to what extent does it reflect the characteristics of contemporary African conflicts?
3. What political, institutional, and structural factors have influenced the African Union's response to the conflict in Sudan since 2019?

1.6 Research Methodology, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

1.6.1 Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to examine the effectiveness of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in responding to the conflict in Sudan. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand complex political, institutional, and conflict dynamics that cannot be adequately measured through quantitative methods. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring social and political processes, actors' perceptions, experiences, motivations, and institutional interactions within their natural settings (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Since the study seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions regarding the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict, a qualitative methodology provides the most appropriate framework for generating detailed and context-sensitive explanations (Mason, 2002).

The study adopted a case study research strategy, using the Sudan conflict as the principal case through which the effectiveness of APSA is examined. The case study strategy enables an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context and is particularly useful where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. While Sudan constitutes the primary case under investigation, the study also draws limited comparative insights from other African conflicts where necessary to contextualize findings and identify broader patterns in African Union conflict management efforts.

1.6.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six key informants selected through purposive sampling. The interviewees were chosen because of their professional responsibilities, expertise, and direct involvement in issues related to Sudan, African peace and security, and African Union conflict response mechanisms.

The respondents included former Ambassador of Ethiopia to the Republic of Sudan who served in the Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an Advisor to the Minister, Sudanese Desk officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Political Affairs Officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa, and senior officials and experts at the Commission of Political Affairs, Peace And Security of the African Union.

These informants were selected because they possess specialized knowledge, practical experience, and direct exposure to the issues under investigation. Interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings, virtual platforms such as Zoom, telephone conversations, and email correspondence. To protect confidentiality, interviewees who requested anonymity are cited as "Informants" throughout the study and are not included in the reference list.

Secondary data was collected through a review of books, peer-reviewed journal articles, African Union Peace and Security Council communiqués, reports of the African Union Commission, United Nations reports, policy briefs, official statements by governments and parties to the conflict, reports of international organizations, and other relevant academic and policy sources.

1.6.3 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected from both primary and secondary sources were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and document analysis techniques. The collected materials were systematically reviewed, coded, categorized, and interpreted according to the major themes emerging from the research questions and objectives.

Particular attention was given to themes relating to the effectiveness of APSA mechanisms, the characteristics of contemporary conflicts, the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict, institutional constraints, political interests of member states, external intervention, mediation efforts, and enforcement challenges.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, information obtained through interviews was triangulated with documentary evidence from official reports, communiqués, academic literature, and policy documents. The findings were subsequently interpreted in light of the theoretical framework guiding the study, enabling an assessment of both the effectiveness of APSA and the factors that shaped the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict.

1.7. Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the ethical principles governing academic research. In collecting primary data, the researcher ensured that participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the intended use of the information provided, and their right to decline participation or withdraw at any stage of the research process. The privacy and confidentiality of participants were respected throughout the study. Accordingly, interviewees who requested anonymity are cited as “Informants,” and any information that could reveal their identity has been withheld. Furthermore, the researcher observed the ethical standards of academic integrity by properly acknowledging and citing all sources of information used in the study. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the data presented and to avoid plagiarism, misrepresentation, or misuse of information.

1.8. Significance of the study

This study is conducted at a time when an effective intervention from the AU is needed to stop the bloodletting and dire humanitarian crisis in the Sudan. In light of this, the findings and recommendations of this research will be critical to understand the nature of conflicts in Africa and the Sudan. This will in return be beneficial for intergovernmental organizations such as the AU, UN, IGAD and other actors to base their response to the conflict on the basis of proper understanding of the nature of the conflict in Sudan.

The study will also contribute in widening the existing body of knowledge and the literature on the Sudan conflict and mediation efforts by the AU. The study will also be important for academia, research think tanks, civil societies, international organizations, and other relevant actors and stakeholders that have both purely academic and practical significance.

This study is therefore significant as a useful guide to actors both policy makers and the academia in formulating, and revamping effective responses to conflict resolution in Africa in general and Sudan in particular.

1.9. Scope of the Study

This study is limited thematically to examining the changing nature of the Sudan conflict and assessing the effectiveness of the African Union's conflict-response mechanisms under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Particular attention is given to the diplomatic, mediation, and conflict-management efforts undertaken by the African Union, as well as the political, institutional, and structural factors that have shaped their effectiveness.

The study covers the period from 2019 to the present. The year 2019 was selected as the starting point because it marked a major turning point in Sudan's political trajectory following the overthrow of President Omar Al-Bashir, the beginning of the transitional process, and the subsequent developments that culminated in the outbreak of large-scale conflict in 2023. Examining the period since 2019 therefore makes it possible to analyze both the evolution of the conflict and the African Union's response across different phases of Sudan's transition and crisis.

Geographically, the study focuses on Sudan as the primary case study while examining the role of the African Union at the continental level. Although reference is made to regional and international

actors where relevant, the analysis is confined to their influence on the Sudan conflict and on AU-led conflict-resolution efforts.

1.10. Limitation of the Study

Given the ongoing nature of the conflict and the Mediation process, this study is limited by the fact that it was not possible to get accurate data as to what is transpiring on the diplomatic efforts. Access to information and individuals leading the mediation process proved difficult at a time when negotiation efforts are ongoing. All the data necessary for the research was not also available in the media and new developments were barely accessible. Moreover, a field trip to Sudan was not possible due to security reasons and financial limitations. In addition, the constraints associated with time and budget are the other important limitations identified by the researcher and implicated in limiting the scope and study of the area. Notwithstanding the stated limitations, the study tried its best to reduce the impact by closely following developments and triangulating statements made by the parties to the conflict and interested actors.

1.11. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized in five chapters. The first Chapter introduced the main subject to be studied, the problem, objective of the study, core argument, research questions to be answered by the research, methodology and method of data collection and analysis, the significance and limitation of the study. The second Chapter discussed and defining the basic concepts like Conflict Resolution and mediation, the AU Peace and Security Architecture, the Principle of complementarity and subsidiarity between the UN, AU and IGAD in responding to regional conflicts. The third chapter examined the evolution and role of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture in resolving conflicts in Africa. The fourth Chapter dealt with the nature of contemporary conflicts in Africa by using Sudan as a case. The fifth Chapter will critically analyze the efficacy of the AU'S Response to the Conflict in Sudan. The challenges, achievements and the approaches AU employed are analyzed in great depth. Finally, a conclusion and recommendation is drawn.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The study of conflict and conflict resolution occupies a central place in International Relations, and Political Science. As conflicts evolve in their nature, actors, and methods, scholars and policymakers continue to examine both the causes of violent conflict and the effectiveness of mechanisms designed to prevent, manage, and resolve them. In Africa, the persistence of violent conflicts despite significant institutional efforts has generated extensive debate regarding the effectiveness of continental and regional peace and security mechanisms.

The African Union (AU), through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), has established an elaborate framework for conflict prevention, management, and resolution (Nathan, 2010). Nevertheless, the continent continues to experience civil wars, terrorism, unconstitutional changes of government, and externally influenced conflicts (PSC, 2025b). The ongoing conflict in Sudan illustrates many of these challenges and raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of AU-led multilateral conflict-response mechanisms.

This chapter reviews the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature relevant to the study. It begins by clarifying key concepts, followed by a discussion of the theoretical perspectives guiding the study. The chapter then reviews the evolution of conflict management in Africa, contemporary conflict dynamics, and the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict. Finally, it identifies the major gaps in the existing literature that this study seeks to address.

2.2 Conceptual Definitions

2.2.1 Conflict

Conflict generally refers to a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible goals, interests, values, or aspirations (Faal, 2001). According to Galtung (2011), conflict arises from incompatible objectives among actors and does not necessarily imply violence. Similarly, Muyangwa and Vogt (2002) define conflict as a struggle over power, status, values, and resources in which opposing actors seek to advance their interests.

In the African context, conflict has taken various forms, including interstate wars, civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, secessionist movements, and unconstitutional changes of government

(PSC, 2025b). For the purpose of this study, conflict refers to a situation in which state and non-state actors pursue incompatible political, economic, social, or security objectives, resulting in varying degrees of confrontation and violence.

2.2.2 Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution refers to efforts aimed at addressing the underlying causes of conflict and creating conditions for sustainable peace. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009) define conflict resolution as a process through which the root causes of conflict are addressed and peaceful relations restored among the parties concerned. Similarly, Wani (2011) argues that conflict resolution involves the development of mutually acceptable solutions capable of satisfying the interests and needs of conflicting parties.

Conflict resolution may involve negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, peacebuilding, institutional reform, and post-conflict reconstruction (Wendy, 2016). In this study, conflict resolution is understood as a comprehensive process encompassing conflict prevention, peacemaking, mediation, peace support operations, and post-conflict reconstruction aimed at achieving sustainable peace.

2.2.3 Mediation

Mediation refers to the involvement of a mutually accepted third party that facilitates communication and negotiation between disputing parties with the objective of reaching a mutually acceptable settlement (Livinus, 2015). Nathan (2005) similarly defines mediation as a voluntary process in which a third party assists conflicting actors in resolving disputes through compromise and accommodation of interests.

Within the African Union, mediation constitutes one of the principal instruments of conflict resolution and is commonly undertaken through High-Level Panels, Special Envoys, High Representatives, and Ad Hoc Committees (PSC Handbook, 2024; AU, 2023a).

2.2.4 Preventive Diplomacy

Preventive diplomacy refers to actions aimed at preventing disputes from escalating into violent conflict or preventing existing conflicts from spreading (United Nations, 2012). Williams (2012)

defines preventive diplomacy as policies and actions designed to prevent the outbreak, escalation, or recurrence of violent conflict.

Within APSA, preventive diplomacy is primarily implemented through the Peace and Security Council, the Panel of the Wise, and the Continental Early Warning System (AU, 2002; PSC, 2007).

2.2.5 African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the institutional framework established by the African Union to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts on the continent. APSA consists of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Union Commission, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), and the Peace Fund (Oita et al, 2024).

APSA is primarily designed to support Member States in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts through collective security mechanisms. Hence, Its effectiveness depends significantly on the cooperation of Member States and the existence of functioning political authorities capable of implementing agreed decisions (Nathan, 2010).

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives

2.3.1 Realism

Realism views international politics as a struggle for power and security among states operating in an anarchic international system (Morgenthau, 1948). Since no authority exists above states, states prioritize survival and national interests, making competition and conflict recurring features of international relations. The theory is useful for explaining the strategic interests of external actors and regional powers involved in contemporary conflicts. However, its state-centric focus offers limited insight into conflicts characterized by fragmented authority, non-state armed groups, and multilateral conflict-management mechanisms. Consequently, realism provides only a partial explanation of both the Sudan conflict and APSA's response.

2.3.2 Liberalism

Liberalism challenges the realist assumption that conflict is inevitable by emphasizing cooperation through institutions, economic interdependence, and shared interests (Molloy, 2017). The theory

provides a useful foundation for understanding international organizations and multilateral approaches to conflict management. However, its expectation that cooperation can emerge through institutional arrangements struggles to explain conflicts where actors prioritize military victory, regime survival, or economic interests over negotiated settlements. As such, liberalism offers only a limited explanation of contemporary conflicts such as Sudan.

2.3.3 Neorealism

Neorealism shifts the focus from human nature to the structure of the international system, arguing that state behavior is shaped by the distribution of power under conditions of anarchy (Waltz, 1979). The theory helps explain external involvement in conflicts and the influence of regional power competition on political outcomes. Nevertheless, like realism, it remains heavily state-centric and pays insufficient attention to domestic actors, institutions, and evolving forms of violence. This limits its usefulness for analyzing conflicts involving fragmented authority and multiple armed actors.

2.3.4 Neoliberal Institutionalism

Neoliberal Institutionalism argues that international institutions can facilitate cooperation even under anarchy by reducing uncertainty, encouraging dialogue, monitoring compliance, and promoting collective action (Byers & Sinclair, 2006; Boehmer et al., 2004; Baylis & Smith, 2001; Burchill et al., 2005). Institutions provide mechanisms through which states can manage disputes and coordinate responses to common challenges (Meierhenrich & Nathan, 2012; Hobson, 2003; Princen, 1992).

This perspective is particularly relevant to the African Union because APSA itself is an institutional framework designed to facilitate collective responses to peace and security challenges. Scholars have highlighted the role of the AU in preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacebuilding, and conflict management (Enuka & Nwagbo, 2016; Okorie, 2024). Neoliberal Institutionalism therefore provides a useful framework for assessing how institutional design, cooperation among member states, and compliance with collective decisions shape the effectiveness of APSA. At the same time, it draws attention to the limitations that arise when political commitment and collective action are weak.

2.3.5 Constructivism

Constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, identities, and social interactions in shaping international politics (Wendt, 1992; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). It argues that concepts such as sovereignty, legitimacy, and security are socially constructed rather than fixed realities. The theory is useful for understanding the normative foundations of the African Union, including principles such as non-indifference, constitutional governance, and collective security. However, while constructivism explains the emergence and evolution of norms, it offers limited tools for assessing institutional effectiveness and operational responses to violent conflicts.

2.3.6 New War Theory

New War Theory emerged to explain the changing nature of contemporary conflicts. Associated primarily with Mary Kaldor, and supported by scholars such as Münkler, Shaw, and Holsti, the theory argues that contemporary conflicts differ from conventional interstate wars in terms of actors, objectives, methods, and sources of financing (Holsti, 1996; Shaw, 2003; Münkler, 2005; Kaldor, 2012). These conflicts increasingly involve non-state armed groups, fragmented authority structures, external intervention, and conflict economies that sustain violence.

The Sudan conflict reflects many of these characteristics, including competing armed actors, contested legitimacy, significant external involvement, and a prolonged humanitarian crisis. New War Theory is therefore particularly useful for understanding the nature of the conflict and the challenges it poses to conventional conflict-resolution mechanisms.

2.3.7 Justification of choice of the Theoretical Perspectives

The theories reviewed above provide important but incomplete explanations of conflict and conflict management. Realism and neorealism highlight power politics and external actors but pay limited attention to institutions and non-state actors. Liberalism emphasizes cooperation but struggles to explain persistent violence in fragmented conflict environments. Constructivism contributes insights into norms and legitimacy but offers limited guidance for assessing institutional performance.

Given the study's objective of examining both the changing nature of contemporary conflicts and the effectiveness of AU-led conflict-response mechanisms, the study employed Neoliberal

Institutionalism and New War Theory as its principal analytical perspective. While Neoliberal Institutionalism provides a framework for assessing APSA as a multilateral conflict-response mechanism, New War Theory explains the evolving dynamics of contemporary conflicts that shape the effectiveness of such institutional responses.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

2.4.1 Evolution of African Conflict Management: From OAU to AU

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) approached conflict management through the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states (OAU, 1963). While these principles contributed to state consolidation, they also limited the organization's ability to respond effectively to internal conflicts and humanitarian crises (Ani, 2016).

Recognizing these limitations, African leaders established the Cairo Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in 1993, creating the Central Organ as a platform for addressing peace and security issues (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2002). This evolution ultimately culminated in the establishment of the African Union in 2002.

Unlike the OAU, the AU adopted the principle of non-indifference and granted itself the right to intervene in grave circumstances, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity under Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act (AU, 2000). The establishment of the Peace and Security Council and APSA further strengthened the continental peace and security framework (AU, 2002).

2.4.2 Evolution of Conflict in Africa

African conflicts have evolved significantly over time. During the immediate post-independence period, interstate disputes over borders and sovereignty predominated (Gody, 2012). During the Cold War, Africa became a theatre of proxy competition between global powers, contributing to the escalation of both interstate and internal conflicts (Tshitereke, 2003).

Following the end of the Cold War, conflicts increasingly shifted toward intrastate violence characterized by civil wars, insurgencies, identity-based conflicts, and struggles for political power. More recently, contemporary African conflicts have become increasingly complex,

involving non-state actors, terrorism, external intervention, transnational networks, and competition over natural resources (PSC, 2025c; International Crisis Group, 2024).

2.4.3 Sudan Conflict and AU Response

The conflict in Sudan represents one of the most significant peace and security challenges facing Africa today. Following the 2019 revolution and the collapse of the civilian-led transition after the 2021 military takeover, tensions between SAF and RSF culminated in civil war in April 2023.

The African Union responded through diplomatic engagement, mediation initiatives, and the adoption of a roadmap aimed at restoring peace and constitutional order (PSC, 2023b). Despite these efforts, the conflict has continued, highlighting the challenges facing AU-led conflict resolution in an environment characterized by fragmented authority, external intervention, and competing mediation initiatives.

Existing studies identify several factors that constrain AU effectiveness, including institutional limitations, weak enforcement mechanisms, competing mediation tracks, external support to belligerents, and divergent positions among member states (Khadiagala, 2023; Kiros, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2025).

2.5 Literature Gap

The existing literature has made significant contributions to understanding conflict dynamics in Africa, the evolution of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and the African Union's role in conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Similarly, a growing body of scholarship has emerged on Sudan's political transition following the 2019 revolution, the military takeover of 2021, and the civil war that erupted in 2023. These studies provide important insights into the drivers of conflict, the challenges of democratic transition, and the efforts undertaken by regional and international actors to restore peace.

With respect to the African Union's response to Sudan, existing studies have identified a number of factors that constrained the effectiveness of AU-led interventions. Some scholars emphasize institutional weaknesses, resource limitations, and the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms as the primary obstacles to successful conflict resolution (Khadiagala, 2023). Others highlight the role of external actors whose political, financial, and military support to the warring

parties has complicated mediation efforts and reduced incentives for compromise (Idris & Daqash, 2024). Additional studies point to competing mediation initiatives, coordination challenges among peace actors, and divergent positions among AU member states as major impediments to effective conflict management (Kiros, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2025).

While these studies provide valuable insights, several important gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature examines these explanatory factors separately. As a result, insufficient attention has been given to how institutional constraints, member state self-interest, external intervention, and conflict dynamics interact to influence the effectiveness of AU-led conflict resolution efforts.

Second, although contemporary African conflicts have evolved significantly over the past two decades, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to examining how these changing conflict dynamics affect the effectiveness of APSA. Fragmented armed actors, competing sources of legitimacy, transnational dimensions, external intervention, and overlapping mediation processes, increasingly characterize contemporary conflicts. Yet most studies evaluate APSA primarily from an institutional perspective without sufficiently considering the implications of these evolving conflict characteristics for conflict resolution efforts.

Third, the literature on Sudan remains fragmented across different phases of the crisis. Existing studies tend to focus on specific events, such as the 2019 revolution, the October 2021 military takeover, or the civil war that erupted in April 2023. Consequently, there is limited scholarship that examines the evolution of the conflict across these interconnected phases while simultaneously assessing the effectiveness of the African Union's response.

Furthermore, despite Sudan representing one of the most significant peace and security challenges confronting the African Union in recent years, relatively few studies have comprehensively evaluated APSA's performance throughout the entire period extending from the 2019 political transition to the ongoing civil war. Much of the available literature focuses on describing peace initiatives rather than systematically assessing their effectiveness and the factors that shaped their outcomes.

This study seeks to address these gaps by providing an integrated analysis of the Sudan conflict and the African Union's response. Unlike existing studies that focus on a single explanatory factor,

the study examines the interaction between conflict dynamics, institutional capacity, member-state politics, and external intervention. It further analyzes how the changing character of contemporary conflicts affects the effectiveness of APSA mechanisms. By tracing developments from the 2019 revolution, through the 2021 coup, to the civil war that erupted in 2023, the study contributes to the growing literature on African conflict management and provides a comprehensive assessment of AU-led multilateral conflict response in Sudan. All in all, While APSA is designed to support Member States in managing conflicts, existing scholarship pays insufficient attention to how its effectiveness is affected when the state itself becomes fragmented and competing actors claim authority, as is the case in Sudan.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature relevant to the study. It clarified the key concepts underpinning the research, examined the theoretical perspectives guiding the analysis, and reviewed the evolution of African conflict management and the African Union's response to conflicts.

The review identified important gaps in existing scholarship, particularly regarding the interaction between contemporary conflict dynamics and the effectiveness of APSA. These gaps provide the basis for the present study and inform the methodological approach outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA): Assessment of Institutional and Conflict Response capacity

3.1 Introduction

The establishment of the African Union (AU) marked a significant shift in Africa's approach to peace and security. Unlike the Organization of African Unity (OAU), whose conflict management role was constrained by the principle of non-interference, the AU adopted a more proactive approach embodied in the principle of non-indifference (Murithi, 2005). This shift led to the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which serves as the continent's principal framework for conflict prevention, management, and resolution (AU, 2000; AU, 2002).

Through institutions such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the AU Commission, the Panel of the Wise, and the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), APSA provides mechanisms for conflict prevention, mediation, and collective security. This chapter examines the principal institutions of APSA, selected experiences in conflict management, and the key achievements and challenges shaping its performance. Therefore, it provides the institutional context for assessing the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict.

3.2 Principal APSA Institutions and Their Role in Conflict Resolution

3.2.1 African Union Commission

The African Union Commission serves as the executive and administrative organ of the AU and plays a central role in implementing the Union's peace and security agenda. Through the Chairperson of the Commission and the relevant departments responsible for political affairs, peace and security, the Commission facilitates preventive diplomacy, mediation initiatives, and the implementation of PSC decisions (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)¹. It also coordinates cooperation among the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), member states, and international partners in support of conflict prevention and resolution (Murithi, 2012; Solomon, 2012).

¹ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

The Commission has supported peace processes in several conflict situations, including Sudan, South Sudan, Libya, and the Central African Republic. Despite resource limitations and political constraints, it remains the operational hub of the AU's conflict-management efforts (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025²).

3.2.2 Panel of the Wise

Established under Article 11 of the PSC Protocol, the Panel of the Wise serves as one of APSA's principal preventive diplomacy mechanisms (PSC, 2007). Composed of distinguished African personalities, the Panel supports the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission through advisory, mediation, and conflict-prevention functions.

Through quiet diplomacy, fact-finding missions, dialogue facilitation, and confidence-building measures, the Panel seeks to prevent disputes from escalating into violent conflict (PSC Handbook, 2024). Since becoming operational in 2007, it has contributed to mediation and preventive diplomacy efforts in countries such as Kenya, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan (Brown, 2009; Okumu, 2023). Although constrained by limited resources and its advisory mandate, the Panel remains an important instrument of preventive diplomacy within APSA (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025³).

3.2.3 Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)

The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) was established as APSA's principal conflict-prevention mechanism. It collects, processes, and analyzes information on emerging threats to peace and security across the continent with the objective of supporting timely policy responses (Amani Africa, 2024a).

Drawing information from RECs, member states, civil society organizations, and research institutions, CEWS provides risk assessments and early-warning reports to the PSC and the

² Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

³ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

Chairperson of the Commission (Noyes & Yarwood, 2015; ISS, 2024a). While the system has strengthened the AU's capacity to identify emerging threats, its effectiveness has often been constrained by the persistent gap between early warning and political action. As several scholars observe, the challenge is not the availability of information but the willingness of political actors to act upon it (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025⁴).

3.2.4 Peace and Security Council (PSC)

The Peace and Security Council is the central decision-making organ of APSA and serves as the AU's principal mechanism for conflict prevention, management, and resolution (Oita et al., 2024). Established in 2004, the PSC provides strategic direction for continental responses to conflict and oversees activities ranging from preventive diplomacy and mediation to peace support operations and post-conflict reconstruction (Bah et al., 2014; Solomon, 2012).

Over the years, the PSC has played a prominent role in addressing conflicts in Darfur, Somalia, South Sudan, Mali, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan. Through its meetings, communiqués, and diplomatic engagement, the Council has become the primary forum through which African states coordinate collective responses to peace and security challenges (Williams, 2019; PSC, 2025a).

Nevertheless, the PSC continues to face challenges related to implementation, divergent member-state interests, and the increasing complexity of contemporary conflicts (Khadiagala, 2023; Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁵). Despite these constraints, it remains the cornerstone of APSA and the principal institution through which the AU pursues its peace and security mandate.

⁴ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁵ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

3.3 APSA in Practice: Selected Experiences in Conflict Resolution

3.3.1 APSA's Response to the Darfur Conflict

The Darfur conflict represented one of the earliest and most significant tests of the African Peace and Security Architecture. Following the outbreak of armed conflict in 2003 between the Government of Sudan and rebel movements, the African Union assumed a leading role in mediation and peace support efforts at a time when APSA was still in its formative stages (Mans, 2004; Cohen, 2006).

The AU facilitated negotiations that led to the N'Djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement in 2004 and subsequently remained engaged through mediation initiatives, fact-finding missions, and Peace and Security Council deliberations (PSC, 2004; PSC, 2006). Recognizing the need for a security presence on the ground, the AU deployed the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to monitor ceasefire arrangements, facilitate humanitarian access, and contribute to civilian protection (Solomon & Tefesehet, 2024).

The AU also established the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD), chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, to examine the underlying causes of the conflict and propose sustainable solutions. The Panel's recommendations emphasized political reform, accountability, reconciliation, and inclusive governance as essential components of long-term peace (PSC, 2008; AU, 2009).

Despite these efforts, APSA's response encountered significant limitations. AMIS suffered from inadequate funding, logistical constraints, and operational challenges that affected its effectiveness (Prunier, 2005; Ekengard, 2008). Mediation efforts were similarly complicated by divisions among armed groups and the reluctance of some actors to commit to negotiated settlements. Although the Darfur Peace Agreement was concluded in 2006, the refusal of key rebel factions to sign the agreement limited its impact and prevented the achievement of durable peace (Murithi, 2012).

Nevertheless, the Darfur experience demonstrated APSA's capacity to mobilize diplomatic, political, and security instruments in response to major crises. At the same time, it revealed the constraints imposed by limited resources, weak enforcement mechanisms, and the difficulty of

securing compliance from conflict parties. The case therefore highlighted both the promise and limitations of Africa's emerging peace and security architecture (Karari, 2016).

3.3.2 APSA's Response to the Democratic Republic of Congo Conflict

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) presents another important illustration of APSA's engagement in conflict management. The DRC has experienced recurring cycles of violence involving state forces, armed groups, regional actors, and external stakeholders, making it one of the most complex and protracted conflicts on the continent (Sasidharan & Dhillon, 2021; Caparini, 2022).

In response, the African Union has supported a range of diplomatic and political initiatives aimed at promoting peace and regional stability. A major milestone was the adoption of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Great Lakes Region in 2013, which sought to address both domestic and regional drivers of conflict through a combination of governance reforms, regional cooperation, and security sector measures (PSC, 2013; ISS, 2013).

More recently, the AU has supported the Luanda and Nairobi processes, which emerged in response to the resurgence of violence in eastern DRC and the renewed activity of the M23 rebel movement. While the Luanda Process focused primarily on addressing tensions between the DRC and Rwanda, the Nairobi Process sought to facilitate dialogue between the Congolese government and various armed groups operating in eastern DRC (Brooke, 2024; Mataire, 2025; Asanzi & Hoinathy, 2024).

The Peace and Security Council has consistently encouraged coordination among these initiatives and emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in addressing the conflict. Through its communiqués and diplomatic engagement, the PSC has sought to maintain continental support for ongoing peace efforts and prevent further regional escalation (PSC, 2025b).

However, APSA's effectiveness in the DRC has been constrained by the complexity of the conflict environment. The multiplicity of armed groups, persistent external involvement, weak state institutions, and competing mediation initiatives have made conflict resolution particularly difficult (International Crisis Group, 2020). Furthermore, the growing role of regional and

international actors has sometimes overshadowed AU-led initiatives, limiting the Union's visibility and influence in the peace process (Custers & Kinkoh, 2025. Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁶).

The DRC case illustrates the challenges APSA faces when responding to contemporary conflicts characterized by fragmented actors, transnational dimensions, and competing political interests (ibid). While the African Union has remained engaged through diplomacy and political support, the persistence of violence underscores the limitations of institutional responses in the absence of sustained political commitment and cooperation among conflict actors.

The experiences of Darfur and the DRC demonstrate that APSA has enhanced the African Union's capacity to respond to conflicts through mediation, preventive diplomacy, and peace support initiatives. At the same time, both cases reveal persistent challenges related to implementation, resource constraints, political will, and the increasing complexity of contemporary conflicts. These experiences provide important insights into the opportunities and limitations of APSA and offer a useful foundation for assessing the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict.

3.4 APSA: Achievements and Challenges

Since its establishment, APSA has significantly strengthened Africa's institutional capacity for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Through institutions such as the PSC, AU Commission, Panel of the Wise, and CEWS, the AU has developed mechanisms for mediation, preventive diplomacy, conflict monitoring, and peace support operations (Murithi, 2008; Dersso, 2016; PSC Handbook, 2023).

APSA has also contributed to strengthening continental norms relating to peace and security. The shift from non-interference to non-indifference expanded the AU's role in responding to grave circumstances such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and unconstitutional changes of government (AU, 2000). Moreover, AU engagement in conflicts such as Darfur and

⁶ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

Somalia demonstrates the growing role of continental institutions in addressing peace and security challenges (Solomon, 2012; Okorie, 2024).

Despite these achievements, APSA continues to face important limitations. One major challenge is the gap between institutional ambition and implementation capacity. Although the AU possesses an extensive legal and institutional framework, translating decisions into effective action often remains difficult (Khadiagala, 2023). Financial dependence on external partners, concerns over sovereignty, and divergent interests among member states frequently constrain collective action (Williams, 2019; ISS, 2024; Amani Africa, 2024).

The changing nature of contemporary conflicts presents an additional challenge. Many conflicts today involve fragmented armed actors, competing claims to legitimacy, transnational networks, and significant external intervention. Such dynamics complicate mediation efforts and reduce the effectiveness of conventional conflict-management approaches (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)⁷. Furthermore, the growing number of actors involved in peace processes often results in overlapping mandates and competing mediation initiatives, weakening coordination and diluting leadership (Abdelwahab, 2024; Amani Africa, 2024).

Overall, APSA has enhanced Africa's capacity for collective security and conflict management. However, its effectiveness continues to be constrained by institutional, political, financial, and operational challenges, particularly in contemporary conflicts characterized by fragmented authority and prolonged violence.

3.5 APSA, Theory and Contemporary Conflict

The discussion in this chapter demonstrates that APSA embodies the core assumptions of Neoliberal Institutionalism, which emphasizes the role of institutions in facilitating cooperation and collective responses to common challenges (Keohane, 1984; Keohane & Nye, 1977). Through mechanisms such as the Peace and Security Council, the AU Commission, and the Continental

⁷ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

Early Warning System, APSA seeks to promote collective security and coordinated conflict management across the continent.

However, the chapter also shows that the effectiveness of these institutions is increasingly challenged by the changing nature of contemporary conflicts. As highlighted by New War Theory, many current conflicts are characterized by fragmented armed actors, external intervention, competing sources of legitimacy, and protracted violence (Kaldor, 2012; Münkler, 2005). Such dynamics often complicate mediation efforts and reduce the effectiveness of conventional conflict management mechanisms.

The interaction between APSA's institutional framework and the realities of contemporary conflict is particularly evident in Sudan. As one of the most complex conflicts on the continent, Sudan provides a useful case for assessing both the strengths and limitations of APSA in responding to contemporary African conflicts.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examined the institutional design and operational experience of APSA as the African Union's principal framework for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. It showed that APSA has strengthened Africa's capacity for collective security through institutions such as the PSC, AU Commission, Panel of the Wise, and CEWS.

The chapter also demonstrated that despite important achievements, APSA continues to face challenges related to implementation, political will, resource constraints, external intervention, and the growing complexity of contemporary conflicts. These strengths and limitations provide an important foundation for assessing the African Union's response to the Sudan conflict in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Sudan since 2019: Evolution and Contemporary Characteristics of the Conflict

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the nature and evolution of the conflict in Sudan since 2019, situating it within broader patterns of contemporary African conflicts. Rather than treating the Sudan war as a sudden breakdown of political order, the chapter demonstrates that the current conflict is the culmination of long-standing structural, political, and security dynamics that intensified during Sudan's failed transition.

The analysis highlights how fragmented authority, militarized politics, identity-based mobilization, and external intervention have shaped the trajectory of the conflict. In doing so, the chapter illustrates why conventional conflict-management approaches have struggled to contain the violence and why Sudan exemplifies the changing character of warfare on the African continent.

4.2. Background

The Sudan remains locked in an ending cycle of conflict. Sudan's contemporary conflict is embedded in a long historical pattern of political exclusion, flawed state formation, and militarized governance. Long before the colonial period, political administration in Sudan was structured around hierarchies that privileged Arab and Muslim elites concentrated in the northern and central regions, while communities in the south and other peripheral areas were treated primarily as a source of labor and resources to maintain the privileges of the center. This unhealthy state society relations laid the foundation for resistance, demands for equality, and eventually armed struggle (Douglas, 2003).

Colonial administration did not dismantle these hierarchies. Instead, it reinforced regional and political divisions, particularly along the North–South axis, entrenching inequalities that would later shape post-independence conflicts. The colonial legacy thus contributed to the persistence of exclusionary governance structures and recurring cycles of violence (Ibid).

Sudan's post-independence experience quickly confirmed the fragility of the new state. The Torit Mutiny of January 1956, occurring even before formal independence, marked the beginning of prolonged armed confrontation between northern and southern elites. This early conflict was

rooted in the failure of political leaders in Khartoum to honor commitments to federalism and inclusive governance, promises that had been central to negotiations with southern representatives (Mumbi, 2010). Although the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 temporarily resolved this phase by granting autonomy to the south, the underlying causes of conflict remained unresolved (ibid).

Consecutive military interventions in the political life of the country further deepened the already unstable and fragile political landscape in Sudan. Sudan experienced its first military takeover in 1958, followed by successive coups and popular uprisings that disrupted civilian governance (Mustafa et al., 2025). The overthrow of General Abboud in 1964 and the collapse of President Nimeiri's regime in 1985 demonstrated a recurring pattern in which military rule was challenged but never fully replaced with civilian and democratic political dispensation (ibid).

Following the secession of South Sudan, instability shifted towards the west of the country. The eruption of violence in Darfur signaled a new phase of internal conflict driven by marginalization, competition over resources, and militarized responses by the central state. Importantly, this conflict has not been conclusively resolved and continues to influence Sudan's current political landscape (Marina, 2023).

This cycle of instability arising from coup d'état and popular revolt continues in the country with no end in sight. In 2019, the people of Sudan took to the streets demanding Bashir to leave in response to economic hardships and the rise of living costs (Annette, 2019). After the overthrow of Bashir, a Transitional Military Council took over power. After months of negotiation, Transitional Sovereignty Council comprising of the civilian forces that lead the 2019 revolution also named as Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) and the military was formed (Aljazeera, 2019). On 21st of August 2019, the Sovereign Council was sworn in, comprising five military personnel and six civilians. The Chairman of the Transitional Military Council, Lieutenant General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan, assumed the presidency of the Council for the first 21 months and the remaining 18 months was expected to be led by a civilian member of the Council (Sudan Constitutional Declaration, 2019).

The tension between the Civilian forces and the Military within the transitional arrangement and in particular the reluctance by the military component to cede power to the civilian after 19 months as per the 2019 transitional agreement led to the resignation of Prime Minister Abdela Hamdok in

October 2021(Tubiana, 2022). Here RSF and SAF combined to upstage yet another coup d'état in a space of two years (ibid)

As the military continues to negotiate with the various civilian and political groups over the future governance arrangement of the country under the December 2022 Political framework agreement, tensions between SAF and RSF continue to build over the integration of the RSF into the national army (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025)⁸. While General Burhan insisted on two-year integration, Hemeti proposed a ten-year timeline. This, coupled with the desire of the two leaders to reign over the Sudanese state and other multiple factors led to the outbreak of the current round of civil war in the Sudan (ibid).

However, the dispute extended beyond the duration of integration. At its core, it reflected broader disagreements over Security Sector Reform (SSR), the future command structure of the armed forces, and the status of the RSF within a unified military institution. The SAF insisted on the rapid integration of the RSF under the command of the national army, whereas the RSF favored a longer transition and sought guarantees regarding its position within the future security architecture. Disagreements over military restructuring, command and control arrangements and the integration process ultimately became one of the principal obstacles to the implementation of the Framework Agreement and contributed significantly to the outbreak of the April 2023 conflict (International IDEA, 2023).

4.3. Major Political Turns since 2019

4.3.1 The 2019 Transitional Arrangement

The post-Bashir transition marked a departure from Sudan's historical pattern of exclusive military rule following coups. The history of Sudanese military indicates that once the military perpetrated unconstitutional change of government, it will go on to establish a government by its own (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025). However, the 2019 revolution has proved to be unique as it creates a new precedence in which the Military that overthrew President Al Bashir entered an agreement with the civilian wing of the revolution to form a transitional arrangement that will eventually led

⁸ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

to the establishment of a civilian led democratic political system in the country (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)⁹

Through coordinated mediation efforts led by the African Union and supported by Ethiopia, Sudanese military and civilian actors agreed on a transitional framework intended to pave the way towards democratic and inclusive governance (Tchie & Llorens, 2024).

This arrangement was unprecedented in that the military agreed to share power with civilian representatives within a Sovereign Council as explained by the interviewees. Several factors made this compromise possible. External actors including Gulf states, Western governments, the AU, and the UN exerted convergent pressure on the military leadership to negotiate rather than consolidate unilateral control (Kurtz, 2024). At the same time, the relative unity and organizational capacity of civilian forces increased their influence during negotiations with the military (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025).

Because of these and other factors, and after consecutive mediation efforts by AU, IGAD, Ethiopia, in August 2019 a Transitional Military Council (TMC) that was formed in the immediate aftermath of the removal of Bashir relinquished its power to the combined military and civilian rule by the name transitional Sovereign Council (Husni, Interviewee, 2025)¹⁰. On 21st of August 2019, the Sovereign Council was sworn in, comprising five military personnel and six civilians (Aljazeera, 2019)

Under the Constitutional Declaration of August 2019, leadership of the Sovereign Council was to rotate between military and civilian members, with Lieutenant General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan assuming the chairmanship during the initial phase (Sudan Constitutional Declaration, 2019). While the arrangement created optimism, it also embedded structural tensions, particularly regarding civilian oversight of security institutions.

4.3.2 The 2021 Coup and the Country's failed Transition to a Democratic Political System

The disagreement between the Civilian and Military Components of the Sovereign Council and the lack of willingness on part of the military to transfer the presidency of the Sovereign Council

⁹ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

¹⁰ Husni is senior political Affairs Officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa

after the conclusion of its presidency brewed tension in the country. The original sin of the military that wanted to control the political life of the country has disrupted the balance created with civilian actors by the 2019 agreement (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025)¹¹.

The fragile balance between civilian and military components of the transitional government unraveled in October 2021. The military leadership's reluctance to relinquish authority, particularly control over the Sovereign Council, reflected a deeper institutional resistance to civilian rule. This culminated in the coup against Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, effectively dismantling the transitional arrangement (Tubiana, 2022).

The African Union responded by suspending Sudan's membership, categorizing the takeover as an unconstitutional change of government (PSC, 2021). While this move was welcomed by civilian actors, it failed to reverse the consolidation of power by the military factions (Yibeltal, 2025)¹².

Subsequent attempts to restore cooperation, including the November 2021 agreement between Hamdok and military leaders, lacked popular legitimacy and failed to address the core imbalance of power. Hamdok's resignation in January 2022 marked the definitive collapse of the civilian-military partnership and extinguished hopes for a negotiated democratic transition (Perthes, 2024b).

For Wurie, the resignation was because of the fact that the Prime Minister was not able to carry on his duty because of the military's interference. This has also created a situation where power was left to the president and deputy president of the Sovereign Council, both of them having a military background. This marks the end of the euphoria that flourished following the 2019 revolution that Sudan would finally get the inclusive and democratic rule it has been yearning for years (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025)¹³. This not only ended the coalition between the civilians and the military but also cleared the way for the military to maintain its unchallenged hand on power. This effectively ended the hope the revolution breathes and effectively killed the dream of transition to civilian rule (Perthes, 2024a)

¹¹ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently an advisor to the Minister

¹² Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently an advisor to the Minister

¹³ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

Beyond immediate political disagreements, the 2021 coup also exposed deeper institutional weaknesses within Sudan's transitional framework. Although the 2019 Constitutional Declaration established a power-sharing arrangement between civilian and military actors, it did not create sufficiently robust mechanisms to ensure civilian oversight of the security sector or effectively regulate civil-military relations (Constitutional Declaration for the Transitional Period, 2019). The Sovereignty Council itself embodied this compromise by combining civilian and military representatives within the highest transitional authority. While intended to facilitate a peaceful transition, the arrangement left significant political and coercive power in the hands of the military establishment.

Furthermore, key transitional reforms, including Security Sector Reform (SSR), the integration of armed groups, and the transfer of leadership of the Sovereignty Council from military to civilian representatives, remained either incomplete or contested. The Constitutional Declaration envisaged a gradual transition toward civilian-led governance, but ambiguities regarding the distribution of authority between civilian institutions and military actors created competing interpretations of the transitional process (International IDEA, 2023). Consequently, rather than establishing a sustainable balance between civilian and military power, the transitional framework institutionalized tensions that ultimately contributed to the collapse of the transition and the military takeover of October 2021.

4.3.3 The Political Framework Agreement of 5 December 2022

Following the resignation of Prime Minister Hamdok and after it was realized that the coexistence between the civilian and the military has become difficult, the African Union through its various mechanisms including African Union Liaison Office in the Sudan has tried to support the Sudanese political forces to get the momentum to transition to civilian rule back into track (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)¹⁴. A high-level visit was also done by Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commissioner Ambassador Bankole Adeoye and the then Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, in which the AU position and readiness to support was made clear. The AU has also

¹⁴ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

leveraged its mechanisms to initiate indirect talks between the military and civilians to find a solution to the political impasse (ibid).

The effort by the AU has regained new vitality with the establishment of a Trilateral Mechanism in March 2022 by the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations with the primary objective of restoring the healthy civilian military coalition in the country with the ultimate objective of securing civilian rule (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025)¹⁵.

These combined diplomatic efforts started to bear fruit when the President of the Sovereign Council agreed to lift the state of emergency and release prisoners on 29 May 2022. A month later in June 2022, direct talks were started between the civilians and military actors (Assal, 2023)

After long deliberations, a compromise was reached between the military and civilian actors both within and outside FFC. The political framework agreement was, thus, signed on 3 December 2022 (Ahram Online, 2022). Both the President and Deputy President of the Sovereign Council and more than 40 political forces put their signature on the Framework Agreement (ibid).

The framework agreement spelt out clear steps in which a Sovereignty Council will be replaced by a civilian arrangement. It is agreed that Civilians will be in charge of the position of Head of State while the Military will withdraw from political governance and assume its normal function in the Civilian and Defense Council that will be led by a civilian Prime Minister. The transition period will take 2 years counted from the assumption of power by the civilian Prime Minister (Assal, 2023)

This was the foundation to restore constitutional order in AU's parlance and to broader democratic governance in Sudan. The agreement also laid out for the parties to engage in successive engagements with the view of dismantling the oppressive system put in place by former President Bashir, Reform of the army and security sector and carrying out transitional justice (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)¹⁶.

¹⁵ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

¹⁶ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

The reform of the security sector proved to be the most consequential elements of the December 2022 Political Framework Agreement. The agreement recognized that sustainable political transition was impossible in the presence of parallel armed forces operating outside a unified command structure. The reform agenda therefore aimed to establish a single professional national army under civilian oversight, a goal that required the gradual absorption of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) into the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)(Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025)¹⁷.

While the parties formally agreed on the principle of integration, they diverged sharply on its implementation. SAF leadership advocated for a rapid process, arguing that prolonged dual command arrangements posed an existential risk to state authority. In contrast, RSF leadership insisted on a much longer timeline, framing gradual integration as necessary to preserve institutional cohesion and prevent marginalization within the restructured army (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025).

This disagreement was not merely technical. It reflected competing political visions and personal ambitions. Both SAF and RSF had evolved beyond conventional military institutions into political and economic actors with stakes in controlling the post-transition state. As a result, security sector reform became a zero-sum contest rather than a confidence-building exercise (ibid).

The December 2022 Political Framework Agreement failed to produce a sustainable political settlement. Beyond disagreements between the SAF and RSF, the agreement faced challenges arising from the fragmented nature of Sudan's political and security landscape. Consistent with New War Theory, authority in Sudan was dispersed among multiple actors, including military institutions, armed groups, civilian coalitions, former regime networks, and external actors with competing interests (Kaldor, 2012; Münkler, 2005). While the agreement sought to establish a civilian-led transition, it failed to secure broad consensus among these actors, particularly on issues relating to security sector reform, military integration, and the distribution of political power. Consequently, the absence of a unified political settlement and the persistence of competing centers of authority undermined the implementation of the agreement and contributed to the outbreak of conflict in April 2023.

¹⁷ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently an advisor to the Minister

4.3.4 War Outbreaks in April 2023: Cause, Nature of the conflict and Dynamics of Actors

4.3.4.1 War outbreaks

By early 2023, warning signs of imminent conflict were increasingly visible. Both SAF and RSF began redeploying forces toward strategic locations, particularly in and around Khartoum. RSF units moved armored vehicles into the capital, while SAF reinforced key military installations, including its general command. These actions, although framed as defensive, reflected mutual anticipation of hostilities by the parties to the conflict (Assal, 2023).

International and regional actors including IGAD, AU and UN urged restraint and de-escalation, but mediation efforts failed to bridge the widening gap between the two camps. On 15 April 2023, open fighting erupted, marking the collapse of the fragile political process and the beginning of a full-scale civil war(ibid).

Each side advanced competing narratives regarding responsibility for the relapse into full-scale conflict. SAF characterized the violence as a premeditated coup attempt by RSF, while RSF accused SAF of sabotaging civilian transition by aligning with remnants of the former regime and Islamic forces. Regardless of these narratives, the outbreak of war underscored the structural impossibility of sustaining parallel security institutions within a fragmented political landscape (Wurie, 2025)¹⁸.

4.3.4.2 Early years of the Conflict: RSF gaining upper hand

During the initial months of fighting, RSF demonstrated tactical superiority in urban combat. Its forces rapidly seized control of key strategic sites, including the presidential palace and critical infrastructure in Khartoum. The detention of foreign military personnel, the Egyptians in particular, at Merowe airbase further highlighted RSF's operational reach (International Crisis Group, 2023).

Several factors contributed to RSF's gains at the formative stages of the war. Unlike SAF, which had prepared primarily for conventional warfare, RSF had extensive experience in mobile and

¹⁸ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

urban operations. Its decentralized command structure allowed for rapid maneuvering, while its access to armored vehicles and portable air defense systems mitigated SAF's aerial advantage (Husni, Interviewee, 2025¹⁹; Savage, 2024).

By mid-2023, RSF controlled large portions of the capital as well as significant territory in Darfur, Kordofan, and Al-Jazira state. SAF, on the other hand, retained control in northern and eastern regions of the country, leading to a de facto territorial division between the warring factions and their allies (Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker et al., 2023).

4.3.4.3 SAF retook Khartoum and the Establishment of Parallel Government by the RSF

The balance of power in the civil war began to shift in late 2024, when SAF launched a sustained counteroffensive aimed at reclaiming control of the capital. This campaign culminated in the recapture of Khartoum in May 2025, forcing RSF to retreat toward its traditional strongholds in western Sudan (Husni, Interviewee, 2025)²⁰.

This territorial reconfiguration introduced new risks, particularly the prospect of de facto partition. While SAF consolidated control over central, northern, and eastern Sudan, RSF entrenched itself in Darfur and parts of Kordofan, raising fears of prolonged fragmentation (Shewit, 2025a).

At this stage of the war, the major developments can be summed up as follows. First, SAF turned its face into the diplomatic front and take measures to ensure it remains the legitimate representative of the state. It prepared road maps that it believes will end the conflict and create peace in the country. It made amendments to the 2019 transitional road map, disseminated to AU and UN, and lobbied them to give support for its plan (Husni, Interviewee, 2025)²¹. With an effort to boost its legitimacy, it appointed Dr. Kamil al-Tayeb Idris as a civilian Prime Minister after making an amendment to the transitional arrangement (ibid).

The SAF's effort seem bearing fruit as a press statement welcoming the appointment was made by actors in particular by the AU Commission chairperson. The Chairperson even went to the extent of coining the appointment as “a step towards inclusive governance and noted that it would

¹⁹ Husni is senior political affairs officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa

²⁰ ibid

²¹ Husni is senior political affairs officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa

contribute meaningfully to ongoing efforts to restore constitutional order and democratic governance” in Sudan (AU, 2025c)

RSF, meanwhile, expanded the conflict’s scope by launching drone strikes against eastern cities, including Port Sudan, temporary capital city. These attacks signaled a shift in tactics and demonstrated RSF’s capacity to challenge SAF in air dominance beyond traditional frontlines (Shewit, 2025b). On the political and diplomatic front, on 26 July 2025 RSF announced the establishment of a government of Peace and Unity by the Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasis) in the areas it controlled (Aljazeera, 2025). The Charter that established this Parallel governing structure was signed by allied political parties and armed groups. The groups, referred to as the Leadership Council of the Sudan Founding Alliance (TASIS), formed a parallel government in RSF-held territories. The government was operationalized by appointing General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo as president and Abdulaziz al Hilu of SPLM-N as vice-president to manage the areas under its control (Sudan Tribune, 2025b).

The move in particular is meant to show that RSF is capable of governing the areas it controls and, in a way, boost its chance of being considered as a legitimate political force (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)²². However, this move is strongly opposed by the African union and the international community (PSC, 2025a).

4.4 Assessment of the Cause of the conflict and its character

At first glance, the Sudan conflict appears to be a power struggle between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti) over control of the state. However, such an interpretation obscures the deeper structural factors that produced the conflict. The roots of the war lie in Sudan's long-standing governance model, in which successive regimes relied on parallel security institutions to maintain political control. This strategy of "coup-proofing" weakened state cohesion by creating armed organizations that operated alongside, rather than under, a unified national command structure (Verhoeven, 2023; Willow et al., 2022).

The emergence of the RSF represents the most significant consequence of this approach. Over time, the RSF evolved from a regime-sponsored auxiliary force into a politically and economically

²² Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

autonomous military actor with capabilities comparable to those of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). The coexistence of two heavily armed institutions with competing interests created an inherently unstable security arrangement. As Kurtz (2024:11) observes, the presence of two security forces of comparable strength increased the likelihood of violent confrontation once the common political framework that had previously contained their rivalry collapsed. In this sense, the conflict was not simply a dispute over political leadership but a struggle over who would control the coercive apparatus of the Sudanese state.

The rivalry was further intensified by divergent institutional visions and competing political ambitions. While the SAF viewed itself as the legitimate national military institution responsible for preserving state unity and stability, the RSF increasingly sought to transform itself from a peripheral security actor into a central political and military force (Verhoeven, 2023). The contest therefore extended beyond questions of military integration to encompass competing claims to legitimacy, authority, and the future direction of the Sudanese state. As Horner (2025) notes, the RSF and its supporters presented their project as a challenge to a political order historically dominated by elites from central Sudan.

Economic interests also constituted a critical dimension of the conflict. Both the SAF and the RSF controlled extensive commercial networks spanning sectors such as mining, agriculture, finance, telecommunications, and arms production (Gallopini, 2020; Hoffmann & Lanfranchi, 2023). These economic assets provided independent sources of revenue and reduced incentives for compromise. As a result, the conflict cannot be understood solely as a political or military confrontation; it also reflects competition over access to economic resources and control of key sectors of the Sudanese economy.

The conflict is equally shaped by Sudan's enduring center-periphery tensions. Historically, political and economic power has been concentrated among elites associated with the central regions of Sudan, while peripheral regions have experienced varying degrees of marginalization (Al-Kuwar & Al-Qawasmi, 2025). Although the current war is not exclusively an ethnic conflict, these historical cleavages continue to influence patterns of mobilization and political legitimacy. The SAF is widely associated with the traditional political and military establishment, whereas the RSF draws much of its support from groups originating in Sudan's peripheral regions, particularly Darfur (Tubiana, 2022; Al-Kuwar & Al-Qawasmi, 2025). Insights from key informants similarly

suggest that the conflict reflects a broader struggle over the distribution of power between the center and the periphery (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025²³; Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025²⁴).

Viewed through the lens of New War Theory, the Sudan conflict exhibits several characteristics of contemporary warfare. These include fragmented authority, competing armed actors, the fusion of political and economic interests, external involvement, and contested claims to legitimacy (Kaldor, 2012; Münkler, 2005). The conflict is therefore more than a conventional struggle for state power; it reflects deeper structural weaknesses in Sudan's political order and illustrates the increasingly complex nature of contemporary African conflicts.

4.5 Actor Analysis: Interests, Evolving Objectives and Competing Visions of Peace

The Sudan conflict involves multiple domestic, regional, and international actors whose interests and objectives have evolved alongside the conflict. What began as a dispute over security sector reform and political transition gradually transformed into a broader contest over Sudan's future political dispensation (International Crisis Group, 2024). Understanding the interests of these actors and their competing conceptions of peace is critical to explaining both the persistence of the conflict and the limited success of mediation efforts.

A. Primary Actors

Primary actors are those directly engaged in the conflict and whose actions largely determine its trajectory.

Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)

Since the collapse of the civilian transition in October 2021, SAF has functioned as Sudan's de facto governing authority under the leadership of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (Husni, Interviewee, 2025²⁵). Initially, SAF sought to preserve its dominance within the transition and prevent the emergence of a parallel military structure outside its command. However, as the conflict evolved,

²³ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

²⁴ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

²⁵ Husni is senior political affairs officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa

its objectives shifted toward restoring its position as the sole legitimate authority in Sudan and securing international recognition of the Port Sudan-based administration (Sudan War Monitor, 2025).

To achieve these objectives, SAF relied on a coalition of allies, including the Darfur Joint Forces, Islamist-linked groups such as the Al-Baraa Ibn Malik Brigade, and defectors from the Sudanese Shield Forces, all of which contributed to its military gains in key areas of the country (ACLED, 2025; Ayin Network, 2024; Africa Intelligence, 2024). For SAF, peace increasingly implies the restoration of centralized state authority, the dismantling of RSF as an autonomous military force, and recognition of its political legitimacy (Sudan War Monitor, 2025).

Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

Originally emerging from militia structures associated with the Darfur conflict, RSF evolved into a powerful semi-autonomous military and political actor (Cohen, 2006; Annette, 2019). At the outset of the crisis, its principal objective was to preserve institutional autonomy and resist integration into the national army. As the war became protracted, however, RSF increasingly sought political legitimacy through alternative governance structures and alliances with civilian and armed groups (Sudan War Monitor, 2025).

This strategy culminated in the establishment of the Sudan Founding Alliance (TASIS), which brought together a range of political and armed actors under RSF sponsorship (Sudan Tribune, 2025a). Consequently, RSF's objectives expanded beyond military survival toward securing recognition as a legitimate stakeholder within a future political order. Unlike SAF, RSF's vision of peace is linked to decentralization, and guarantees regarding its future role in Sudan's governance architecture (Kurtz, 2025).

The divergent visions of peace held by SAF and RSF constitute one of the principal obstacles to conflict resolution. While both actors publicly endorse peace initiatives, they fundamentally disagree on the political order that should emerge from any settlement.

B. Secondary Actors

Secondary actors are not direct belligerents but significantly influence the conflict through political, military, financial, or diplomatic support.

Domestic Political and Armed Movements

The positions of Sudan's armed movements and civilian political groups have been highly fluid and shaped primarily by calculations of security, political influence, and future access to power (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025²⁶). While groups such as the Darfur Joint Forces aligned with SAF, others joined RSF-backed initiatives such as TISIS. Similarly, civilian coalitions fragmented over questions of engagement with the warring parties, as illustrated by the division of Taqaddum and the emergence of Smoud (Sudan War Monitor, 2025; Marsden, 2025). For many of these actors, peace is associated with meaningful participation in future governance arrangements rather than merely ending hostilities.

Gulf Countries

Regional actors have approached the conflict through the lens of their respective security and strategic interests. The UAE has been linked to support networks benefiting RSF and views the conflict through the prism of commercial and geopolitical interests in Sudan and the Red Sea region (IFA, 2025; UN, 2025). Saudi Arabia's engagement is driven largely by Red Sea security and economic interests (Khalil, 2023; Salih, 2024).

Neighboring Countries

For neighboring countries such as Ethiopia and Chad, the conflict poses direct security challenges through refugee flows, cross-border instability, and armed group activity (Tubiana, 2022; Salvator, Interviewee, 2025²⁷). Consequently, peace for these regional actors generally implies the emergence of a stable Sudan capable of preventing regional spillovers.

Egypt has consistently supported SAF, viewing a stable and friendly government in Khartoum as essential to its regional interests, particularly regarding the Nile and the GERD (Zeinab, 2024; Haile, Interviewee, 2025²⁸).

²⁶ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

²⁷ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

²⁸ Haile is Desk Officer of Sudan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

C. Tertiary Actors

Tertiary actors influence the conflict primarily through mediation, diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, and norm promotion.

African Union (AU)

The African Union occupies a distinctive position in the conflict. Through the Peace and Security Council and other diplomatic mechanisms, it has consistently advocated for Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, and an inclusive civilian-led political process (PSC, 2025d). Although divisions among member states have occasionally constrained its effectiveness, the AU remains one of the few actors pursuing a comprehensive political settlement rather than supporting military victory by either side (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025²⁹). For the AU, peace extends beyond ending violence and encompasses the establishment of a legitimate and inclusive political order (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025³⁰).

Major Powers

International actors have pursued varying objectives. The United States has combined diplomatic engagement with sanctions while seeking to limit Russian and Chinese influence and advance broader regional objectives (Yildirim & Özer, 2023). Russia's engagement has focused on access to strategic resources and a naval presence on the Red Sea (Pospisil & Jenner, 2022; Andrew, 2024). China has prioritized the protection of economic investments and regional stability (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025³¹), while the European Union has focused on migration management, humanitarian concerns, and democratic transition (ibid).

In conclusion, the Sudanese conflict demonstrates that actors are not merely contesting territory and political power but are advancing fundamentally different visions of Sudan's future. The

²⁹ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

³⁰ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

³¹ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

challenge facing mediators is therefore not only ending violence but also reconciling competing understandings of legitimacy, governance, and peace. These divergent objectives help explain both the persistence of the conflict and the limited success of mediation efforts thus far.

4.6 Evolution of Actors and Interests Across the Conflict Phases (2019–2025)

The Sudan conflict cannot be understood through a static analysis of actors. The interests, alliances, and objectives of both domestic and external actors have evolved significantly in response to changing political realities and battlefield developments. Three broad phases can be identified: the post-revolutionary transition (2019–2021), the post-coup period (2021–2023), and the ongoing civil war (2023–present).

A. The Post-Revolutionary Transition (2019–2021)

The overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 created a fragile power-sharing arrangement between civilian and military actors under the Transitional Sovereign Council. During this period, the principal political divide was not between SAF and RSF but between forces advocating democratic transformation and those seeking to preserve elements of the existing power structure (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025³²).

SAF and RSF largely acted as partners, cooperating in managing the transition while safeguarding their institutional interests. In contrast, civilian actors under the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) sought a transition that would gradually place state institutions under civilian authority. The African Union strongly supported constitutional transition and civilian governance, while regional actors generally prioritized stability and the prevention of state collapse (Al Jazeera, 2019; Perthes, 2024). Accordingly, peace during this phase was widely understood as the successful completion of a civilian-led democratic transition, although disagreements persisted regarding the distribution of power within the transitional arrangement (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025³³).

³² Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

³³ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

B. The Post-Coup Period (2021–2023)

The October 2021 military takeover fundamentally altered Sudan's political landscape. Although SAF and RSF jointly participated in the coup, their alliance gradually evolved into strategic rivalry. The exclusion of civilian actors from decision-making transformed the political arena into a competition between two military centers of power(Kurtz, 2025)

SAF sought to consolidate its position as the dominant security institution, while RSF focused on preserving its autonomy and political influence. The dispute over security sector reform and the integration of RSF into the national armed forces emerged as the central source of tension between the two actors (Soliman, 2023).

During this period, civilian actors became increasingly fragmented, while regional actors adjusted their positions according to evolving political realities. Egypt became more supportive of SAF, whereas the UAE deepened its engagement with RSF. Meanwhile, the African Union suspended Sudan and continued to advocate for the restoration of constitutional order and civilian-led governance (PSC, 2021; Zeinab, 2024).

As a result, peace became increasingly associated with institutional survival and political influence. For SAF, it implied a transition managed under military oversight; for RSF, guarantees regarding its future autonomy; and for civilian actors and the AU, the restoration of constitutional civilian governance.

C. The Civil War Period (2023 up to Present)

The outbreak of war between SAF and RSF in April 2023 transformed Sudan's political crisis into a full-scale civil war. Initially, both sides pursued military victory. However, as the conflict became prolonged, military objectives gradually evolved into competing political projects(Sudan War Monitor, 2025).

SAF increasingly sought to restore its position as the sole legitimate authority in Sudan and secure international recognition for the Port Sudan-based administration(Husni, Interviewee, 2025³⁴)

³⁴ Husni is senior political affairs officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa

RSF, meanwhile, moved beyond battlefield objectives and pursued political legitimacy through alternative governance structures and alliances such as the Sudan Founding Alliance (TASIS) (Sudan Tribune, 2025a).

Domestic political actors adapted to these changing realities, with some aligning themselves with SAF and others supporting RSF-backed initiatives (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025³⁵). Regional and international actors similarly recalibrated their engagement according to battlefield developments and strategic interests. While Egypt strengthened its support for SAF, the UAE maintained ties with RSF. Saudi Arabia increasingly prioritized mediation and Red Sea stability, while neighboring countries such as Ethiopia and Chad focused on managing the regional consequences of the conflict (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025³⁶).

In contrast to other actors, the African Union's position remained relatively consistent. It continued to advocate for Sudan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, and an inclusive civilian-led political process (PSC, 2024a; PSC, 2025d).

Consequently, peace has come to mean different things to different actors. For SAF, it implies the restoration of a unified Sudan under centralized authority. For RSF, it entails recognition of new political realities and its role within a reconfigured political order. For regional actors, peace is associated with stability and the protection of strategic interests (Kurtz, 2025; Perthes, 2024). For the African Union and other mediators, peace remains inseparable from an inclusive political settlement capable of addressing the root causes of Sudan's recurring instability (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025³⁷).

The evolution of actor interests demonstrates that the Sudan conflict is not simply a struggle for territorial control but a contest over competing visions of legitimacy, governance, and statehood.

³⁵ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

³⁶ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

³⁷ Ibid

These divergent objectives continue to complicate mediation efforts and help explain the persistence of the conflict despite numerous peace initiatives (Perthes, 2024).

4.6 Comparison of the nature of the war with other African conflicts

The Sudanese war captures several defining characteristics of contemporary armed conflict across Africa. While every conflict has internal roots, the broader trends visible in Sudan such as internationalization, fragmented armed landscapes, weakened state authority, and competition over strategic resources are increasingly common across the continent.

a. Internationalization of conflicts and the rising influence of middle powers

A major feature of recent African conflicts is the extent to which they are prolonged and complicated by external involvement. Unlike the Cold War period when superpowers often acted as principal patrons, today's conflict environments are frequently shaped by "middle powers" with strong regional ambitions and the resources to sustain proxies. In Sudan, external engagement has expanded beyond diplomacy into material and logistical support, producing a conflict dynamic that is harder to contain and more resistant to negotiated compromise (CDRC, 2024a).

For Al-Ghwell what is happening in Sudan is an early indicator of a wider shift in the nature of conflicts in Africa. He opined that future conflicts may increasingly be shaped by regional actors which have port, mineral, and security interests and who can influence outcomes without formally deploying national armies. In such contexts, mediation becomes more difficult because external stakeholders often become parties with their own strategic payoffs tied to battlefield outcomes (Al-Ghwell, 2025).

b. Trajectory of State-Building and Leadership, not only a breakdown of order

Sudan's war also reflects a broader governance crisis that underpins many African conflicts. Contemporary wars frequently emerge not simply from sudden breakdowns in order, but from prolonged failures to build inclusive institutions and manage political succession. Where leadership remains personalized and accountability is weak, state resources are often treated as

tools for political survival, and coercive institutions become central to elite bargaining (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025³⁸).

A recurring consequence is the construction of parallel security structures, militias, paramilitaries, or semi-autonomous forces, created to secure regimes against coups or to fight insurgencies at low political cost. Over time, these forces develop their own command systems, economic interests, and political ambitions. Sudan's experience demonstrates how a security structure initially created to protect the state can later threaten the state's survival by competing with national institutions for authority and resources (CDRC, 2024b).

This logic is not unique to Sudan. Similar dynamics have been observed in other contexts where parallel security structures initially established for regime protection or counterinsurgency purposes, only to evolve into autonomous coercive actors within national politics. Ethiopia's experience offers a relevant parallel, particularly the conflict between the Federal Government and regional special forces most notably the TPLF as well as the more recent crisis in the Amhara region, which can be understood within this broader pattern (ibid).

c. Proliferation of Armed Groups and the Fragmentation of Violence

Another defining feature of contemporary conflicts is the multiplication of armed actors. In Sudan, RSF is central, but it operates within a broader ecosystem of armed movements, local forces, and politically aligned militias that complicate efforts to reach a unified settlement (ACLED, 2025).

The trend is visible even more sharply in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where violence is characterized by a complex web of local armed groups, shifting alliances, and competing claims over territory. Estimates of armed actors vary widely, reflecting the fluidity of group formation, fragmentation, and rebranding but there are over 100-armed actors operating in eastern DRC (Brooke, 2025).

At the continental level, the AU Peace and Security Council has warned that the emergence of armed groups organized around ethnic or tribal identities is increasingly destabilizing. The expansion of ethnic self-defense formations and localized militias has become a common pattern,

³⁸ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

weakening state authority and increasing the difficulty of disarmament and reintegration (PSC, 2025c).

d. Strategic Resources as drivers of Conflict

Competition over strategic resources has become a prominent driver and sustainer of conflict in addition to ideological and political reasons conflicting parties pushes to achieve. In DRC, armed violence is closely tied to control over mineral-rich territories and the economic networks that benefit from extraction and cross-border trade (Taiwo, 2025)³⁹.

Sudan is less resource-endowed than DRC in scale, but the war has an unmistakable political economy dimension. Control over gold production, agricultural land, and strategic trade corridors, in particular access to ports creates enduring incentives for armed actors to fight for territorial dominance and economic influence (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025⁴⁰). This resource logic can also reinforce external involvement, as foreign stakeholders may back factions that promise preferential access to assets or infrastructure.

For Wurie, resources are now driving not only conflicts across the continent. They are now a driving force in the mediation and diplomatic efforts. The US for instance, has brokered the peace deal between DRC and Rwanda in return for access to the strategic mineral resources of the DRC by the US and its biggest corporations (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁴¹)

e. Regional Spillover and the Normalization of Cross-Border Involvement

Regional involvement is another shared character of African conflicts even if the forms vary. In some cases, neighboring states intervene indirectly through political sponsorship, logistical corridors, or proxy support. This is particularly true of the ongoing conflict in Sudan. In others

³⁹ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁴⁰ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

⁴¹ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

such as the DRC, neighboring states are alleged to be involved more directly, including through the deployment or support of forces inside contested areas (Salvator, Interviewee)⁴².

The salience of cross-border dynamics in the DRC has been acknowledged in regional and continental initiatives. The AU-supported Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Great Lakes region, for example, includes obligations for neighboring states to refrain from interference and to avoid harboring or supporting armed groups that destabilize the DRC (ISS, 2013). Such frameworks highlight how contemporary African conflicts increasingly require regional political solutions, not only national settlements.

All in all Sudan reflects the evolving character of conflict on the continent. Wars are increasingly internationalized, multi-actor, and resource-linked, unfolding in environments where state authority is contested and political legitimacy is fragile. These conflicts are rarely resolved by battlefield outcomes alone durable settlement requires addressing both the internal drivers such as institutional exclusion, militarized politics, fragmented armed landscapes and the external dynamics like regional rivalries and the incentives of foreign sponsors that sustain the conflicts.

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examined the evolution of the Sudan conflict since 2019 and assessed the extent to which it reflects the characteristics of contemporary African conflicts. The analysis showed that the current war cannot be understood solely as a power struggle between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Rather, it emerged from deeper structural factors, including Sudan's history of fragmented security arrangements, unresolved civil-military tensions, competing political ambitions, economic rivalries, and longstanding center-periphery inequalities.

The chapter further demonstrated that the conflict exhibits several features commonly associated with contemporary warfare. These include fragmented authority, the presence of competing armed actors, the growing influence of economic interests in sustaining violence, and the involvement of external actors. The failure of the transitional process and the Political Framework Agreement also

⁴² Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

highlighted the challenges of managing conflicts in contexts where multiple actors possess competing claims to legitimacy and power.

Viewed through the lens of New War Theory, the Sudan conflict illustrates how contemporary conflicts increasingly blur the boundaries between political, military, and economic competition. Violence is sustained not only by battlefield dynamics but also by struggles over authority, resources, and state control. The Sudan case therefore reflects broader trends observed in contemporary African conflicts and demonstrates the growing complexity of conflict environments confronting regional and continental peace and security institutions.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for assessing the effectiveness of conflict-management mechanisms. The next chapter therefore examines how the African Union, through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), responded to the Sudan conflict and evaluates the factors that shaped the effectiveness of its intervention.

Chapter Five AU's Response to the Sudan Conflict

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the African Union's response to the conflict in Sudan since 2019, with particular attention to the gap between institutional ambition and practical outcomes. Despite the AU's extensive normative authority and the availability of conflict-management tools under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), its interventions have yielded limited results in halting violence or stabilizing Sudan's political trajectory.

Rather than attributing this outcome solely to capacity or resource constraints, this chapter argues that the AU's response has been shaped by deeper structural challenges. These include the changing nature of contemporary conflicts, the persistence of sovereignty-driven political calculations among Member States, and the limited influence of institutional diplomacy over militarized actors. By drawing on Neoliberal Institutionalism and New War Theory, the chapter situates the Sudan case within a broader theoretical debate on the effectiveness of multilateral conflict management in an era of fragmented warfare.

5.2 AU's Diplomatic Engagement in the aftermath of the 2019 Revolution

Following the removal of President Omar al-Bashir from thirty years of rule, the African Union framed the military overthrow as an unconstitutional change of government, activating its established normative response mechanisms to coup d'états. The Peace and Security Council's early deliberations signaled a clear preference for rapid civilian restoration in the country, reflecting the Union's commitment to discouraging military seizures of power and encourage constitutional means of assuming power (PSC, 2019a).

Beyond formal pronouncements, the AU pursued active engagement on the ground. Senior Commission leadership conducted field consultations with military leaders, civilian representatives, and other stakeholders, indicating that the crisis was viewed not merely as a procedural breach but as a test case for the Union's credibility in managing transitions (AU, 2019). When immediate transfer of power proved unrealistic, the AU adjusted its timeline to allow negotiations, prioritizing stability over rigid enforcement (Reuters, 2019).

The eventual suspension of Sudan's membership in June 2019 marked a critical escalation. This decision was rooted in AU legal instruments that empower the PSC to impose suspension where

unconstitutional changes persist, but it also reflected frustration with the military's resistance to civilian authority (PSC, 2019b; AU, 2002). Importantly, suspension did not signal disengagement. On the contrary, the AU expanded its diplomatic footprint by establishing a liaison office and appointing a special envoy to accompany negotiations toward a transitional settlement (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)⁴³. This affirms the fact that AU has more responsibility towards that state where unconstitutional change of government occurs and is duty bound to support and accompany that state back to normalcy and civilian rule (Amani Africa, 2025c)

AU's engagement in the post 2019 revolution in Sudan bears fruit as the transitional constitutional arrangement was signed on 17 July 2019 (Aljazeera, 2019). The Civilian and Military forces agreed to share power that will eventually lead to the establishment of inclusive democratic and civilian dispensation in the country (ibid). The success of establishing a clear transitional road map led to the lifting of the suspension imposed on Sudan (Vhumbunu, 2019).

The key lesson that can be taken from the mediation is that a lead nation in this case Ethiopia under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the AU and IGAD were all joining their efforts and lead a unified process and position on the peace process (Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025)⁴⁴. The AU and IGAD were also complementing each other and corrected the problem of coordination that was observed at the earlier stage. The fact that Ethiopia served as a lead nation under the AU and IGAD platform enables the coming together of other actors in support of the made it's a success (Nte, 2019)

From a neoliberal institutionalist perspective, this phase of AU engagement was grounded in the belief that structured dialogue, norm enforcement, and mediated cooperation can effectively manage conflict. Sudan's suspension from the Union was intended to serve as a reputational sanction signaling the costs of unconstitutional change while AU-led mediation sought to recalibrate political incentives in favor of cooperation and a return to civilian rule.

⁴³ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁴⁴ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

Yet the Sudan case reveals the limits of this trend. While formal agreements were signed, real authority remained concentrated in militarized elites who approached institutional arrangements as tactical tools rather than binding commitments. In practice, adherence to AU norms was shaped less by institutional obligation than by shifting power calculations on the ground.

New War Theory offers a more persuasive lens. Sudan's transition unfolded in a landscape marked by fragmented authority, entrenched militarized political economies, and parallel security structures most notably the uneasy coexistence of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In such a setting, violence was not merely a breakdown of order but part of a competitive system of power and resource control. These dynamics severely constrained the capacity of formal institutions to regulate behavior, rendering negotiated agreements inherently fragile and easily reversible.

5.3 AU's Response to the 2023 Civil war

By early 2023, tensions between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces had reached a level that made violent confrontation increasingly likely. Disagreements over the integration of RSF into the national army were symptomatic of deeper institutional rivalry rather than technical disputes alone (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)⁴⁵. Despite preventive diplomacy by the AU-IGAD-UN trilateral mechanism, these efforts failed to generate sufficient trust or commitment to avert war (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025)⁴⁶.

Once hostilities began on 15 April 2023, the AU triggered its standard crisis response mechanism condemning the relapse into civil war, calling for restraint, demanding an immediate stoppage of the conflict, protection of civilians and uninhibited facilitation of the flow of humanitarian aid.

Within a month after the conflict erupts, the PSC held its second meeting at the level of leaders with the view of resolving the crisis. The meeting ended up adopting a road map to resolve the conflict (PSC, 2023b). The plan has outlined the following major points. First, considering the

⁴⁵ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁴⁶ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

involvement of too many actors in the mediation process, the plan emphasized seamless coordination and harmonization of diplomatic initiatives and envisioned a formulation of a peace process under the shared leadership of the AU and IGAD, the two organizations that have a good history of resolving the challenges Sudan has encountered in the past. Secondly, the plan clearly understands the importance of stopping the fighting to make diplomatic initiatives a success. Hence, it demanded speedy and overarching agreement to stop the war. Thirdly, the humanitarian crisis the conflict created was unacceptable. Hence, the plan put a strong emphasis on the relevance of facilitating effective humanitarian response and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The plan has also highlighted the positive role the neighboring countries and the region has to play if the AU has any chance of stopping the raging conflict. The last and most important component of the plan is carrying out a credible and inclusive political process to propel the country into era of lasting peace (ibid).

In practice, however, the roadmap exposed the gap between norm-setting and enforcement. Repeated PSC calls for ceasefires and negotiations were not matched by mechanisms capable of compelling compliance. Even accountability measures, such as proposals for investigative task forces to ensure accountability to violations of humanitarian law and human rights remained largely declaratory and having only paper value (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁴⁷).

The establishment of an ad hoc presidential committee comprising of Angola, Egypt, Uganda, Nigeria, and Equatorial Guinea in 2024 was intended to inject political leverage at the highest level (PSC. 2024). The main target and goal of the Adhoc Committee is to use the leverage of AU member states in facilitating a face-to-face engagement between the leaders of the two major belligerents- SAF and RSF leaders (Amani Africa, 2024(c)). Nonetheless, the Mechanism has failed to achieve its stated objective.

Members of the PSC Council made a field visit to Port Sudan in October 2024, during which Egypt, trusted supporter of SAF, was chair of the PSC. The Council made a consultation with the representative of the SAF only and, in the end, adopted a communiqué that seemingly endorsed a plan presented by one of the parties to the conflict only. This has put a serious question mark on

⁴⁷ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

the credibility on the partiality of the council even some analysts calling the field visit of the Council as a solidarity visit Egypt has made on its friend and ally (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025)⁴⁸

To conclude, the AU PSC has held over 15 sessions on Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict between April 2023 and February 2025 and passed numerous decisions to end the conflict, protect civilians and facilitate the flow of humanitarian assistance. Nonetheless, the decisions and communiqués remain a paper tiger as they remain unimplemented and continue to be recycled in one meeting after the other (Dr. Salvator, Interviewee, 2025, Interviewee, 2025, Interviewee, 2025, Interviewee, 2025 2025). Hence, the PSC needs to have the leverage and capability to implement its decisions. It must devise a mechanism to enhance compliance to the decisions made (ISS, 2025a)

As discussed in chapter three, APSA comprises of the AU commission and other mechanisms even if the PSC is the backbone of the African Union peace infrastructure. Hence, the AU commission and the Chairperson have huge involvement in resolving the crisis on the Sudan. The major reason for this was the fact that they were tasked by the PSC to implement the decisions the Council passed in relations to the situation in the Sudan (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)⁴⁹.

In line with the major plan passed by the PSC, the Chairperson of the Commission established an expanded mechanism. It is primarily meant to facilitate a smooth and streamlined working relationship among the various regional and international actors that are in one way or another engaged in mediating the warring parties (Ibid).

According to IDEA, 2023, the expanded mechanism was crucial to address the three major weakness of mediation process encountered. Controlling actors that disrupt mediation for their narrow interests, to correctly use the leverage of actors to force warring parties to commit to a peace process and to bring civilian actors at the center of the negotiation (IDEA, 2023). This has never been helpful as the actors were reluctant to commit for the mechanism (ibid).

⁴⁸ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁴⁹ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

Further to this and as per the major plan of the PSC, in January 2024, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the then Chairperson of the African Union Commission, has appointed three notable Africans to the AU High-Level Panel on Sudan, chaired by Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns (AU, 2024b). The High-level Panel is a dedicated mechanism that will work 24 hours a day and seven days a week on its full capacity to chart a possible way out for the Sudanese problem (Amani Africa, 2024c).

To facilitate an inclusive political talk among all Sudanese political forces, the Commission has tasked the AU high level Panel to work closely with IGAD to convene an inter Sudanese political dialogue (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁵⁰). Against this backdrop, Inter Sudanese Political Dialogue is also launched by AU and IGAD. Accordingly, three Preparatory Meetings to the Inter-Sudanese Political Dialogue were held in July and August 2024 and February 2025 (AU, 2025d)

The AU has also worked in close partnership with other mediators. For instance, the AU has participated as observer in the Jeddah and Geneva meetings (Amani Africa, 2024c). The AU has also welcomed and expressed support to other mechanisms such as the Quad. This has deviated from the conventional wisdom of solving problems by African leadership and ownership. The gravity of the problem and the destruction allow members of the Council and leadership of the Commission to deviate from this fundamental principle and support whomever is capable of ending the fight (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁵¹)

African Union and IGAD will also be joined by other multilateral organizations such as UN, Arab league and European Union and establish quintet mechanism to ensure policy coordination, harmonizing mediation efforts, preparing together the launch of the inter-Sudanese inclusive global political dialogue and ensuring regional and international coherence in support of peace negotiations (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁵²).

⁵⁰ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁵¹ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁵² Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

From a neoliberal institutionalist standpoint, the measures adopted by the AU were conceptually coherent. They reflected a confidence in multilateral coordination, the articulation of shared norms, and inclusive mediation frameworks as mechanisms for reducing uncertainty, aligning political incentives, and steering actors toward negotiated outcomes. The emphasis on coordination particularly through the AU Roadmap and subsequent communiqués sought to reassert institutional leadership, minimize duplication among external actors, and prevent the fragmentation of peace initiatives. Empirically, however, these efforts produced limited impact on the trajectory of the conflict. The roadmap did not significantly alter battlefield dynamics. Armed actors continued to pursue military objectives, external sponsorship persisted, and repeated ceasefire appeals were disregarded. In effect, institutional messaging operated in parallel to, rather than in control of, the conflict environment.

New War Theory provides a more compelling explanation for this outcome. Contemporary conflicts such as Sudan's are embedded in transnational networks of financing and arms flows, sustained by war economies, and characterized by fragmented chains of command. In such settings, violence is not merely instrumental but economically and politically self-reinforcing. Military victory or at least strategic advantage remains a rational and viable objective for competing elites. Under these conditions, declaratory diplomacy and norm-based appeals lack the coercive leverage necessary to shift behavior. The AU's reliance on institutional persuasion, while normatively consistent with its framework, was structurally mismatched to a conflict environment driven by material incentives, external backing, and decentralized authority.

5.4 Appraisal of Efforts led by IGAD

As a recognized pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture, IGAD is institutionally mandated to play a central role in conflict prevention and mediation within the Horn of Africa. Its early response to the Sudanese conflict reflected this mandate. Within twenty-four hours of the outbreak of fighting, IGAD convened an extraordinary summit of leaders of member states, signaling an initial willingness to act decisively (IGAD, 2023a).

Subsequent IGAD initiatives focused on structured mediation. The organization adopted a roadmap that sought to bring the leaders of the warring parties into direct dialogue under regional facilitation. The decision to expand the mediation team to include Ethiopia and Somalia was

intended to broaden legitimacy and balance regional interests (IGAD, 2023b). This approach reflected lessons learned from earlier peace processes in the region.

In practice, however, IGAD's mediation capacity quickly deteriorated. The withdrawal of cooperation by the Sudanese Armed Forces fundamentally undermined the organization's leverage. Accusations that IGAD had violated Sudan's sovereignty by engaging RSF leadership further eroded trust and led to a boycott of IGAD-led initiatives (Aljazeera, 2024). Once one principal belligerent disengaged, IGAD's mediation framework became largely symbolic.

This decline is not unique to the Sudan case. Analysts have noted a broader erosion of IGAD's internal cohesion, driven by divergent foreign policy priorities among member states. Rather than operating as a unified mediator, the organization increasingly reflects the interests of whichever state holds the chairmanship at a given time (Khair, 2022). In the Sudanese context, this institutional weakness translated into diminished credibility and reduced influence over conflict dynamics.

Compounding the problem was the lack of effective coordination between IGAD and the African Union. Instead of operating within a clear subsidiarity framework, both organizations advanced parallel roadmaps, inadvertently fragmenting mediation efforts and opening space for external actors to introduce competing initiatives (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁵³). This duplication weakened regional ownership and diluted pressure on the belligerents.

5.5 Major Achievements of AU in the Mediation of the Sudan Conflict

Identifying concrete achievements attributable to the AU's mediation efforts in Sudan is challenging, particularly given the scale of violence and humanitarian catastrophe that occurred in the country. Several informants characterized the AU's engagement as a failure not only of mediation strategy but also of moral responsibility, given the inability to halt civilian suffering (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁵⁴).

⁵³ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁵⁴ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

Nevertheless, the AU's role in facilitating the 2019 transitional arrangement remains a notable exception. The power-sharing agreement between civilian and military actors, though ultimately short-lived, demonstrated the AU's capacity to broker compromise when political conditions and external coordination aligned (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁵⁵).

A second, more limited achievement lies in the AU's consistent effort to foreground civilian participation. Unlike many mediation platforms that prioritize negotiations among armed actors, the AU invested political capital in convening civilian forces and creating space for non-militarized voices (ibid). Through the AU High-Level Panel and in coordination with IGAD, multiple rounds of civilian consultations were organized in Addis Ababa (AU, 2025d).

These efforts, however, were constrained by persistent fragmentation among civilian groups. Boycotts by pro-SAF factions such as Democratic Alliance and disagreements over agenda-setting undermined the inclusivity of the process and exposed the structural weakness of Sudanese civilian politics (Sudan Tribune, 2025). While the AU cannot be held responsible for these divisions, their persistence limited the effectiveness of civilian-centered mediation.

To conclude, at least the AU has done one thing that other mediation platforms has failed to do so. The giving of a platform to civilian forces. And this will rectify the major pitfall previous peace agreements in Sudan have created. For Marsden previous agreements focus on sharing power and wealth between the armed actors, which has created an enduring cycle of conflict. The Focus on civilians will change that unhelpful precedence and habit (Marsden, 2025)

5.6 Challenges to AU's approach

5.6.1 The multiplication of geopolitically motivated mediation Initiatives

The Actors involved in the Sudan are too many to handle and to coordinate their mediation initiatives seamlessly. As the saying goes too many cooks spoil the broth has become a bitter reality

⁵⁵ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

in the case of the Sudan. On top of that the concern of all the actors is not about solving the conflict but rather defending and promoting their geopolitical interests (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025)⁵⁶

Bearing in mind the involvement of multiple actors, the AU has established the so-called expanded mechanism to coordinate the various mediation initiatives (Abdelwahab, 2024). But this has failed to bear fruits. There are over 28 actors under this mechanism. It has become impossible to speak in one voice and coordinate efforts as the actors keep pulling into multiple directions(ibid). This is aptly captured in the communiqué adopted by the PSC at its 1293 meeting held on 4 August 2025

“Expresses concern over the lack of coordination between the multiple peace initiatives on Sudan and requests the Chairperson of the AU Commission to convene a meeting of all actors involved in the peace efforts in Sudan with a view to consolidating all these peace frameworks into a single process aimed at resolving the conflict in Sudan, led by the African Union and IGAD, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and proliferation of peace initiatives. In this regard, calls for the reinvigoration of the central role of the African Union in the peace efforts towards a viable, inclusive and lasting solution to the conflict in Sudan.” (PSC, 2025d: 4)

Instead of pulling Sudan out of the mud by joining hands together, they started to chart their own separate modality in a manner that bestows their preferred actor a political and diplomatic legitimacy. The ultimate goal was to make sure their preferred ally emerges victorious. They are not necessarily driven by the motive of resolving the crisis (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁵⁷)

Let us have bird’s eye view of the initiatives that have mushroomed over the years. It is good to start from the hosting by Egypt of a summit of the neighboring States of the Sudan in Cairo on 13 July 2023, bringing together the representatives of neighboring States of the Sudan, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States (Salah, 2023). The meeting also adopted a road map aimed at ending the crisis. One of the

⁵⁶ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁵⁷ ibid

points included in the road map is Reiterating the importance of preserving the Sudanese State and its institutions (ibid)

The term state institutions are used by Egypt to cover their support for SAF and this is all too often mentioned in the PSC Communiqués adopted when Egypt Chairs (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁵⁸). Egypt has initiated its own mediation process to make sure the IGAD process, which Egypt thinks will give Ethiopia the upper hand is not successful (Kurtz, 2025). Egypt's intention was made clear after arranging its own initiative merely three days after SAF refused to take part in IGAD led mediation effort (IDEA, 2023)

Ethiopia, on the other hand, has attempted to use its inclusion in the IGAD quartet of mediators to outflank Egypt out of the mediation equation in the Sudan. However, the inclusion of Egypt in the informal Quad alliance and the preference of SAF to initiatives where Egypt is a crucial actor have given Egypt the edge in its competition with Ethiopia (Taiwo, 2025⁵⁹)

In May 2023, Saudi-US facilitated talks between representatives of the warring parties began in Jeddah with the aim of achieving a short-term truce to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance and setting up subsequent expanded negotiations to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities (Mahdi, 2024). On May 11, 2023 Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to protect Civilians of Sudan was signed by the warring parties (US Department of State, 2023). While the parties were able to agree on a short-term ceasefire on multiple occasions, the process hasn't been successful in reaching permanent ceasefire (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁰).

On the other hand, Geneva process was convened in August 2024 with the objective of working on the signing of cessation of conflicts throughout the country to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid (Amani Africa, 2024c). For Ramzy, US's effort to pressurize SAF so that the Geneva process will bear fruit was hindered by the lack of the necessary support from other actors. The reason being Saudi preferred solutions that are reached through the Jeddah process. The fact that IGAD

⁵⁸ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁵⁹ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁶⁰ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

was an observer in the Geneva process means Egypt was keen on avoiding processes that give influence for IGAD considering the influence Ethiopia has with the block (Ramzy, 2024).

The Geopolitical nature of the mediation efforts was in full display when the London conference on the Sudan was hosted on 16 April 2025. The actor's gathered at the conference failed to reach a common language to adopt an outcome document for the conference. This was because of the fact that each actor was looking to insert an expression and statement that favors its preferred warring party (Noisette, 2025)

The Quad meeting is yet another testament that the mediation efforts of in the Sudan are loaded with geopolitical interests. The meeting was prolonged for a longer period of time as some actors insisted on the participation of their preferred actor on the table (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁶¹). Nonetheless, the quad meeting was convened and put a more balanced statement. It put the RSF and SAF on equal footing and proclaimed that the future governance of the Sudan shall not be left to the warring parties alone (Emirates Policy Center, 2025). But implementation and follow-up remain the weak point and common denominator of all mediation initiatives (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁶²).

5.6.2 The Problem of neutrality and a divided AUPSC and AU

The other challenge that hindered an effective response by the mediation effort was lack of neutrality within the major mediators. All AU member states and Members of the PSC in particular are supporting either one party or the other in this conflict (Haile, Interviewee, 2025⁶³; Yibeltal, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁴). This has prevented both AU and the AUPSC from being a neutral abattoir on the conflict. Even some of the statements issued by the AUC chair were not helpful. They give the impression that the AU as an institution tilt towards SAF and is engaged in legitimizing SAF

⁶¹ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Haile is Desk Officer of Sudan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

⁶⁴ Yibeltal is Ethiopia's Ambassador to Sudan till the end of 2024 and currently serving as an advisor for the Minister

efforts compromising its neutrality. For the informants this has to do with the established practice within the AU that favors incumbent governments (ibid)

Even the Mediation initiatives set by AU comprises members that are not entirely neutral. For instance, Egypt's support to SAF has never been a secret. They are openly providing a military and diplomatic support to SAF. Nonetheless, Egypt is a member of all the mediation mechanisms the AU has established. For instance, Egypt is a member of the ADhoc presidential Committee the PSC has set up. It is also a member of the Expanded Mechanism (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁵).

Egypt has used its PSC membership to pass a decision that favors SAF. For instance, in October 2024, Egypt was chair of the PSC. Using their chairmanship, they have made the PSC to adopt decisions that legitimize SAF. They lead the PSC to a field visit to Port Sudan. Many coined this visit as a solidarity visit to SAF by Egypt. This has risked the neutrality principle of a mediator and risked the neutrality of the PSC and the AU as a whole (ibid).

5.6.3 External support complicates the mediation process

The main belligerents never wanted to seat together and reach a compromise agreement. It has become increasingly difficult to secure a political will from parties to the conflict to commit to mediation process (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁶). The unprecedented military, financial and diplomatic support they obtained from foreign powers give them the belief that they can win it all in the battlefield (ibid)

Kurtz clearly argued that competition between external actors to mediate the war and their support to the belligerents led the parties to refuse participation in peace processes and refrain from making a compromise and reach at an agreement that ends the fighting (Kurtz, 2025)

To express how external support to warring factions has complicated the mediation process, Wurie has gone to the extent of stating that warring parties have gained more leverage and power than

⁶⁵ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁶⁶ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

the mediator AU owing to the external support. This has delayed the ripeness or readiness for mediation on both sides of the party to the conflict (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁷).

Related to this, the AU has, limited resources and leverage to pressure the warring parties to commit to the decisions made by the various AU policy Organs. AU is trying to augment its leverage by cooperating with external actors. But AU has faced two-fold problems. First, the parties to the conflict are unwilling to listen to the AU and abide themselves by the AU decisions (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁸). Second, foreign powers that have the carrot and stick are also not willing to respect the centrality of the AU in the mediation. They perceive the AU mediation as a threat to their national interest. Hence, they intentionally ignore the AU and chart their own mediation efforts. The two problems combined has shattered the confidence the major political forces in the Sudan have on the AU peace and mediation infrastructure (Ibid)

5.6.4 Fragmentation of Internal Political Forces

For Al Makki the challenge to mediating the conflict also lies with the nature of the Sudanese internal political forces. The political forces lack a shared vision regarding the way the future structuring of the Sudanese state should look like. The consecutive political upheavals such as the 2019 revolution, the 2021 Coup and the 2023 civil war have fragmented political forces (Al Makki, 2025)

At the early days of the conflict, the Sudanese people used to put their trust on the civilian coalition named Taqaddum. They were also seen as an alternative force to the warring factions to end the conflict. The civilians were at the forefront of advocating for the conclusion of ceasefire agreement and an inclusive political dialogue. Foreign powers such as the US and EU were also supporting their efforts (Horner, 2025)

⁶⁷ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁶⁸ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

But the coalition's effort faced an existential challenge. The first one has to do with the fact that they were found to be non-representative of the youth and appear to close to RSF. The lack of neutrality has also made external actors to reconsider their support to the civilian coalition (ibid).

The most critical challenge, however, is the division the group has encountered over the support to the establishment of parallel government by RSF. Some of them such as SPLM-North of Abdel Aziz al-Hilu supported RSF led parallel government. The others who opposed this branched out and from a civilian coalition called the Civil Democratic Alliance for Revolutionary Forces (Somoud) led by former Prime Minister Hamdok (Sudan Tribune, 2025b)

The unending division among civilian forces and the lack of a unifying vision that transcends tribal lines has not only impaired the mediation process and prolonged the war but also endangered leaving the post war Sudan to be dominated by armed actors (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁶⁹). For this informant the September 2025 Quad statement has made it clear that the post war governance in Sudan cannot be left to the two-armed actors only. However, this may not be realized as the civilian forces are more fragmented than ever (ibid)

5.6.5 The Suspension of Sudan from the AU

Following the 2021 Coup against the transitional civilian leadership, the AU has suspended Sudan from effective membership of the AU (PSC, 2021)

This has divided opinion as to whether it has derailed the AU from playing a constructive role in mediating the crisis in the Sudan. For SAF, this has prevented the effectiveness of the mediation of the Sudan crisis (Husni, Interviewee, 2025⁷⁰). The argument they forwarded is, at the outset, President of the Sovereignty Council removing the civilian Prime Minister from power cannot be said a coup as the overthrown entity was not democratically elected leader. It rather was appointed by the president of the Sovereign Council and hence the President reserves the right to fire the Prime Minister if he fails to deliver on the popular demand (ibid)

⁶⁹ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁷⁰ Husni is senior political affairs officer at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa

For Taiwo, the suspension was the right thing to do by the AU. It has not impacted the engagement of the AU with Sudan and the mediation process. The suspension major goal is encouraging democratic transition of power. This has to be kept at all costs (Taiwo, Interviewee, 2025⁷¹).

The suspension does not mean the AU cannot make contacts with Sudanese Authorities. The AU has other mechanisms to deal with countries under suspension. The Constitutive act allows the Chairperson of the commission to maintain a diplomatic contact with the suspended country with the view of facilitating a return to civilian administration. The PSC also holds a consultative meeting with countries to support the transition (Amani Africa, 2025c)

For Taiwo, the mediation failure of the Sudanese peace process has more to do with other underlying factors than the mere suspension of the Sudan from AU membership. The fighting has not stopped not because the AU is not talking to the Sudanese actors but the decisions passed by the AU are not enforced (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁷²)

In practice, suspension neither halted AU engagement nor significantly altered conflict dynamics. The persistence of violence reflected enforcement limitations rather than the absence of dialogue channels (Amani Africa, 2025c). This suggests that suspension was not the primary driver of mediation failure.

5.7 Assessment of APSA's Involvement on Sudan

The African Peace and Security Architecture offer a comprehensive framework for conflict prevention, management, and post-conflict engagement. In the Sudanese case, several APSA tools were activated, including early warning assessments, diplomatic interventions, and ad hoc mediation mechanisms. Yet their cumulative impact has remained limited.

The central constraint has been enforcement capacity. While early warning reports identified escalation risks, neither Sudanese actors nor influential member states acted decisively on these

⁷¹ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁷² Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

warnings (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁷³). Moreover, APSA decisions lacked credible consequences for non-compliance, undermining their deterrent effect (Salvator, Interviewee, 2025⁷⁴).

Institutional limitations within the AU compound this problem. APSA structures remain incomplete, and the absence of a fully operational standby force constrained options for civilian protection and humanitarian facilitation (Taiwo, Interview, 2025⁷⁵). At the same time, the AU Commission's authority remains circumscribed by member states' reluctance to delegate supranational powers, particularly where enforcement might set precedents for intervention in their own domestic affairs (Wurie, Interviewee, 2025⁷⁶).

As a result, APSA's engagement in Sudan illustrates a broader continental dilemma: strong normative frameworks without corresponding political will and enforcement tools risk eroding institutional credibility rather than strengthening it.

Taken together, these dynamics reveal a fundamental tension between APSA's institutional design and the realities of contemporary conflict. APSA is premised on assumptions of centralized authority, identifiable state actors, and institutional compliance. Sudan's conflict, by contrast, is defined by fragmented power, external intervention, and militarized political economies.

While neoliberal institutionalism helps explain the AU's normative orientation and preference for multilateral diplomacy, New War Theory more effectively captures why these tools struggle to produce results in practice.

Over all, the AU's engagement in Sudan was constrained by three interrelated structural challenges. First, despite its interventionist mandate under Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act, the Union remained limited by Member States' sovereignty sensitivities and divergent geopolitical interests, which weakened collective enforcement of PSC decisions. While neoliberal

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Salvator is the Head of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Regional Desk at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁷⁵ Taiwo is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

⁷⁶ Wurie is senior expert at the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union

institutionalism assumes that shared norms and membership generate incentives for compliance, Sudan demonstrates that sovereignty continues to function as a protective shield when enforcement mechanisms lack credibility. Second, sustained external military and financial support to both the SAF and RSF reshaped the conflict's incentives, reducing the appeal of compromise and reinforcing military strategies an outcome consistent with New War Theory's emphasis on external sponsorship and war economies as engines of protracted conflict. Third, the fragmentation of Sudanese civilian forces further constrained mediation efforts: although the AU broadened inclusivity, decisive authority remained with armed elites. Together, these dynamics underscore a central tension between neoliberal expectations of norm-driven cooperation and the realities of contemporary conflicts characterized by fragmented authority, external backing, and informal power structures that institutions struggle to penetrate.

5.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examined the capacity of African peace and security institutions to respond to contemporary conflicts through the case of Sudan. The analysis showed that the conflict reflects key features of contemporary warfare, including fragmented authority, competing armed actors, external intervention, and shifting political alliances. These dynamics have complicated conflict resolution efforts and challenged conventional approaches to peacebuilding.

The chapter further demonstrated that while African peace and security institutions are grounded in principles of cooperation, dialogue, and collective security, their effectiveness is often constrained by limited implementation capacity, divergent political interests, and the complex realities of contemporary conflicts. As a result, a gap frequently emerges between institutional commitments and outcomes on the ground.

Overall, the findings suggest that contemporary African conflicts increasingly test the assumptions upon which existing conflict-response mechanisms are built. While institutions remain essential for legitimacy, coordination, and mediation, their effectiveness depends on their ability to adapt to conflicts characterized by fragmented authority, multiple actors, and evolving political objectives. Therefore, the Sudan case highlights both the continued relevance of multilateral conflict-response mechanisms and the need for more flexible and context-sensitive approaches to conflict management.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the changing character of contemporary African conflicts and assessed the effectiveness of the African Union's conflict-response mechanisms using Sudan since 2019 as a case study. It was motivated by the apparent contradiction between the African Union's expanded peace and security architecture and the persistence of violent conflicts across the continent. Through a qualitative analysis of the Sudan conflict, the study explored how contemporary conflict dynamics interact with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and shape the outcomes of multilateral conflict-response efforts.

The study found that the Sudan conflict reflects many of the defining features of contemporary African conflicts. Rather than a conventional struggle between clearly defined state actors, the conflict is characterized by fragmented authority, competing armed groups, external intervention, parallel governance structures, and political economies that sustain violence. The conflict evolved from a failed political transition into a complex civil war in which military, political, economic, and regional interests became deeply intertwined.

The study also found that while the African Union possesses a comprehensive normative and institutional framework for conflict management, its effectiveness in Sudan has been constrained by weak political compliance, limited enforcement capacity, competing mediation initiatives, and divergent interests among member states and external actors. As a result, a significant gap persists between institutional commitments and implementation on the ground. The findings suggest that the challenge is not simply the absence of institutions or norms, but the difficulty of applying state-centric and rule-based conflict-management approaches to conflicts characterized by fragmented authority and multiple competing centers of power.

The analysis further demonstrates the continued relevance of both New War Theory and Neoliberal Institutionalism. While New War Theory helps explain the evolving nature of violence and the persistence of conflict in Sudan, Neoliberal Institutionalism provides insight into the logic underpinning multilateral responses and institutional cooperation. The interaction between these perspectives reveals that institutions remain essential for coordination, legitimacy, and mediation,

but their effectiveness increasingly depends on their ability to adapt to contemporary conflict realities.

The findings carry important implications for the African Union. Strengthening implementation and compliance mechanisms, enhancing coordination among mediation actors, and addressing external support to belligerents are critical to improving the effectiveness of conflict-response efforts. Equally important is the need to integrate political economy analysis into mediation processes and ensure meaningful participation of civilian actors in peace initiatives.

Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening preventive diplomacy through clearer early-warning response mechanisms, enhancing the operational role of the Panel of the Wise, and establishing a more coherent AU-IGAD-led mediation framework supported by regional and international partners. The study also recommends greater emphasis on monitoring external support to belligerents, improving follow-up on Peace and Security Council decisions, and developing more adaptive approaches capable of responding to conflicts characterized by fragmented authority and evolving political objectives.

Ultimately, the Sudan case demonstrates that contemporary African conflicts increasingly challenge traditional approaches to conflict management. While APSA remains an indispensable framework for promoting peace and security on the continent, its future effectiveness will depend on its ability to adapt to the realities of contemporary warfare and bridge the gap between institutional ambition and conflict realities.

References

Books

- Abiodun, A. (2024). *African Union and the quest for peace and security in Africa: A critique*. In *Development and regional stability in Africa: Unlocking potential*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature, pp. 11–3.
- Adekanye, J. B. (2007). *Linking conflict diagnosis, conflict prevention and conflict management in contemporary Africa: Selected essays*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Araba Press.
- Baldo, S. (2017). *Border control from hell: How the EU's migration partnership legitimizes Sudan's militia state*. Enough Project. <https://enoughproject.org/reports/border-control-hell-how-eus-migration-partnership-legitimizes-sudans-militia-state>
- Bah, A. S., Choge-Nyangoro, E., Dersso, S., Mofya, B., & Murithi, T. (2014). *The African Peace and Security Architecture: A handbook*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Baylis, J., & Smith, S. (Eds.). (2001). *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations*. (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Berghof Foundation for Peace Support. (2006). *Sudan: Conflict analysis and options for systematic conflict transformation*. Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, Berlin: Germany.
- Burr, M., & Collins, R. O. (2006). *Darfur: The long road to disaster*. Markus Wiener Publishers.
- Burchill, S., Linklater, A., Devetak, R., Donnelly, J., Paterson, M., Reus-Smit, C., & True, J. (2005). *Theories of international relations* (3rd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Byers, M., & Sinclair, A. (Eds.). (2006). *International law and international relations*. Oxford University Press.
- Carayannis, T., & Weiss, H. F. (2003). *The Democratic Republic of Congo, 1996–2002*. In J. Boulden (Ed.), *Dealing with conflict in Africa: The United Nations and regional organizations* (pp. 253–303). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cheeseman, N. (2014). *Researching democracy, peace and human rights in Africa* (SAID Report, pp. 1–14). Skoll Foundation.
- Cilliers, J., & Gasser, A. (2016). The African Peace and Security Architecture and regional conflict management mechanisms. In *Minding the gap: African conflict management in a time of change* (pp. 137–156). Centre for International Governance Innovation.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Curtis, D. (2003). The African Union and regionalism: A new direction for Africa? In H. Solomon & I. Neethling (Eds.), *Regionalism and security in Africa* (pp. 35–54). Institute for Security Studies.

- Dallaire, R. A. (2010). *Foreword: Meeting the demand for intervention: The promise of African security architecture*. In H. Besada (Ed.), *Crafting an African security architecture: Addressing regional peace and conflict in the 21st century* (pp. xvii–xxvi). Ashgate Publishing.
- De Waal, A. (2007). *Sudan: The turbulent state-War in Darfur and the search for peace*. Harvard University Press.
- De Waal, A. (2015). *The real politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, war and the business of power*. Polity Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Douglas H. J. 2003. *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*. James Currey, Oxford. p. 17
- Ekengard, A. (2008). *The African Union mission in Sudan: Experiences and lessons learned*. Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), Defence Analysis.
- Engel, U. and Porto, J. (2010). *Africa's New Peace and Security Architecture Promoting Norms, Institutionalizing Solutions*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Fisas, V. (2012). *Yearbook of peace processes*. Escola de Cultura de Pau, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. ISBN: 978-84-9888-427-2.
- Gallopin, J.-B. (2020). The great game of the UAE and Saudi Arabia in Sudan. In M. Lynch (Ed.), *Africa and the Middle East: Beyond the divides* (pp. 25–30). Project on Middle East Political Science.
- Harris, G. 2024. *The Elgar Companion to War, Conflict and Peace Building in Africa. International Centre of Nonviolence*. Durban University of Technology, South Africa
- Godfrey, P.O. 2004. “*Conflict Management in Post-Cold War: The Role of International Actors*”, in Nhema, A.G(Ed): *The Quest for Peace in Africa: Transformation, Democracy and Public Policy*, OSSREA, Addis Ababa.
- Guest, R. (2004). *The Shackled Continent: Africa's Past, Present and Future*, London: Macmillan.
- Hobson, J. M. (2003). *The State and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoffmann, A., & Lanfranchi, G. (2023). *Kleptocracy versus democracy: How security-business networks hold hostage Sudan's private sector and the democratic transition*. Clingendael Institute.
- Holsti, K. J. (1996). *The state, war, and the state of war*. Cambridge University Press.
- Holtslag E. (2024). *Negotiating Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Unpicking Challenges, Opportunities and the Role of Regional International Actors*. World Mediation Organisation.
- Kaaba, O., & Fagbayibo, B. (2019). *The African Union and the challenge of institutional capacity*. In T. Tella & S. O. Oloruntoba (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of African peace and security* (pp. 25–42). Oxford University Press.

- Kaldor, M. (2012). *New and old wars: Organized violence in a global era (3rd ed.)*. Polity Press.
- Makinda, S. M., & Okumu, F. W. (2008). *The African Union: Challenges of leadership and governance*. Routledge.
- Mamdani, M. (2009.) *Saviors and Survivors; Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror*. London: Verso.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching (2nd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Meierhenrich, J., & Nathan, L. (Eds.). (2012). *Ending civil wars: The implementation of peace agreements*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Miller, E. (2005). *A glossary of terms and concepts in peace and conflict studies (2nd ed.)*. University for Peace, Africa Programme.
- Molloy, S. (2017). *Kant's international relations: The political theology of perpetual peace*. University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.5036715>
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Münkler, H. (2005). *The new wars*. Polity Press.
- Murithi, T. (2005). *The African Union: Pan-Africanism, peacebuilding and development*. Ashgate Publishing
- Muyangwa, M., & Vogt, M. A. (2000). *An assessment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 1993-2000*. International Peace Academy.
- Okumu, F. W. (2015). *Addressing Africa's peace and security challenges*. In S. M. Makinda, F. W. Okumu, & D. Mickler (Eds.), *The African Union: Addressing the challenges of peace, security, and governance (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Okumu, F. W. (2020). *Conflict prevention from the ground- opportunities and challenges for closer cooperation between AU, RECs and civil society on conflict prevention in Eastern Africa*. Addis Ababa: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
- Okumu, F. W. (2023). Addressing Africa's peace and security challenges. In Okumu, W., & Atta-Asamoah, A. (Eds.). (2023). *The African Union at 20: African perspectives on progress, challenges and prospects*. Institute for Security Studies.
- Peter, S.(2011). *Africa: A Continent Self-Destructs*, New York: Palgrave.
- Sandbrook, R. (1985). *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (CUP).
- Princen, T. (1992). *Intermediaries in international conflict*. Princeton University Press.
- Prunier, G. (2005). *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Ruggie, J. G. (1993). *Multilateralism matters: The theory and praxis of an institutional form*. Columbia University Press. New York.
- Sasidharan, S. & Dhillon, H. (2021). *A Snapshot of Poverty, Diseases, and war -- the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. PubMed Central. 2021.
- Shaw, M. (2003). *War and genocide: Organized killing in modern society*. Polity Press.
- Ukeje, C., & Ako, R. T. (2017). *The African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC): Challenges and policy options*. Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University.
- Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Addison-Wesley.
- Williams. P. D. (2011). *War and conflict in Africa*. Polity Press.
- Williams. P. D. (2012). *Conflict prevention in practice: from rhetoric to reality*. United States Institute of Peace.
- Williams, P. D. (2016). *The AU's less coercive diplomacy in Burundi*. IPI Global Observatory
- Williams, P. D. (2019). *Lessons for "Partnership Peacekeeping" from the African Union Mission in Somalia*. International Peace Institute.
- Willow, B. 2015. *Civil Uprisings in Modern Sudan. The "Khartoum Springs" of 1964 and 1985*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015

Journal Articles

- Agu, S.U and Okeke, B. (2013). The African Union (AU) and the Challenges of Conflict Resolution in Africa. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 14 (2), 280-287.
- Ahmed, S. (2023). Resolving Sudan's Crisis means removing those fighting. *Chatham House*. 65(2)
- Ani, N.C. (2016). The African Union Non-Indifference Stance: Lessons from Sudan and Libya. *African Conflict and Peace building Review*, 6(2), 1-22.
- Annette, W. (2019). For a peaceful transition in Sudan: Current developments and plausible scenarios. *SWP policy brief*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 79(15)
- Asanzi, P., & Hoinathy, R. (2024). The revived Luanda process - inching towards peace in east DRC. *Institute for Security Studies*. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-revived-luanda-process-inching-towards-peace-in-east-drc>
- Assal, M. (2023). War in Sudan 15 April 2023: background, analysis and scenarios. *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2023-09/war-in-sudan-15-april-2023-background-analysis-and-scenarios.pdf>
- Ayabei, C. (2016). The rise of China and conflicts in Africa: The case of Sudan. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 11(2), 29-35.

- Bassil, N. & Zhang, J. (2021). The Post-Bashir Era in Sudan: Tragedy or Remedy? *Australian Institute of International Affairs*. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-post-bashir-era-insudan-tragedy-or-remedy/>
- Belachew, G. (2010). The Cynicism of "African Solutions for African Problems", *African Security*, 3(2), 80–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2010.503039>
- Benny, K. (2024). Conflict in Sudan and impacts in Darfur. *Modern Diplomacy*. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/11/22/conflict-in-sudan-and-impacts-in-darfur/>
- Boehmer, C., Gartzke, E., & Nordstrom, T. (2004). Do intergovernmental organizations promote peace? *World Politics*, 57(1), 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004388710001004X>
- Brooke, H. L. (2025). Conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (Research Briefing No. CBP-10089). House of Commons Library. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10089/> House of Commons Library+1
- Brown, W. (2009). The African Union and the political economy of Africa's marginalization. *International Affairs*, 85(3), 417–431.
- Caparini, M. (2022). Conflict, governance and organized crime: Complex challenges for UN stabilization operations. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022/2212_sipri_report_un_stabilization_operations.pdf
- Chigozie, N. P. (2018). The application of new wars theory to African conflicts since 1960. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 6(6), 313–320.
- Cilliers, J. (2014). "Africa's Conflict Burden in a Global Context", Institute for Security Studies ISS paper 273, p 1-20.
- Cohen, R. (2006). No quick fix for Darfur. *Northwestern Journal of International Affairs*, 1–7
- Custers, D., & Kinkoh, H. (2025). Qatar's mediation in the DRC-Rwanda conflict: Reimagining African agency (Pulse No. 03). CARPO. <https://carpo-bonn.org/en/publications/carpo-pulse/qatar-s-mediation-in-the-drc-rwanda-conflict-reimagining-african-agency>>
- Darkwa, L. (2017). The African Standby Force: The African Union's Tool for the Maintenance of Peace and Security. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38(3), 471-482
- Dunne, P. J., & Tian, N. (2017). Conflict and fragile states in Africa (African Development Bank Group Working Paper No. 242). African Development Bank Group.
- El Abdellaoui, J. (2009). The Panel of the Wise: A comprehensive introduction to a critical pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture. *Institute for Security Studies*, ISS Paper 193.
- El Mquirmi, N. (2021). The Sudan at a Crossroads: Multi-layered Fragility. *Policy Center for the New South*. <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/sudancrossroads-multi-layered-fragility>

- Engel, U. and Porto, J.G. (2014). Imagining, Implementing, and Integrating the African Peace and Security Architecture: The African Union's Challenges. *African Security*, Vol. 7, Pp. 135--146.
- Enuka, C. and Nwagbo, S. (2016). "Regional International Organizations as Conflict Managers: The Limits and Capabilities." *African Research Review*, 10 (2): 16–30.
- Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). International norm dynamics and political change. *International Organization*, 52(4), 887–917.
- Franke, M. (2009). The African Union and civilian protection: Challenges in Darfur. Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper No. 63, University of Oxford.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for?. *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341–354
- Gibson, C. (2002). Of Waves and Ripples: Democracy and Political Change in Africa in the 1990s. *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 5. Pp. 201-221.
- Gottschalk, K., & Schmidt, S. (2004). The African Union and peace operations. In *Africa's New Peace and Security Architecture* (pp. 147–166). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Horner, J. (2025). Split decision: Why Sudan is on the brink of partition—again. European Council on Foreign Relations. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/split-decision-why-sudan-is-on-the-brink-of-partition—again/>.
- Idris, A. & Daqash, M. (2024). The Failure of Jeddah and IGAD Mediation efforts for Sudan. Arab Center Washington DC
- Isaac, O. A. (2007). The African Union and Conflict Management. *Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1.
- Jemirade, R. (2021). Responsibility to Protect and intervention in Africa. *African Security Review*, 30(3), 215–231.
- Karock, U. (2014). The African Peace and Security Architecture: Still Under Construction, Directorate-General for External Policies Policy Department. Vol. 47. Pp. 1-8.
- Karari, P. (2016). Responsibility to protect in Kenyan and Darfur crises: A critical deconstruction of the ideology of AfSol in the lens of R2P, normative international relations theory, and the Jetliners-Rigs approach for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. *Afsol Journal*, 1(1), 161-186
- Khadiagala, G. (2023). The African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the search for peace and security: The record over the past twenty years. *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, 33(1), 53–69.
- Khair, K. (2022). The muddled diplomacy of Sudan's tripartite mechanism. *African Arguments*. Available at: <https://africanarguments.org/2022/06/the-muddled-diplomacy-of-sudans-tripartite-mechanism/>

- Khalil, O. (2023). The Sudan crisis: How regional actors' competing interests fuel the conflict. *Arab Center Washington DC*. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-sudan-crisis-how-regional-actors-competing-interests-fuel-the-conflict/>
- Kiros, K. (2024). The ongoing war in Sudan and its implications for the security and stability of the Horn of Africa and beyond. *Policy Center for the South*. <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/ongoing-war-sudan-and-its-implications-security-and-stability-horn-africa-and-beyond>
- Kouassi, Y. (2023). Development pathways for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 2050. Institute for Security Studies
- Kurtz, G. (2024). Power relations in Sudan after the fall of Bashir: From revolution to war (SWP Research Paper No. 5/2024). Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik
- Kurtz, G. (2025). Mediation efforts on Sudan: Beware the pitfalls of diplomatic coordination. ISPI. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/mediation-efforts-on-sudan-beware-the-pitfalls-of-diplomatic-coordination-205952>
- Liaga, E. A. (2025). Proxy Wars are Redefining Sudan's Security and Peace Trajectory. Near-ER. <https://near-er.eu/proxy-wars-are-redefining-sudans-security-and-peace-trajectory/>
- Livinus, I. O. (2015). Diplomatic methods of conflict resolution: A case study of ECOWAS. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, 3(2), 27–42.
- Mahdi, M. (2024). Sudanese are losing hope with each new peace initiative. Institute for Security Studies (ISS). <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/sudanese-are-losing-hope-with-each-new-peace-initiative>
- Marsden, R. (2025). Prioritising civilians in responses to Sudan's war. Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/prioritising-civilians-in-responses-to-sudans-war-207244> ISPI
- Mans, U. (2004). Sudan: The new war in Darfur. *African Affairs*, 103 (411), 291–294.
- Meierhenrich, J. & Nathan, L. (2012). "Ambiguity and Uncertainty in International Organizations: A History of the African Peace and Security Architecture." *International Studies Quarterly* 56 (4): 674–687.
- Møller, B. (2005). The pros and cons of subsidiarity: The role of African regional and sub regional organizations in ensuring peace and security in Africa. DIIS Working Paper 4, Danish Institute of International Studies
- Møller, B. (2009). The African Union as a security actor: African solutions to African problems? Crisis States Research Centre Working Papers Series Number 2, Working Paper Number 57. London: Crisis States Research Center.
- Mohammad, T. (2023). Sudan's Conflict is turning into a Saudi-UAE Proxy War for Gulf Hegemony. *Foreign Policy*

- Mumbi, M. L. (2010). African sub-regional bodies in armed conflict resolution: The case of IGAD in Sudan 1994–2005. Unpublished manuscript.
- Munene, M. (2023). The Horn of Africa in 2023: A geopolitical analysis. *The HORN Bulletin*, 6(1), 1–8. <https://horninstitute.org/the-horn-of-africa-in-2023-a-geopolitical-analysis/>
- Munya, P. M. (1999). *International dispute settlement. Anuario de Acción Humanitaria y Derechos Humanos / Yearbook on Humanitarian Action and Human Rights*, (3), 57–92.
- Munya. (1997). Overview on international dispute resolution in Africa. In Merrills, J. G., *International dispute settlement. Anuario de Acción Humanitaria y Derechos Humanos*, (3), 57–92.
- Murithi, T. (2008) "The African Union's evolving role in peace operations: The African Union Mission in Burundi, the African Union Mission in Sudan and the African Union Mission in Somalia." *African Security Studies* 17(1), 14–26.
- Murithi, T. (2012). Special Issue on the African Union: Between Reactive and Proactive Interventionism: The African Union Peace and Security Council's Engagement in the Horn of Africa, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution (ACCORD)*, Vol. 12(2), Pp. 87-108.
- Mustafa, S., Hassan, O., & Alassam, M. N. (2025). Escalation pathways to the April war and the dynamics of Sudan's political economy. Arab Reform Initiative
- Nathan, L. (2005). *Mediation and the African Union's Panel of the Wise* . Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics.
- Nathan, L. (2010). *Towards a new era in international mediation* . Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-policy-briefs/Towards-a-new-era-in-international-mediation.pdf>
- Niou, E., & Ordeshook, P. (1991). Realism versus neoliberalism: A formulation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 35(2), 481–511.
- Noyes, A., & Yarwood, J. (2015). Progress toward the African Union Continental Early Warning System. Institute for Defense Analyses.
- Nte, T. U. (2019). The 2019 Sudan coup and conflict resolution by the African Union. *International Journal of Comparative Studies in International Relations and Development*, 6(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.48028/ijprds/ijcsird.v6.i1.01>
- Oguonu, C. N., & Ezeibe, C. C. (2014). African Union and conflict resolution in Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(27), 325–332. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p325>
- Oita, E., Abdulkadir, T., Masah, C., & Mapiro, T. (2024). Evaluation of the African Union Peace and Security Council: Lessons from 20 years of intervention and recommendations for the future. *ACCORD*.

- Okorie, U. (2024). International organizations and conflict management in Africa: The role of the African Union in peacebuilding and mediation. *African Security Review*, 33(1), 45–62.
- Pedrosa de Sousa, R. R. (2022). The subsidiarity principle in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA): A case of diffusion by imitation of the European Union (EU). *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, (44). <https://doi.org/10.4000/cea.7585>
- Perthes, V. (2024a). Sudan's transition to war and the limits of the UN's good offices . SWP, 65(14) <https://doi.org/10.18449/2024RP14>
- Perthes, V. (2024b). Sudan's transition to war. *Survival*, 66(4), 127–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2024.2380205>
- Pospisil, J., & Jenner, M. (2022). Fragmented transitions in the context of competitive regionalism: The case of Sudan. PeaceRep. <https://peacerep.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Regionalism-Sudan-GT-Report-Digital.pdf>
- Ramzy, S. (2024). Potential consequences of failure of Geneva talks on the future of Sudan's conflict. EPC. <https://epc.ae/en/details/scenario/potential-consequences-of-failure-of-geneva-talks-on-the-future-of-sudan-s-conflict>
- Rorbaek, L., & Knudsen, K. (2017). Peace missions and the security sector in Africa. *African Security Review*, 26(2), 113–115
- Salih, Z. (2024). Conflict in Sudan: A map of regional and international actors. Wilson Center. <https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/article/conflict-sudan-map-regional-andinternational-actors>
- Schmidt, S. (2016). Through the lens of European integration theory: APSA in transition. In *Crafting an African Security Architecture* (pp. 41–62). London: Routledge.
- Shewit, W.. (2025a). El Fasher: A bloody new chapter in Sudan's ruinous war. *International Crisis Group*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sudan/el-fasher-bloody-new-chapter-sudans-ruinous-war>
- Shewit, W. (2025b). Drone attacks on Port Sudan mark dramatic escalation: Implications for the country's civil war. *International Crisis Group*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org>
- Sikander, T. (2011). Conflict and conflict resolution. *Margalla Papers*, 15(2).
- Simonovic, I. (2016). The Responsibility to Protect. *UN Chronicle*, 53(4).
- Sithole, T. (2012). The AU Peace and Security Mechanism's crawl from design to reality. *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 12(2), 111–132.
- Sithole, T. (2018). Review of the African Union framework on peace and security. *Journal of African Union Studies*, 7(1), 67–90.
- Soliman, A. (2023). Sudan's military elites and the failure of transition. *African Affairs*, 122(489), 412–430.

- Solomon, D. (2012). "The quest for Pax Africana: the case of the African Union's peace and security regime." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 12(2): 11-47.
- Solomon, D. and Tefesehet. (2024). PSC marks 20th anniversary as the continent faces dangerous deterioration of peace and security <https://amaniafrica-et.org/psc-marks-20th-anniversary-as-the-continent-faces-dangerous-deterioration-of-peace-and-security/>
- Suhrke, A. (2007). Reconstruction as modernization: the 'post-conflict' project in Afghanistan. *Third World Quarterly*, 28(7), 1291–1308.
- Tchie, A. E. Y., & Llorens Zabala, M. (2024). Consolidating peace? The inner struggles of Sudan's transition agreement. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 24(1). https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-accordr_v24_n1_a6
- Tshitereke, C. 2003. The Origins of War in Africa. *African Security Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2
- Tubiana, J. (2022). Darfur after Bashir: Implications for Sudan's transition and for the region (Special Report). United States Institute of Peace. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/darfur-after-bashir-implications-sudans-transition-and-region>
- Walraven, V. K. (1999). Dreams of Power: The role of the Organization of African Unity in the politics of Africa 1963-1993, African Studies Centre Research Series.
- Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), 391–425.
- Verhoeven, H. (2023). "Surviving Revolution and Democratization: The Sudan Armed Forces, State Fragility and Security Competition", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 61(3): 413–37.
- Vhumbunu, C. H. (2019). Reflecting on the role of regional and international interventions in resolving the post-coup crisis in Sudan. *Accord*, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflictrends/reflecting-on-the-role-of-regional-and-international-interventions-in-resolving-the-post-coup-crisis-in-sudan/>
- Wani, A. H. (2011). Understanding conflict resolution. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Centre for Promoting Ideas (CPI), 1(2).
- Umoh, A. I., & Nwinkol, B. (2024). internationalization of conflict as a challenge to peace and development in Africa. *Wukari International Studies Journal*, 8(5), 23–31. Retrieved from <https://wissjournals.com.ng/index.php/wiss/article/view/409>
- Williams, P.D. (2007). From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference: The Origins and Development of the African Union's Security Culture. *African Affairs*, Vol. 106/423, Pp. 253--279.
- Wulf, H., & Debiel, T. (2009). Conflict prevention and peacebuilding: Why regional organizations fail to use early warning and response mechanisms. *Global Governance*, 15(4), 525–544. [doi.org](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1070270509000010)

Yildirim C. & Özer. (2023). Internal and external factors behind the instability in Sudan. *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs*, 28(2), 173–193.
<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/perception/issue/81744/1410435>

Zeinab, M. S. (2024). Conflict in Sudan: A map of regional and international actors. *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/conflict-sudan-map-regional-and-international-actors>

Official AU/OAU Documents

African Union. (2000). Constitutive Act of the African Union. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union.

African Union. (2002). Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union.

African Union. (2008). Memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the area of peace and security between the AU, the RECs and the coordinating mechanisms of the regional standby brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union.

African Union. (2009). Report of the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD).
<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/aupdreportdarfureng.pdf>. Accessed on 21 October 2024.

African Union. (2015). *African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) roadmap 2016–2020*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union.

African Union. (2019). *Communiqué on the visit of the Chairperson of the Commission to Sudan*. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20190421/communique-visit-chairperson-commission-sudan>. Accessed on 19 February 2025.

African Union. (2023a). African Union handbook 2023. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union Commission.

African Union. (2023b). Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the developing situation in Sudan: Urgent call for a ceasefire in Sudan.
<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/the-chairperson-of-the-au-commission-s-statement-on-the-developing-situation-in-sudan-urgent-call-for-a-ceasefire-in-sudan>

African Union. (2024a). Revised African Union post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) policy.
<https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2017/ENG%20Clean%20version%20of%20the%20AME%20NDED%20PCRD%20Policy%20REV%2005%20February%202024.pdf>

African Union. (2024b). The Chairperson of the African Union Commission appoints a high-level panel on the resolution of the conflict in Sudan.
<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240117/auc-chairperson-appoints-high-level-panel-resolution-conflict-sudan>

- African Union. 2024(c). African Union Handbook 2024. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union Commission.
- African Union. (2025a). Decision on the Appointment of Panel of the Wise.
<https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/10721/Assembly%20AU%20Draft%20Dec%2029%28XXXVIII%29-Panel%20of%20Wise>
- African Union. (2025b). AU Commission Chairperson to deploy the Panel of the Wise for South Sudan mediation (Press release).<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20250331/au-commission-chairperson-deploy-panel-wise-south-sudan-mediation>
- African Union. (2025c). The Chairperson of the African Union Commission welcomes the appointment of a civilian prime minister in Sudan(Press Release).
<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20250520/auc-chairperson-welcomes-appointment-civilian-prime-minister-sudan>
- AU. 2025(d). Joint Statement by the AU High- Level Panel and the IGAD Special Envoy to Sudan.
<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/joint-statement-by-the-au-high-level-panel-and-the-igad-special-envoy-to-sudan>
- Organization of African Unity. (1963). Charter of the Organization of the African Unity.
 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia).
- Organization of African Unity. (1964). Protocol that establishes the Commission for Mediation and Conciliation.
 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia).
- Peace and Security Council. (2004). *Communiqué of the 12th session of the Peace and Security Council*.
- Peace and Security Council. (2006). *Communiqué of the 46th session of the Peace and Security Council*.
- Peace and Security Council. (2007). *Modalities for the functioning of the Panel of the Wise, as adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 100th meeting held on 12 November 2007*. African Union Peace and Security Department.
- Peace and Security Council. (2008). *Communiqué of the 142nd meeting of the Peace and Security Council*. <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/PSC142COM.PDF>
- Peace and Security Council. (2013). *Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCXCIII)*.
<https://amaniafrica-et.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-com-393-drc-28-08-2013.pdf>
- Peace and Security Council. (2019a). *Communiqué on the situation in Sudan*.<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/840-psc-unique-sudan.eng.pdf>
- Peace and Security Council. (2019b). *Communiqué on the situation in Sudan*.
<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.854.comm.sudan.6.6.19.pdf>

- Peace and Security Council. (2021). *Communiqué on the situation in Sudan*.
<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/eng-final-communique-of-the-1041st-psc-meeting-in-sudan-26-october-2021.pdf>
- Peace and Security Council. (2023a). *Communiqué on the situation in Sudan*.
<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/1154.comm-en.pdf>
- Peace and Security Council. (2023b). *Communiqué adopted on the situation in Sudan*.
<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/1156.comm-en.pdf>
- Peace and Security Council. (2024a). *Communiqué of the 1218th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held at the level of Heads of State and Government on 21 June 2024, on consideration of the situation in Sudan*.
<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-1218-hosg-communique-sudan-en.pdf>
- Peace and Security Council. (2024b). *Communiqué on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*.
https://unoau.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/1222nd_psc_communique_-_ministerial_-_drc_mediation_-_en.pdf
- Peace and Security Council. (2025a). *Press statement on the 1292nd meeting of the Peace and Security Council*.
<https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5849aaa1-c413-4ef7-8ac6-eb9935c37594/content>
- Peace and Security Council. (2025b). *Report on the activities of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union for the first quarter of 2025*.
<https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/entities/publication/ff2511a4-f3b9-4c12-8dd0-1a07e6288e28/full>
- Peace and Security Council. (2025c). *Annual activity report of the African Union Peace and Security Council*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Peace and Security Council. (2025d). *Communiqué on the situation on the Sudan*. Retrieved on 23 September 2025 from, <https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/entities/publication/b7cb98bb-65a8-4adc-a071-910ac50f1b54>.
- Peace and Security Council Handbook. (2023). *The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook for the year 2023*. Amani Africa Media and Research Services: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Peace and Security Council Handbook. (2024). *The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook for the year 2024*. Amani Africa Media and Research Services: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Sudan Constitutional Declaration, 2019. Accessed 11 July, 2025. Available at:
<https://constitutionnet.org/vl/item/sudan-constitutional-declaration-august-2019> [Accessed July 11 2025].
- United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations*. New York, United States of America.
- United Nations. (2012). *UN guidance for effective mediation*. UN Peacemaker.

United Nations. (2014). The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region: First progress report. United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region.

United Nations. (2025). Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan.
<https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/239>

Policy Reports, Working Papers and Institutional Publications

ACLED. (2025). Two years of war in Sudan: How the SAF is gaining the upper hand.
<https://acleddata.com/report/two-years-war-sudan-how-saf-gaining-upper-hand>. Accessed on 17 May 2025.

ACCORD. (2022). The role of the African Union in the mediation process in Ethiopia.
<https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/the-role-of-the-african-union-in-the-mediation-process-in-ethiopia/>. Accessed on 21 November 2024.

ACCORD. (2025). Reflections on enhancing the role of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in early warning, conflict prevention and strengthening good governance.
<https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/reflections-on-the-enhancing-the-role-of-the-aprm-in-early-warning-conflict-prevention-and-strengthening-good-governance/>. Accessed on 11 May 2025.

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2023). *African-led peace operations: A crucial tool for peace and security*. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-led-peace-operations-a-crucial-tool-for-peace-and-security/>. Accessed on 10 December 2024

Al-Kuwari, M. & Al-Qawasmi, F. (2025). Gulf diplomacy in crisis management: The case study of Sudan's forgotten war (Gulf Studies Report No. 5). Gulf Studies Center, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University. <https://www.qu.edu.qa/en-us/research/gulfstudies-center/documents/sudan%20report.pdf>

Amani Africa. (2022). Update on operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF). Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/update-on-operationalization-of-the-african-standby-force-asf/>

Amani Africa. (2023). Insights on the Peace and Security Council: Consideration of the status report on the implementation of the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework. Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/consideration-of-the-status-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-continental-structural-conflict-prevention-framework>

Amani Africa. (2024a). The African Union Peace and Security Council at 20: From a promising past and a challenged present to a less certain future. Amani Africa Media and Research Services <https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-at-20-from-a-promising-past-and-a-challenged-present-to-a-less-certain-future>

Amani Africa. (2024b). Memo to the new AU Commission leadership: From the roaring guns on the AU's first decade of silencing the guns. Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/MEMO-TO-THE-NEW-AU-COMMISSION-LEADERSHIP.pdf>

- Amani Africa. (2024c). Briefing on the situation in Sudan (Amani Africa Policy Brief). Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/briefing-on-the-situation-in-sudan-august-19-2024/>
- Amani Africa. (2025a). Africa in a new era of insecurity and instability: The 2024 review of the Peace and Security Council. Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/africa-in-a-new-era-of-insecurity-and-instability-the-2024-review-of-the-peace-and-security-council/>
- Amani Africa. (2025b). Africa and the African Union in shaping the future of peacekeeping and the Berlin Ministerial. Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/africa-and-the-african-union-in-shaping-the-future-of-peacekeeping-and-the-berlin-ministerial/>
- Amani Africa. (2025c). Informal consultation with countries in political transition. Amani Africa Media and Research Services. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/informal-consultation-with-countries-in-political-transition-5/>
- Center for Dialogue & Research in Conflict (CDRC) Ethiopia. (2024a). Geopolitical competitions, global governance, and external actors in Africa amidst changes in the global order: Challenges and opportunities for growth, stability, and peace. CDRC Digest, Vol. 1 No. 5
- Center for Dialogue & Research in Conflict (CDRC) Ethiopia. (2024b). The state of peace and security in the Horn of Africa: Persistent trends and evolving dynamics 1: Glimmers of hope? CDRC Digest, (Vol. 1, No. 3).
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2023). *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Global Conflict Tracker. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-democratic-republic-congo>
- Economic Community of Central African States. (2016). The principle of subsidiarity: The example of ECCAS in Central African crises. Crisis Management Initiative.
- Emirates Policy Center. (2025). Quad initiative to end the war in Sudan: Positions and challenges. <https://www.epc.ae/en/details/brief/quad-initiative-to-end-the-war-in-sudan-positions-and-challenges> EPC+1
- International Crisis Group. (2019). Safeguarding Sudan's revolution (Africa Report No. 281). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/281-safeguarding-sudans-revolution>
- International Crisis Group. (2020). Toward a comprehensive strategy to end the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. International Crisis Group.
- International Crisis Group. (2023). A race against time to halt Sudan's collapse (Africa Briefing No. 190). International Crisis Group.
- International Crisis Group. (2024). Sudan: A year of war. International Crisis Group.
- International Crisis Group. (2025). Sudan's calamitous war: Finding a path toward peace. International Crisis Group.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2023). The pros and cons of the regional initiatives to stop the war in Sudan available at: <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2023.81>

Institute of Foreign Affairs. (2025). Red Sea Dialogue [Conference]. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Institute for Security Studies. (2009). The Panel of the Wise: A comprehensive introduction to a critical pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture.
<https://issafrica.org/research/papers/the-panel-of-the-wise-a-comprehensive-introduction-to-a-critical-pillar-of-the-african-peace-and-security-architecture>

Institute for Security Studies. (2013). Peace, security and cooperation framework for the DRC: Hopes and challenges.
<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/peace-security-and-cooperation-framework-for-the-drc-hopes-and-challenges>

Institute for Security Studies. (2020). Sudan: A coup laboratory.
<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/sudan-a-coup-laboratory>

Institute for Security Studies. (2023). Eastern DRC peace processes miss the mark.
<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/eastern-drc-peace-processes-miss-the-mark>

Institute for Security Studies. (2024a). Should the old Continental Early Warning System be restored?
<https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/should-the-old-continental-early-warning-system-be-restored>

Institute for Security Studies. (2024b). Will an election equip the Council with strong states?
<https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/will-an-election-equip-the-council-with-strong-states>

Institute for Security Studies. (2024c). New AU mission for Somalia: Old problems, fresh solutions?
<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/new-au-mission-for-somalia-old-problems-fresh-solutions>

Institute for Security Studies. (2024d). The African Union could learn lessons from the Jeddah and Geneva processes.

Institute for Security Studies. (2024e). The time for PSC reform is now.
<https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/the-time-for-psc-reform-is-now>

Institute for Security Studies. (2025a). Prioritization, higher-level engagement and stronger compliance measures can change the PSC.
<https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/prioritisation-higher-level-engagement-and-stronger-compliance-measures-can-change-the-psc>

Institute for Security Studies. (2025b). Urgent AU action could defuse rising Chad–Sudan tensions.
<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/urgent-au-action-could-defuse-rising-chad-sudan-tensions>

Newspaper, Media and Online Sources

Abdelwahab, El-Affendi. (2023). (Mis)understanding and (mis)managing the Sudanese crisis. Aljezeera.
<https://www.aljazeera.com>. Accessed on 12 December 2024.

- Africa Intelligence. (2024). *Why the army pushed RSF warlord Abu Aqla Kikl to defect*. <https://www.africaintelligence.com/eastern-africa-and-the-horn/2024/10/29/why-the-army-pushed-rsf-warlord-abu-aqla-kikl-to-defect,110333079-art>. Accessed on 20 February 2025.
- Ahramonline. (2022). Political Agreement signed in Sudan. Ahramonline news outlet. <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1203/482551/AlAhram-Weekly/World/Political-agreement-signed-in-Sudan.aspx>. Accessed on 25 March 2025.
- Al-Ghwell, H. (2025). Sudan's deadly conflict and the shape of wars to come. *Arab News*. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2620241>. Accessed on 27 November 2025.
- Aljazeera. (2019). Sudan: What have military and opposition coalition agreed to? Aljazeera news. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/7/17/sudan-what-have-military-and-opposition-coalition-agreed-to>. Accessed on 9 April 2025.
- Al Jazeera. (2021). Sudan's military dissolves cabinet, announces state of emergency. Aljazeera news. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/25/sudans-military-dissolves-cabinet-announce-state-of-emergency>. Accessed on 9 April 2025.
- Aljazeera. (2024). Sudan suspends membership in IGAD regional bloc. Aljazeera news <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/20/sudan-suspends-membership-in-igad-regional-bloc>. Accessed on 9 April 2025.
- Aljazeera. (2025). RSF paramilitary-led coalition forms parallel government in war-torn Sudan. Aljazeera news. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/26/rsf-paramilitary-led-coalition-forms-parallel-government-in-war-torn-sudan>. Accessed on 9 September 2025.
- Al-Makki, A. S. (2025). Sudan without a center: State disintegration amid war and the absence of sovereignty. Sudan Media Forum. <https://sudanmediaforum.org/en/sudan-without-a-centre-state-disintegration-amid-war-and-the-absence-of-sovereignty/>. Accessed 16 May 2025.
- Andrew, M. G. (2024). Russia switches sides in Sudan war. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 21(102).
- Ayin Network. (2024). The Al-Bara Ibn Malik Brigade: a lifeline to the army or a lifelong challenge. <https://3ayin.com/en/sudans-state-supported-smugglers-12/>. Accessed on 17 March 2025.
- Elbagir N. & Alkhaldi C. (2023). US sanctions deputy leader of Sudanese paramilitary force over human rights abuses. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/06/africa/us-sanctions-sudan-paramilitary-deputy-leader-intl/index.html>
- Metairie, R. (2025). DRC/Rwanda peace process unpacked. *The Heraldonline*.
- Nashed, M. (2023). Shifting alliances in Sudan's Darfur as new civil war fears rise. Aljazeera news. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/27/shifting-alliances-in-sudansdarfur-as-new-civil-war-fears-rise>.
- Noisette, C. (2025). London Conference on Sudan: What prospects after uninspiring diplomatic outcomes? Interviews / Africa/s. IRIS. <https://www.iris-france.org/en/london-conference-on-sudan-what-prospects-after-uninspiring-diplomatic-outcomes/>

- Nyamilepedia, 2021. UAE withdraws from Sudan, Ethiopia border row mediation. Available: <https://www.nyamile.com/news/uae-withdraws-from-sudan-ethiopia-border-row-mediation/>
- Reuters. (2019). African summit gives Sudan military three months for reforms. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/african-summit-gives-sudan-military-three-months-for-reforms-idUSKCN1RZ16L/>
- Salah, A. (2023). Sudan's neighboring countries to form ministerial mechanism to address crisis: Summit's final statement. Ahram Online. Available at: <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/504709.aspx>
- Savage, R. (2024). Sudan's civil war: How did it begin, what is the human cost, and what is happening now? The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/globaldevelopment/2024/mar/22/what-caused-the-civil-war-in-sudan-and-how-has-it-become-one-of-the-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crises>
- Sudan Tribune. 2015. UAE corporation to invest \$10 billion in agricultural land in Sudan. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article53806/>
- Sudan Tribune. (2024). Revolutionary Front RSF discusses ways to form rival governments. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article294710/>
- Sudan Tribune. (2025a). Sudan's RSF, allies sign charter for parallel government. <https://sudantribune.com/article/297786>
- Sudan Tribune. (2025b). Sudanese civilian blocs split over joining AU-led political talks. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/article/305183>
- Sudan war monitor. 2025. Debate over parallel government divides Taqaddum. Available at: <https://sudanwarmonitor.com/p/debate-over-exiled-government-divides>
- Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker (STPT), Ayin, & Sudan Human Rights Hub. (2023). The Sudan Conflict Monitor #5. Available at: https://sudantransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/SCM_5.pdf
- The New Arab. 2024. Sudan 'cancels \$6 billion Abu Amama port agreement with UAE. Available at: <https://www.newarab.com/news/sudan-cancels-6-billion-abu-amama-port-agreement-uae>

Theses and Dissertations

- Faal, M. (2001). *The OAU and conflict management in Africa: The post–Cold War era* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southampton).
- Gody, A. H. 2012. The Challenges of the United Nations in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Darfur. In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in International Relations Eastern Mediterranean University
- Hulse, M. (2016). United we stand, divided we fall: Actorness and effectiveness of ECOWAS and SADC in interregional negotiations for economic partnership agreements (Doctoral dissertation,

Radboud University).
<https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/158942>

Marina, P. D. F. (2023). Analysis of the Darfur Genocide through a critical and political perspective after 20 years of conflict. MA thesis, University of Galway, Ireland

Nora, A. 2021. United Nations and African Union Peace Operations: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba.

Okorie, U. K. (2024). Role of United Nations and African Union in conflict resolution in Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan (Master's thesis, Vytautas Magnus University, Diplomacy and International Relations study program, Political Science field).

Solf, A. (2014) Managing intra-state conflicts in Africa: the African Union as an effective security actor. PhD thesis.

Start, J. M. (2016). *Humanitarian intervention in Libya and Darfur: The future of Responsibility to Protect*. MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan.

Wendy, N. O. (2016). The effectiveness of conflict resolution methods by the African Union: A case study of Burundi's conflict resolution process (Master's thesis).

Primary Sources: Interviews

Interview with Haile Molla. (2025, June). Desk Officer for Sudan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa.

Interview with Ambassador Yibeltal Aemiro (2025, November). The Ambassador of Ethiopia to Sudan till 2024. Addis Ababa.

Interview Mr. Husni Mustafa, Political Affairs senior expert at the Embassy of Sudan in Ethiopia, (2025, October). Addis Ababa.

Interview with Dr. Salvator, Head of the East Africa Regional Desk at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the AU (2025, October). Addis Ababa.

Interview with Mr. Babatunde Taiwo (Expert at Conflict management Directorate with in the AU) (2025, October). Addis Ababa.

Interview with Mr. Wurie Bah, Political Affairs Officer with in the East African Desk at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the AU. (2025, October). Addis Ababa.

Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Guiding Questions

Title: African Conflicts and the African Union Response: The Case of Sudan Since 2019

Dear Key Informant:

My name is Hailu Alebachew. Currently, I am working on my MA thesis under the title: “African Conflicts and the African Union Response: The Case of Sudan Since 2019” in partial fulfillment of MA Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Addis Ababa University. At

the outset, I would like to extend my appreciation for your time and willingness to take part in this interview.

I hereby declare that the information obtained from this interview will be solely used for academic purposes. Your response will be kept confidential and if it is your wish, you will be cited as anonymous or in a pen name in the thesis. The quality of the study depends up on your genuine response. So, I would appreciate your comments on all issues freely and without any reservations.

As we progress in the interview, I shall be taking notes or record the interview through my cellphone. If there are issues on which you feel uncomfortable to comment, kindly feel free to indicate so and we shall make corrections accordingly. Thank you in advance of your kindly cooperation!!

Part one: on the Nature of conflict in Africa and in the Sudan

- Explain the major political events that transpired in Sudan following the 2019 revolution and how they have shaped the current conflict?
- What sparked/caused the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023? How has the political landscape in Sudan changed since then? What does the dynamics look like now?
- Explain the actors both domestic and external involved in the conflict and their interests/motivations?
- How do you compare the conflict in the Sudan with other Conflicts in Africa such as the DRC?

Part Two: on the African Union's Role and Response

- How do you explain the mediation efforts done by IGAD, AU and the international community since the outbreak of the conflict in 2023?
- What challenges has the AU faced in mediating or intervening in the Sudanese conflict?
- How has the AU coordinated with other international and regional actors (such as the UN, IGAD, EU, and neighboring countries) in Sudan?
- What have been the most significant outcomes of the AU's involvement in Sudan since 2019?
- What recommendations would you make for improving the AU's effectiveness in conflict resolution and peace building in Sudan and other similar contexts?

Appendix II: The List of Informant and interview dates

List of Informants	Names and Positions	Date of Interview	Platform	Remarks
Informant 1	Mr. Haile Molla (Desk Officer for Sudan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia	15 June 2025	In person, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
Informant 2	Mr. Husni, Mustafa (Political Affairs senior expert at the Embassy of Sudan in Ethiopia)	1 October 2025	In person at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa	
Informant 3	Dr. Salvator, Head of the East Africa Regional Desk at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the AU	22 September 2025	Via zoom	
Taiwo	Mr. Babatunde Taiwo (Expert at Conflict management Directorate with in the AU)	23 September 2025	Via zoom	
Wurie	Mr. Wurie Bah (Political Affairs Officer with in the East African Desk at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the AU)	24 September 2025	Via Zoom	
Informant 6	Ambassador Yibeltal Aemiro, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Sudan until 2024	15 November 2025	In person, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia	