

Timeline Sudan

(P) Political event

(S) Economy, Social development

(I) State & Institutions

(U) Uprising

Books to start with:

For a recent assessment of the Sudanese Revolution see Willow Berridge, Justin Lynch, Raga Makawi and Alex de Waal (2022): *Sudan's Unfinished Revolution. The Promise and Betrayal of a Peoples Revolution*, London (Hurst: African Arguments).

For a good overview in DE see: Thomas Schmidinger (2020): *Sudan*, Wien (bahoe books).

1821 The Egyptian Pasha incorporates Sudan into his empire. Khartoum is founded at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile. Initially a military outpost and garrison town, Khartoum soon becomes a trading centre, mediating the entire trade in ivory, gum arabic, tamarind, ostrich feathers and slaves from Central Africa to the Red Sea.

1884 Mahdi uprising: a jihadist leader raises an army in the north, Darfur and Kordofan and inflicts heavy defeats on British troops. Capture of Khartoum in 1885.

1889 Battle of Omdurman: the British kill or wound 25,000 Mahadists due to superior weaponry. Sudan becomes a de facto British colony. The centrepiece of colonialism was the Gezira Scheme.

(I) The Gezira Scheme itself has operated continuously for over 70 years without substantial modification. Moreover, this single development project has had a dominant role in setting the course of subsequent development initiatives in Sudan and in shaping the Sudanese economy as a whole. The legacy of the Gezira Scheme is not only the profound economic transformations it entailed, but also the vision of modernity that it represented. In the most literal sense, the Gezira Scheme was a model of development for the Sudanese.¹

On the other side of the development was the periphery: in particular the southern provinces, Darfur, Southern Kurdistan and parts of Blue Nile: "closed areas" with renewed traditional forms of rule as a reserve of labour.²

1947 First strike by railway workers in Atbara

1 Victoria Bernal (1997): *Colonial Moral Economy and the Discipline of Development: The Gezira Scheme and "Modern" Sudan*: <https://sites.socsci.uci.edu/~vbernal/bio/Bernal-CA2.pdf>

2 Berridge et al (2022), p.16

(S) The labour movement in Atbara, as well as workers, students and intellectuals in Khartoum, are the backbone of the independence movement, which is limited to the north. The railway workers organized in a union and were a stronghold of the CP.³

1956 Republic Sudan.

1958 Military coup, war in South Sudan. Protests at the universities, split of students into a secular left and an Islamist current.

1964 "October Revolution": a broad front of civil society, professional organisations and parties forces the putschists to retreat.⁴

1964 - 69 Several unstable civilian governments

(I) State power and structures have merely existed in the Triangular City and the surrounding regions within one day's drive. In the periphery of the country, political representation was and still is based on local and ethnic power structures.

1969 Military coup by Colonel Nimeiri, orientated towards Nasser.

1971 Short-lived communist coup, persecution of the CP.

1972 Nimeiri's agreement with the SPLA, autonomous government in Southern Sudan

1981 Nimeiri turns to Islamist politics and violates the Addis Ababa Agreement.

(S) During the 1960s and 1970s, the government in Khartoum pushed programs for the large-scale mechanization of agriculture: In 1971, the land administration is placed under state supervision. Large trenches of agricultural land were given to political associates, army officers and private entrepreneurs, and the small farmers and pastoralists were driven out. Many of them went into the towns and cities, just as millions from South Sudan did during the long war there. Particularly hard hit by this kind of "state land grab" were the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile region, whose inhabitants sided with the South Sudanese liberation movement SPLM/SPLA during the civil war for precisely this reason. In the Nuba Mountains, the war has since flared up again-with apparently devastating consequences for the civilian population. Darfur is an extra chapter.

1983 – 2005 Sharia imposed in the whole of Sudan. War in South Sudan

(S) In the **1970s and 1980s**, Khartoum was the destination of hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking protection from the conflicts in Chad, Ethiopia and Uganda. They settled in large slums on the outskirts of the city. Since **1983**, many displaced persons from Sudan itself have also arrived as a result of the new secessionist war in South Sudan and the Darfur conflict.

1984 Famine in Kordofan and Darfur. Execution of the reformist Islamist Taha. Unrest at the universities, assembly of professional organisations

3 Schmidinger S. 47

4 Adam Branch, Zachariah Mampilly (2015): Africa Uprising. Popular Protest and Political Change, London: p.178 f.

1985 Intifada: Widespread protests after bread and fuel prices are raised under pressure from the IMF. Withdrawal of Nimeiri.

(U) The protests began with a procession of students from the Islamic University. The next day, a large demonstration also took place from Khartoum University, with an increasing number of poor people joining in (*shammasha*). Coordination of the opposition (NANS), based on the professional organisations. General strike and demonstrations in all major cities.⁵

1985 - 89 In the 1985 elections, traditional Islamist parties achieve a high electoral victory. Several civilian governments. Sharia law remains in force, including the appointment of a great-grandson of the Mahdi as prime minister.⁶

1989 Military coup under Al-Bashir, who will rule for 30 years.

(S)The 1990s were the years of "Islamic neoliberalism", which led to the enrichment of Islamist clientele and was favoured by the IMF.⁷

2003 - ongoing Darfur: SAL and JEM declare their existence and attack the airbase of Al Fasher and attack the army bases in Kutum, Mellit and Tina. The regime plays the ethnic card and mobilises the Janjaweed. Wave of massacres until 2004. The armament of Arab nomadic (Baggara) tribes against Black peasants had already begun in 1986 under al-Mahdi.⁸

2005 Peace agreement with South Sudan, which leads to the independence of South Sudan in **2011**.

(I) Military: Speaking about the state in Sudan means speaking about the military in the first place. The Sudanese military (SAF) has never won a victory, but it has been a dominant force in the ruling of the country since its independence, and also has a dominant role in the country's economy, reportedly controlling more than 200 commercial companies, including businesses involved in gold mining, rubber production, agriculture, and meat exports.⁹

The military is closely interconnected with the political class and its crony capitalism. This class has always been small, originating from few rich families of the central Nile valley, with its roots in the colonial *effendiya*¹⁰ class. Many of them live in one and the same quarter of the Triangular City. Some have degrees from European or American universities. They follow different threads of Islamism or modes of modernization, on a "political marketplace"¹¹ with a decades-long rivalry

5 Branch & Mapilli, p. 282 ff.

6 Zu den islamischen Eliten zusammenfassend Schmidinger, S.66

7 Schmidinger S.68

8 Darfur and South Sudan, but also other "peripheral areas", are underexposed in this timeline. On Darfur see Julie Flint, Alex de Waal (2008): Darfur, A New History of a Long War, London (Z-Books)

9 For this issue, CIA is a good source, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sudan/>. The Sudanese Resistance Committees have edited a Revolutionary Charter which contains a good summary analysis of post-colonial statehood in Sudan.

10 Men educated by the colonial government for working in the colonial administration, since 1902. Cf. Berridge et al (2022)

11 Alex de Waal (2019): Sudan: A Political Marketplace Framework Analysis. World Peace Foundation occasional paper, <https://csf-sudan.org/library/sudan-a-political-marketplace-framework-analysis/>

between various families and political parties, and an oscillation between political standpoints and family affiliation.

In the years 2011-2018, between 60 and 80% of the state budget was spent on the military.

1999 - 2011 Oil boom

(S) The state creates more than 1 million jobs in administration, education and the army. Boom in the education system and universities. Development of infrastructure in the Khartoum region, dam construction (Merowe Dam 2006). In 2011, the independence of South Sudan leads to the extensive loss of oil revenues. University graduates can no longer find jobs, state subsidies are cancelled.

1972 – 2018 The Political Marketplace

The Marketisation of Sudanese Politics, 1970s–2018

<i>Period</i>	<i>Economic characteristics</i>	<i>Political finance</i>	<i>Economic beneficiaries</i>	<i>Political beneficiaries</i>
1972–77	Debt-led boom	State borrowing	Crony capitalists	Modern forces
1978–83	Crisis	Privatisation, Islamic banks	Informal sector, finance	Islamists
1983–99	Severe crisis	Islamic banks, pillage	Informal sector, security sector	Islamists and paramilitaries
2000–11	Oil-led boom	Oil and associated contracting	Security actors and crony capitalists	State, army and ruling party
2012–18	Crisis	Gold, state mercenarism	Paramilitaries, smugglers	Paramilitaries, Arab states, and their clients

(Table see Berridge et al. (2022))

(S) Bread Price and Uprisings: „As long as the government provided cheap bread to urban consumers it would withstand political shockwaves across the rest of the country“.¹² Early during the Nimeiri Regime, in 1969, they “began to fix prices to manage the restive urban constituencies”, until the slashing of the subsidies, under the pressure of the IMF, lead to the Intifada of 1985. Years of Islamist control followed after a short time of civil government. The regime appeased the urban poor with religion and some Islamist charity. The years of the oil boom, after 1999, allowed for

12 Berridge et al. (2022), 125

creating formal jobs and subsidies, especially regarding bread and fuel. In 2012, with the secession of South Sudan, the easy money was gone. The austerity measures following triggered the 2013 protests, which were answered with harsh repression. In their first appearance in Khartoum, RSF shot dead 200 protesters. The Al Bashir regime tried to keep up subsidies as long as possible, but had to cut them in September 2018.

The budget deficits and social cuts of 2012, and again 2018, did not only cause slashes of subsidies, but also cuts in the formal pay rolls. In the cities, the uprisings started with protests of the railway workers, with their old communist tradition, and the protests of the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), with many teachers, clerks, nurses, and other employees of the state sector in their rank and file. The main difference between the uprisings of 2013 and 2019, however, are the neighbourhood committees. After 2013, the Communist Party has withdrawn from the “political marketplace”, and the members helped building these neighbourhood committees not only in the Triangular City, but all over the country, inclusively in the refugee camps.

2010 In the context of preparations for election, *Girifna* (We are fed up) is formed as an urban, student grassroots organisation.¹³

2011 - 12 demonstrations by *Girifna* and other student organisations in Khartoum and Omdurman, coinciding with the protests in Tunisia and Egypt.

(U) Despite various attempts to establish links with the *shammasha*, the student protests were easily suppressed by the regime. Despite the severe economic crisis, individual attempts remained unsuccessful in 2012, such as the protest against the rising costs of living of 4 women at the University of Khartoum and protests in other cities. Revolutionary Fridays were proclaimed and supported by bloggers. The hashtag #SudanRevolts spread beyond the borders of Sudan. But there were no links to the poor population in the cities or to the rural population and the periphery.

2013 A year later, on 19 September, there are protests in Nyala / S-Darfur; 3 days later, the *shammasha* take to the streets in Wad Madani. The unrest quickly spreads to Khartoum and Omdurman and other cities. Dozens are killed.¹⁴ In addition to inflation, the regime had also proved incapable of responding to the severe storms and floods throughout the country. Police stations and petrol stations are burned down. First appearance of the RSF: The *Janjaweed* enter Khartoum and Omdurman and kill numerous protesters.

(U) The regime had arrested student activists as a precaution, but achieved nothing: the activists themselves were surprised by the uprising. The (hidden) links between the student revolts and the eruption of September 2013 are fascinating to be explored (memes, images, social media, mediators, ...)

(I) In 2013, the RSF emerged out of the horse-rider troops *Janjaweed* which were responsible for the [Darfur Genocide in the years since 2003](#). Janjaweed originate from Arab tribes; many are from outside Sudan, mostly originating from Chad, Niger, and Mali. A 2019 video showed one of the

13 On this and the following Branch & Mapilli, p. 190 ff,

14 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/09/27/sudan-dozens-killed-during-protests>

perpetrators of the Kartoum massacre explaining that he originally came from Chad, went to fight the war in Yemen, and now was at Khartoum to “liberate” the capital.

Apart from the official state funding, RSF makes [money from gold-mining](#), and from the expulsion of non-arabic populations.

*They also obtained money in the Darfur War: for example, in the attacks on Tawila, Korma, and Kutum, they stole money and goods as well as the livestock and harvests of the wealthier inhabitants. They attacked places for economic aims as well as to carry out ethnic cleansing: certain Fur populations with land and livestock were easy and profitable targets. The Janjawids laid claim to land and houses, settling and occupying the zones they emptied.*¹⁵

A further source of income for RSF was the selling of military services, [sending militia and selling child-soldiers](#) to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

The EU has supported the RSF in its border guard function with well over €100 million.¹⁶

(S) After the 2013 uprising, networks are being established in the opposition, especially in the form of the neighbourhood associations (SPA). The CP calls for anchoring in the neighbourhoods. A series of further protests followed in the years between 2013 and 2016.

2014 The European Union Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, better known as the [Khartoum Process](#), was launched at a Ministerial Conference in Rome.

(I) The Khartoum Process is built on the idea that the burden of preventing and managing migration should be on the region of origin. The Khartoum Process supports this control of migration by African states, rather than reform of the state actors whose behavior contributes to migration. To this end, in 2015 the European Union created a 2 Billion Euro fund to address multiple aspects of migration across the [Mediterranean](#): The “*European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa*” ([EUTF for Africa](#)).¹⁷

December 19, 2018 An uprising against inflation in Atbara spreads by leaps and bounds to numerous cities. Mass protests against the Bashir regime in the following months.

(S) The revolution started from the margins, with demands for security, bread and water. As the movement moved into the cities, these demands were transformed into slogans for freedom and independence.¹⁸ After internet shutdowns, coordination through the SPA and the coordination of neighbourhood committees became increasingly important.¹⁹ Organising in neighbourhood

15 Find more info on Janjaweed here: <https://de.crimethinc.com/2019/06/14/sudan-behind-the-massacre-in-khartoum-the-perpetrators-and-the-backstory> (translated from <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/sudfa/blog/100619/les-janjawids-au-pouvoir>);

16 Reta Barfus (2023): How the European Union Finances Oppression, <https://migration-control.info/en/blog/how-the-european-union-finances-oppression/>

17 Suliman Baldo (2017), Border Controls from Hell: How the EU’s migration partnership legitimizes Sudan’s “militia state”, <https://enoughproject.org/reports/border-control-hell-how-eus-migration-partnership-legitimizes-sudans-militia-state>, p. 3,4; Caitleen Chandler (2018): Inside the EU’s flawed \$200 million migration deal with Sudan, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/special-report/2018/01/30/inside-eu-s-flawed-200-million-migration-deal-sudan>

18 <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2HU4NRG0aVDWo8mFPXtZ7B?si=7FpbWDd5SSqFtke5ZvUcyA>

19 Shirin Kamangar (2022): Crisis and Revolt in Iran Today, <https://partisanmag.com/crisis-and-revolt-in-iran-today/>

committees seems to be suitable for civil, female and reproductive forms of resistance against military capital and male domination. These neighbourhood committees are making a difference. They are a Sudanese invention and have formed not only in the Triangle City and its village-like suburbs, but in many places across the country.²⁰ There are said to be 7300 neighbourhood committees across Sudan, and about 100 coordinating committees, one in each city, seven in the Triangle City and one in the refugee camps.

April 06 – June 03, 2019 Sit-in front of the military headquarters

(I) After Bashir was deposed, a Transitional Military Council (TMC) was established, headed by rivals Burhan and Hemeti, and the opposition formed the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), in which the traditional parties were also represented.²¹ The TMC and FFC agreed on the formation of a transitional council at the end of April 2019. Meanwhile, the presence of the RSF in the Triangular City were steadily increasing.

June 03, 2019 Clearance of the protest site by the RSF. Fatal shootings and rapes.

(I) The SPA calls for a boycott of the TMC after the eviction. Numerous demonstrations and a general strike from 9-11. June force the TMC to resume negotiations with the FFC.

August 20, 2019 Sovereignty Council, made up of equal numbers of military and civilians. Hamdok government. Negotiations with the guerrillas from September 2019.

The RSF continues to establish itself in Darfur and terrorises the black population. Representations in El Geneina. Disputes over budget and fuel subsidies. *Political business as usual*.²²

October 25, 2021 Military coup, arrest of Hamdok.

Protests by supporters of the FFC with counter-demonstrations by Islamist supporters of the military.²³ Hamdok is reinstated a month later after signing an agreement with Burhan that deligitimises him among the FFC, but above all among the grassroots. Mass protests in Khartoum in December, tear gas.²⁴

January 2022 The "Year of Resistance" is proclaimed, Hamdok resigns.²⁵ Continued attacks in Darfur. Wave of protests in June.²⁶

20 Azza Mustafa and Sara Abbas (2020): Learning from Uprisings: Sudan's December Revolution, in: Saab (2020): A Region in Revolt, Mapping the Recent Uprisings in North Africa and West Africa, Ottawa and Amsterdam. Also see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudanese_resistance_committees,

21 Composition of the FFC see Schmidinger (2020), p. 148

22 Berridge et al. (2022), S.107 ff

23 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudan-dozens-injured-rival-camps-take-streets-protests>

24 <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/sudan-sicherheitskraefte-setzen-traenengas-gegen-tausende-demonstranten-ein-a-a5bb35b9-5d74-4474-a22c-88bd91026d8a>; <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/12/14/guardians-of-the-revolution-street-activists-defying-Sudan-coup>

25 <https://taz.de/Premier-tritt-ab-nach-neuen-Protesten!/5823261/>

26 See e.g. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/1/thousands-rally-in-sudan-day-after-9-killed-during-protests>

December 2022 Military and FFC sign a controversial framework agreement on the transfer of power. The RCs call for protests.²⁷ The RSF consolidates its positions in Darfur.

January 2023 [Revolutionary charter of the RCs.](#)

April 15, 2023 Start of the war between the RSF and the army.²⁸

Refugee crisis and security concerns of the West.²⁹ Initially, the resistance structures are still strong.³⁰ In July, the RSF attacks in Darfur increase.³¹

May 2023: [In Sudan, the Revolution Is Caught in the Crossfire](#)

June 06, 2023 Massacre in Geneina.³²

Omdurman becomes the centre of the war.³³ In August, the war spreads to Khartoum, the situation of the people in Darfur becomes hopeless.³⁴

October 2023 The war spreads to Gezira.³⁵ The RSF take Nyala, which is considered a breakthrough for the RSF.³⁶

18 December 2023 Capture of Wad Mandani by the RSF.³⁷ Hundreds of thousands flee again.

27 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/5/protests-as-sudan-military-parties-sign-initial-transition-deal>

28 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/04/15/world/africa/sudan-maps-videos.html>,
<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/video/2023/04/19/sudan-unrest-view-darfur>

29 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/02/sudan-conflict-europe-security-implications-protracted>,
https://migration-control.info/documents/118/2023-05-MONTHLY_REVIEW.pdf

30 <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/50527/sudans-revolutionary-path-against-war>

31 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/24/after-one-hundred-days-of-sudan-war-rsf-atrocities-pile-up-in-darfur>,

32 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Geneina; <https://migration-control.info/de/blog/i-was-a-witness-to-your-death-oh-geneina/>

33 <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/11/world/africa/sudan-war.html>,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/24/100-days-of-fighting-in-sudan-and-no-peace-in-sight-what-to-know>

34 https://migration-control.info/documents/125/2023-08-MONTHLY_REVIEW.pdf

35 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/20/thousands-of-refugees-in-danger-as-sudan-fighting-spreads-from-khartoum>

36 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/26/sudan-opposition-forces-rsf-say-they-have-seized-second-largest-city-nyala>

37 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/18/rsf-paramilitary-seizes-control-of-wad-madani-sudans-second-city>