PAYING FOR PEACE:

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE JUBA PEACE AGREEMENT

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MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

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THE PROJECT

The Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) project, which began in 2022, is a collaboration between the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), Confluence Advisory (CA) – the research partners – and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), which has funded and supported the project.

The project sought to conduct research that would do three things: 1) map out the key actors in the JPA; 2) explain the political economy of the agreement; and 3) set out a series of policy recommendations, and lessons learnt, for international actors involved in the process.

The project started in the aftermath of the October 2021 coup and its conclusion takes place whilst Sudan experiences a devastating national conflict with fighting widespread from Darfur to Khartoum. Amidst the current war, it is all too easy to forget the national peace agreement that preceded it. While the JPA was undeniably flawed, there is much that can be learnt from how the agreement was reached, what it sought to achieve and the mechanisms that were designed, although largely never activated, as part of it.

THE AUTHOR

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THE PARTNERS

The Rift Valley Institute works in Eastern and Central Africa to bring local knowledge to bear on social, political and economic development.

Confluence Advisory is a policy 'think-and-do' tank based in Khartoum.

The United States Institute of Peace is a national, nonpartisan, independent institute, founded by Congress and dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible, practical and essential for U.S. and global security. In conflict zones abroad, the Institute works with local partners to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict. To reduce future crises and the need for costly interventions, USIP works with governments and civil societies to build local capacities to manage conflict peacefully. The Institute pursues its mission by linking research, policy, training, analysis and direct action to support those who are working to build a more peaceful, inclusive world: https://www.usip.org/about

Thanks also to the team of research assistants who contributed vital material and insights to the project.

EDITING

This report was edited by Kate McGuinness and Magnus Taylor.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
FFC	Forces of Freedom and Change
JPA	Juba Peace Agreement
NCRFSA	National Commission of Resources and Financial Revenue Sharing and Allocation
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North
SRF	Sudan Revolutionary Front

SUMMARY

Sudan's economy is based on resources that have been exploited via violence rather than through peaceful, sustainable means. As a result, those who have benefited are those who control the means of violence. Furthermore, the inequalities in wealth, power and human development between Sudan's moneyed center and its diverse and impoverished peripheries are profound. The Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), signed in October 2020 in a sweeping bid to end Sudan's multiple violent conflicts, failed to address these inequalities—and thus the root of those conflicts—because it did little to change Sudan's economic power dynamics.

One of the preambles of the JPA lays out the 'underlying root causes, including in particular the issues of citizenship without discrimination, land ownership and use, economic and political divisions between the center and periphery of Sudan, and systematic social, economic, political, and cultural marginalization of certain groups and areas of Sudan'. The country's system of wealth production and distribution pits the interests of poor farmers and herders from the country's peripheries against those of the commercial-military leaderships which control the state and the market. This system is, furthermore, framed by violence. Much of the country's exportable wealth is produced by rural farmers, herders and miners who are constantly being displaced or pushed towards arduous labor migration to survive.

The JPA's remedies—increasing the share of national wealth that goes to the peripheries and increasing the representation of peripheral leaders in state posts—are familiar elements of Sudan's twenty-first century peace agreements. Yet they have consistently failed to resolve the country's long-running crisis.

Part of the problem lies with the power-sharing formula. For the past two decades, the representatives of the periphery who rise to cabinet rank are usually militia leaders. They have spent most of their lives at the top of militarized structures that can finance themselves, rather than building democratic, accountable structures that can fairly represent the interests of the peripheries.

A second reason a string of peace accords has failed in Sudan has been the wealth-sharing formula. Even during Sudan's oil boom from 2000 to 2011, when the center could afford to share more wealth with the peripheries, the local leaders receiving the proceeds spent the money on patronage to buy the loyalties of followers who could provide military services, rather than trying to serve wider populations by improving basic services. Nor were the funds used to address the deadly legacies of decades of conflict and climate change, or to improve production systems that were so poor as to lead to starvation among the rural poor and, inevitably, to migration.

Since 2011, a long macroeconomic crisis has made such transfers of centralized resources all but impossible, and foreign donors routinely fail to disburse promised financial assistance. To tackle this problem, the JPA was supposed to be financed primarily by local taxation and revenues from the exploitation of local natural resources. But revenue from Sudan's gold mines and other natural resources largely flow to militias and regular forces, and the central government is not powerful enough to control them; weak sub-national governments would have an even more difficult time exerting authority. Additionally, natural resources are distributed unevenly across the country: the richest states have the most gold mines. The JPA essentially favoured resource-rich areas. The result was a drive soon after the agreement was signed by local communities to claim natural resources based on which groups are ethnically indigenous, provoking competition that quickly increased local violence in places like Darfur, Blue Nile and Eastern Sudan. A case study of Eastern Sudan, for example, delineates how the mere spectre

of JPA-outlined authority for state and regional administrations to attract outside investment quickly aggravated longstanding social conflicts over origin and identity. Implementation of the JPA was suspended there as a result in December 2021.

The JPA's multi-track approach was a key culprit: Rebels from each track drafted an agreement that drew heavily on the precedents of the peace agreements signed during Sudan's oil boom. Like earlier peace agreements, the negotiators from each track sought to end the conflict in their own region based on power-sharing, wealth-sharing, security arrangements and transitional justice. The resulting patchwork of protocols falls far short of a unified manifesto for change. The JPA tried to address some of these issues with committees and commissions for discussion and policy-setting, but most of those were still unfunded and non-existent two years later. A National Commission of Resources and Financial Revenue Sharing and Allocation, for example, was to ensure revenues were allocated transparently and fairly and aimed at redressing historical grievances. Despite the appearance of such bodies in a succession of peace agreements, however, they have never actually existed in any substantial sense.

Sudan needs a more peaceful way of producing wealth, and its people need access to basic services that can improve their resilience to shocks of violence, climate change, and oppression. This would require democratic processes that ensure Sudan's military and militia leaders engage with civil society structures such as the Resistance Committees that organized the remarkable revolution that ended, through democratic means, the three-decade reign of Omar al-Bashir. Together, with civilians truly in the lead—unlike the process that led to the JPA (see accompany paper 'Key Actors in The Juba Peace Agreement for Sudan: Roles, Impacts, and Lessons')—they could redesign the fundamentals of the Sudanese economy and systems of governance. Details of how such a process could work would require further study. In Blue Nile state, for example, resources are needed to address land conflicts in a democratic and consensual way, and to provide basic services such as health, education and water. Such investments might mitigate competition over resources, which has been greatly aggravated by war, climate change and an ever-increasing reliance on markets to meet food needs.

In the meantime, however, the October 2021 coup not only reversed the limited gains of the macroeconomic measures introduced by the post-revolution transitional government, but intensified the losses by allowing the security forces to maintain control over their patronage systems. At the same time, the leaders of the armed movements who controlled power in Sudan's regions turned their backs on any pretence at democratization, preferring instead to retain the limited access to patronage networks achieved through the JPA. As outlined in this report, however, Sudan's macroeconomic crisis limited the financial resources available for patronage, intensifying competition between the leaderships of these networks and once again aggravating the conditions for violence.

THE ORIGINS OF THE JUBA PEACE AGREEMENT

Sudan's 2019 revolution marked the end of Omar al-Bashir's three decades of rule over Sudan. Young urban workers, students and other protestors peacefully faced down Bashir's security forces—the army, the intelligence services and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia—prompting those very forces to go on to depose Bashir in April that year. The urban protestors were backed by a broad front of urban-based trade unions, civil activists, technocrats with comfortable careers in international bureaucracies, old political parties, and business leaders, all grouped around the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC)—an opposition coalition formed at the start of the revolution. Many Resistance Committees, made up of young protestors who had braved the snipers, rejected any compromise with the security forces. In August 2019, however, the FFC signed a Constitutional Declaration with the security forces and formed a transitional government with them. The cabinet was led by Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok, and all but two ministries (defence and interior) were led by people described as 'technocrats', appointed for their expertise rather than the political weight of their constituencies.

For decades, more than a dozen rebel armed movements had fought to depose Bashir from the rural hinterlands of Darfur, Eastern Sudan, and the 'Two Areas' of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. When the revolution came, however, they were left on the sidelines. Many had little military force to project—by 2019, much of rural Sudan was administered by government-aligned counter-insurgency militias and the momentum behind rural insurgency had stalled. Others no longer believed that peaceful protests and civil politics could change things—in Sudan, rural and urban radicalism are often at odds, with the Sudanese system setting the interests of rural and urban populations against each other.

One of the priorities of the transitional government was to end the wars in the peripheries. In October 2019, the government began peace talks with the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), which brought together many of the established armed rebel movements from the rural crisis zones. Rebel groups from Darfur and the Two Areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile had set up the SRF in 2011 in the aftermath of South Sudan's secession, with rebels from an inactive insurgency in Eastern Sudan joining them in 2013. Small opposition groups from Northern and Central Sudan—which had never participated in armed insurgency—joined the SRF in 2019, along with hitherto unknown factions in Darfur. In all, 13 movements participated in the peace talks.

The talks between the SRF and the government culminated in the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), which was signed in October 2020. The JPA aimed to address Sudan's various interlinked insurgencies and rural crises in a single process, dividing them up into five regional tracks: 1) Darfur; 2) the Two Areas; 3) Eastern; 4) Central; and 5) Northern. Taken together, these tracks cover 16 of Sudan's 18 states. The two states not covered are the capital, Khartoum, and the adjacent state of North Kordofan.

The five-track approach yielded a cumbersome document, full of overlaps, repetitions and inconsistencies. Rebels from each track drafted an agreement which drew heavily on the precedents of the peace agreements signed during Sudan's oil boom. Like earlier peace agreements, the negotiators from each track sought to end the conflict in their own region based on power-sharing, wealth-sharing, security arrangements and transitional justice—however, details varied considerably in the six texts that made up the final agreement signed in October 2020 (see Box 1).

Each of the regional agreements was drafted by regional rebel group coalitions of varying sizes, with the texts produced differing vastly in length—from 4 to 105 pages. The resulting patchwork of protocols falls far short of a unified manifesto for change. As Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) chairman, Malik Agar, who signed the JPA at the end of a long insurgency whose origins lie in the 1980s, observed, it is 'sewn together very badly'.[1]

Box 1. The Juba Peace Agreement

The National Issues Agreement

- Incorporates former rebels into government and legislature; establishes national constitutional and federal governance conferences.
- Establishes Peace Commission, National Revenue Fund and other commissions to monitor regional allocations of federal resources.
- Establishes national commissions for pastoralists, nomads and farmers; housing and services for migrant worker camp communities; environment; and transitional justice.

The Darfur Agreement

- Establishes Darfur region, made up of Darfur's five states, irrespective of the outcome of the federal governance conference—with a share of posts going to former rebels.
- Allocates 40 per cent of revenues from local natural resources to the regional government for a ten-year period, and defines other revenue sources.
- Establishes a Darfur Peace Support Fund worth USD 750 million per year for ten years.
- Establishes mechanisms for transitional justice, compensation and reparations, the return of internally displaced persons, and issues relating to pastoralism and land.
- Sets conditions for a ceasefire and the integration of former rebels into regular forces.

The Two Areas Agreement

- Incorporates former rebels into new administrations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and sets out a path for West Kordofan to join those two states after the federal governance conference.
- Allocates 40 per cent of revenues from local taxation and natural resources extracted from the Two Areas to regional government for a ten-year period, and defines other revenue sources.
- Sets a framework for negotiating a Rehabilitation and Development Fund, and a mechanism for sharing revenue from hydropower electricity generated in Blue Nile.
- Commits to investment in basic services, environmental clean-up and transitional justice.
- Sets conditions for a ceasefire and the integration of former rebels into regular forces.

Eastern Track Agreement

- Establishes a conference on the future status of Eastern Sudan.
- Allocates 30 per cent of revenues from local natural resources to Eastern states/region for a seven-year period.
- Allocates USD 348 million to the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund.
- Commits to investment in health, language, culture, transport and tourism.
- Establishes mechanisms for transitional justice.

1 Interview with Malik Agar, Sovereignty Council member, Khartoum, September 2022.

Northern Track Agreement

- Allocates a share of revenues from hydroelectric power to state/regional governments and compensates people whose land was expropriated for dam construction.
- Allocates 30 per cent of revenues from local taxation and natural resources to the regional/state government for a ten-year period (additional protocol, December 2021).
- Commits to investment in infrastructure and basic services.
- Commits to investigating human rights abuses under the previous government.

Central Track Agreement

- Commits to rehabilitating the agricultural sector and the development of basic services.
- Allocates part of future reconstruction funds to agriculture.
- Allocates 30 per cent of revenues from local taxation and natural resources to the regional/state government for a ten-year period (additional protocol, December 2021).

The August 2019 Constitutional Declaration aimed to restore the principle of civilian politics through a temporary alliance with military leaders, and a schedule for elections and constitutional change that would end the military's dominance of politics. While the Constitutional Declaration focused on the root causes of dictatorship, the JPA focused on the root causes of war—the inequalities in wealth, power and human development between Sudan's moneyed centre and its diverse and impoverished peripheries.[2] One of its many preambles sets out the problem of spatial inequality in language that draws on decades of rebel history:

> Convinced that Sudan's internal conflicts are fundamentally political in nature and thus can only be resolved by addressing their underlying root causes, including in particular the issues of citizenship without discrimination, land ownership and use, economic and political divisions between the center and periphery of Sudan, and systematic social, economic, political, and cultural marginalization of certain groups and areas of Sudan.[3]

The JPA's remedies—increasing the share of national wealth for the peripheries, and increasing the representation of peripheral leaders in state posts—are familiar elements of Sudan's twenty-first century peace agreements. This report therefore sets out to explore the context for these remedies and why they have consistently failed to resolve the country's long-running crisis.

The rest of this report unfolds as follows. Section 1 details how one of the reasons the JPA has been singularly unsuccessful in addressing the spatial and social inequality shaping Sudan's crisis is its five-track approach. Section 2 delves into the long-term intractability of inequality in Sudan, and in particular how the deep-seated centre–periphery divide came about and persists to this day. Section 3 then turns to how twenty-first century peace agreements, and the JPA specifically, have attempted to address such inequalities, and why they have for the most part failed. Building on this, section 4 looks at the possibilities for increasing funding for peace through local taxation, natural resource revues and foreign credit and investment, using Blue Nile state and Eastern Sudan as case studies. Finally, the conclusion offers a brief summary of the key points raised by the report.

2 Constitutional Declaration, 2019, Chapter 15.

3 JPA, Chapter 2, Preamble.

FIVE-TRACK CRISIS

One of the reasons the JPA has been singularly unsuccessful in addressing the spatial and social inequality shaping Sudan's crisis is its five-track approach. The approach has been criticized because it obscures the role played in the national crisis by the centre of the state, which started a five-dimensional game of political chess in which the security forces were bound to win. This chess game began in October 2019, prior to the JPA negotiations, prompted by differences between the civilians of the FFC and the militia leaders of the SRF over inclusion of the respective coalitions' agreed priorities in the Constitutional Declaration. Some accuse the military of inventing the Northern and Central movements as a means of minimizing the influence of the Khartoum-centred FFC.[4]

This chess game was played out during one of Sudan's deepest financial crises. Sudan had run up huge debts in the 1970s, and the debt crisis led to decades of war and sanctions. The oil boom which began in 2000 greatly increased urban consumption, but oil revenues contracted sharply when South Sudan seceded in 2011. Sanctions undermined Bashir's ability to come to terms with Sudan's debtors, and he ran up huge budgetary and trade deficits to finance consumption.

Hamdok's first 'technocratic' government promised to deal with Sudan's debts and deficits. In order to do so, his government removed nearly all government subsidies on fuel and food and abandoned currency controls which were a key part of the subsidy regime (the 'wheat exchange rate' had been one of its most opaque elements). Bashir had tried to deal with these deficits by printing money and contracting unfavourable short-term loans from regional heavies—pushing annualized inflation up to 44 per cent on the eve of his ouster. The technocrats wanted to reduce deficits, work with international financial institutions to rebuild relationships with creditors, get debt relief, and eventually, allow future Sudanese governments to finance government operations through more conventional borrowing (in the topsy-turvy world of international finance, debt relief is rewarded with more debt). In December 2020, just before exchange controls were abandoned and subsidy removal was imposed, inflation was over 250 per cent, with policy-makers hoping it would come down to 100 per cent by 2022.

For technocrats and well-fed supporters, the macroeconomic reforms were a necessity in light of the out-of-control deficits. The revolutionary moment conferred legitimacy on the technocrats, who led negotiations with international financial institutions in 2020 on debt relief. The technocrats were also able to negotiate international support to cushion the public from the inflationary impact of subsidy removal and currency depreciation. Among these measures was a dramatic increase in wages for civil servants, which was an effective way of stimulating local economies. One former government adviser claimed it was probably more important than higher-profile economic decisions, including the Family Support Programme aimed at transferring the equivalent of USD 60 per person per annum to 80 per cent of the population.[5]

In February 2021, Hamdok formed a new government, which included the military, political parties, technocrats, and leaders of the armed movements that had signed the agreement. The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)—a

4 Interview with senior representative of FFC, September 2022, Khartoum; interview with political adviser from South Kordofan, September 2022, Khartoum; interview with representative of Resistance Committees, Khartoum, September 2022.

5 Interview with former government adviser, Khartoum, September 2022; figures for value of the Family Support Programme from World Bank, 'Leaving No-one Behind in Sudan', 7 July 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/07/07/leaving-no-one-behind-in-sudan.

former insurgent group linked to both the Zaghawa ethnic/language group in North Darfur and factions of the Islamist movement—nominated its chairperson, Jibril Ibrahim, as finance minister. He immediately removed subsidies on fuel and wheat and abandoned controls on Sudan's exchange rates, which were part of the subsidy regime. The value of the currency fell dramatically.

Within six months, trade and budget deficits shrank.[6] The exchange rate fell to one-eighth of its value at the time of the revolution, and one-hundredth of its value at the time of South Sudan's secession. Inflation rose to 423 per cent. Foreign donors committed 800 million US dollars (USD) to the Family Support Fund. But this money did not get through. The Central Bank reported that total loans and grants from all sources and for all purposes it received in 2021—the year when the programme began—was USD 498 million (in 2020, total loans and grants received amounted to USD 314 million.[7] A former official in the prime minister's office said that financial resources for the Family Support Programme were held by the World Bank and released in tranches. The government failed to set up the infrastructure to deliver the programme, which required a reform of civil registration systems. More than half the population was hungry at the end of 2021, with hunger rates rising steeply with inflation.[8] Starved of foreign currency, the government had little capacity to address the crisis.

Hunger even affected the Resistance Committees' capacity to maintain their pressure on the government. For the revolutionaries, Sudan's real subsidy problem was the public wealth appropriated by the military, either through control over the main export sectors, or control over government budgets—and the manipulation of complex subsidy regimes. They protested against military involvement in government; the government's entanglement with Saudi Arabia, Israel and other security-minded regional powers opposing democratic change; and the government's gamble on economic policies, which had predictably intensified hunger.

All the groupings in the government—the civilians, the military, the armed movements—were coalitions. During the long, hot hungry summer of 2021, it became clear that coalition of civilians had been weakened by the hunger crisis—its famished base was out of step with its leaders, who had imposed harsh macroeconomic measures on the country without ensuring the funds and infrastructure needed to mitigate them. It also became clear that the military and some of the armed movements shared interests and appetites. Both believed that their control of state finances would be buttressed if they rode out the financial-hunger crisis unencumbered by democratic accountability mechanisms. That led the military and some of the armed movements to depose the grouping in the October 2021 coup. The coup reversed any gains made by the macroeconomic measures and intensified the losses. Moreover, it allowed the security forces to maintain control over their network of banks and companies, which controls many productive sectors (including the main export sectors: gold, crops and livestock) and finances their patronage systems.

Why did the armed movements support the coup? On being appointed to the government in February 2021, the movements had taken control of ministries that controlled significant resources: finance, labour and social development (which controls Sudan's social insurance funds), and mining. They may have been inspired by the example of those in the security forces, who have had 30 years' experience using the techniques of war, austerity and privatization to seize control of the productive efforts and surpluses of millions of miners, farmers and

6 Edward Thomas and Alex de Waal, 'Hunger in Sudan's Political Marketplace', World Peace Foundation, 2022, 11.

7 Central Bank of Sudan, 'Economic and Financial Statistics Review' (series). Table 2, Quarter 4, 2020 and Quarter 4, 2021 reviews. Khartoum: Central Bank of Sudan Statistics Directorate, https://cbos.gov.sd/en/periodicals-publications?field_publication_type_tid_i18n=44.

8 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 'Sudan: Projection update for October–December 2020 period shows higher levels of acute food insecurity than forecast in June 2020', November 2020; and IPC, 'Sudan: High levels of acute food insecurity driven by currency devaluation, inflation and localized conflict', May 2021.

herders. This process of mass-immiseration set off myriad rebellions in the peripheral areas where profits are made but not kept. The JPA brought into government the leaders of those mutinies, who may have calculated that backing the coup was worth it to retain the temporary and partial access to the network of security companies and patronage funds they had achieved. Their authority was based on not-very-successful insurgencies, and their small constituencies were unlikely to give them electoral victories. The military, in turn, preferred to turn over partial, temporary control of mines and government budgets to the insurgents rather than come up with an alternative, democratic Sudan. The civilians, meanwhile, did not have a unified programme for what that democratic alternative might be.

Minni Minawi (the governor of Darfur) and Jibril Ibrahim were two former rebel leaders who supported the coup. Both hail from North Darfur, from an ethno-linguistic group called the Zaghawa which made up about 10 percent of Darfur's population in the 1970s—before climate change and conflict pushed many of them to migrate.[9] In the lean season before the 2020 harvest, estimated hunger rates in North Darfur were 32 per cent. In the 2022 lean season, hunger rates were 36 per cent.[10] In the 2021 lean season, the predominantly Zaghawa locations of Umm Baru and Kernoi had the worst hunger rates in the country.[11] Hunger rates reflect complex ecological, financial and social factors. But a key argument of Sudan's armed movements was that if peripheral peoples were better represented in central decision-making, their welfare would improve, and that the factors underlying hunger could be mitigated. The deepening hunger in the ethnic/geographic constituencies of the two most powerful Darfurian former rebel leaders suggests that welfare improvements promised by the JPA's power-sharing and wealth-sharing arrangements are unlikely to come about quickly.

Hunger data is important to bear in mind when assessing the political behaviour of rebel leaders. When the October coup took place, some of them invoked the histories of marginalization endured by their ethnic constituencies in order to support the ejection of urban technocrats from government. Rather than leading to tangible benefits for people in Darfur—where violence and displacement have increased—however, the JPA has allowed the emergence of patronage structures that benefit the political leaderships of armed movements.

Sudan's macroeconomic crisis has limited the financial resources available for patronage. This will almost certainly lead to increased competition between the leaderships of these patronage networks, with the leaders of former armed movements unlikely to come out on top. Trade and budget deficits are once again deepening, while the government is trying to finance these deficits through increased taxation (Sudanese tax rates are lower than regional averages, in part due to the extent of expropriation taking place through informal security–commercial networks). Such tax rises are, however, intensifying the pressure on purchasing power. In October 2022, merchants went on strike in response to rising prices and depressed sales caused by increased taxes. At the same time, a government agency burned hundreds of tonnes of unsold spoiled food in the capital.[12]

The JPA, like previous peace agreements, has not so far mitigated Sudan's spatial inequalities. Part of the reason

9 Darfur's population was 2.2 million in the 1973 census. Marie-José Tubiana, an anthropologist working in Zaghawa areas, estimated the Zaghawa population in 1971 at around 200,000 persons. Department Of Statistics Population Census Office, 'Second Population Census, 1973, Vol. I Socio-Economic Characteristics', Khartoum: Ministry of National Planning, 1973: 12; Marie-José Tubiana, 'Système pastoral et obligation de transhumer chez les Zaghawa (Soudan-Tchad)', *Études rurales*, 42 (1971), 120.

10 IPC, 'Sudan: High food insecurity levels in Sudan persist, driven by high inflation, a deteriorating economy and high food prices', July 2020; and IPC, 'Sudan: Food Insecurity Levels Continue to Increase Driven by the Worsening Macroeconomic Situation, Poor Harvest and Conflict', 21 June 2022.

11 IPC, 'Sudan: High levels of acute food insecurity [May 2021]'.

12 Al-Arabi al-Jadid, '*tujjār al-sūdān fī muwājiha al-ḥakūma: iḍrābāt wa-ibāda sila*' ['Merchants of Sudan face off to the government: strikes and destruction of commodities'], 11 October 2022.

for this is the peace agreements themselves. Power-sharing means that representatives of the peripheries take part in central decision making—but all of these representatives are militia leaders disconnected by long insurgencies from democratic processes. Wealth-sharing means that peripheral populations benefit from centralized resources. In the peace agreements of the oil boom period, central governments were able to transfer resources to the peripheries and at the same time maintain a vast shadow economy dominated by the military and its commercial allies. The current macro-economic crisis makes that kind of wealth-sharing impossible.

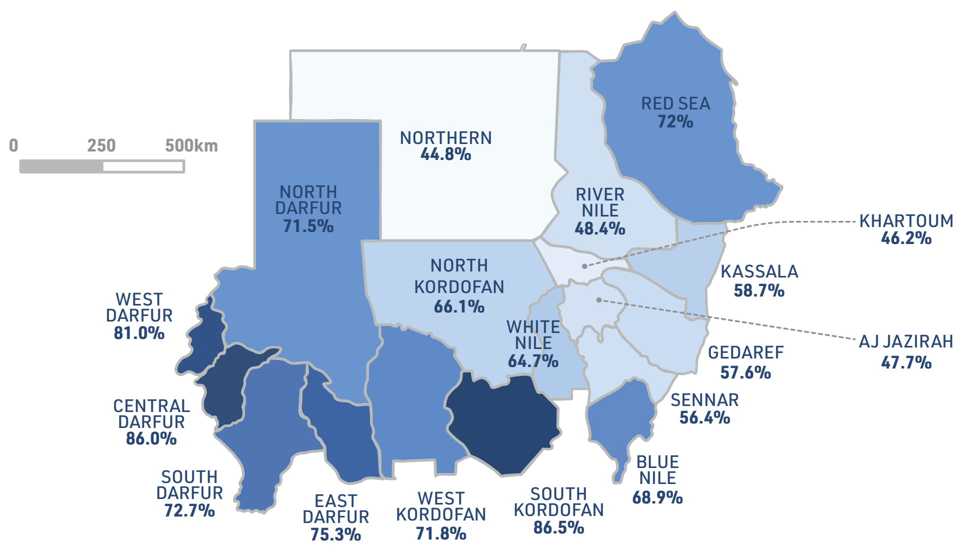
Another reason why the JPA has had limited success is lack of implementation. Wealth-sharing arrangements have not been honoured in federal budgets, and measures to address the root causes of conflict have failed to materialize. JPA signatories envisaged that JPA commissions would address these root causes. These commissions were to organize public discussions and reach decisions on Sudan's constitutional future, and on many of the components of the rural poly-crisis—ecology, pastoralism, land, migration and displacement. Such commissions were features of previous peace agreements, and although none of them led to major change, the idea that forums for democratic debate might address problems without easy answers was in many respects an inevitable one—peace negotiations between unelected armies and unelected militias are unlikely to resolve these crises. But none of the commissions are operational. For over two years, signatory armed movements have been unable to reach consensus on the composition of the commissions. The recent coup has only made such consensus more elusive. Sudan's spatial inequality is as intractable as ever.

CENTRE-PRIPHERY

Many people use the term ‘centre–periphery’ (or ‘core–periphery’) to describe the unhappy relationships between the centre of Sudan, dominated by military and commercial interests, and its vast, diverse, resource-rich and marginalized peripheries. The term became popular in the 1960s among social scientists seeking to elucidate how poverty and wealth is organized in geographically uneven ways, and how geographical unevenness affects development pathways and exchange. ‘Centre–periphery’ represented a simple binary irresistible to many Sudanese and outsiders wishing to explain the country’s long-running crisis. From the 1980s on, armed insurgents invoked the term in their English-language manifestos, while its Arabic cognate *tahmīsh* (marginalization) turned up in Arabic-language rebel manifestos.[13]

These terms reflect painful, lethal realities. Poverty and life chances are distributed unevenly across Sudan. The most recent poverty survey, for 2014/15, used a money poverty line of 4,044 Sudanese pounds (SDG) per person per year in rural areas, SDG 5,100 in urban areas—less than the cost of staying alive.[14] In the poorest places, almost 90 per cent of the population were poor, and in the ‘richest’ areas, about half the population was equivalently poor (see Figure 1). Education and hunger rates are higher, and children in the poorer areas were about four times as likely to die before their fifth birthday.[15]

Figure 1. Poverty headcount ration by state, 2014/15 (per cent)[16]



13 Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, ‘Manifesto’, 21 September 1983; and Seekers of Truth and Justice, ‘The Black Book’, 2004.

14 In 2014/15, Sudan’s poverty line was based on consumption, not income. The market value of SDG 4,044 was about USD 450, or USD 1.23 per person per day. The market value of SDG 5,100 was about USD 566, or USD 1.55 per day. Many poverty surveys use the controversial purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rate, which inflates the dollar value of income and consumption in order to make poverty appear less dire. In Sudan in 2015, a PPP dollar was worth more than three times the value of a market dollar.

15 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), ‘Sudan: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, Final Report’, Khartoum: Ministry of Cabinet Affairs/UNFPA/UNICEF/WFP/WHO, 2015, 25, 40, 176.

16 Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MOFEP), ‘Sudan: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2021–2023’, Khartoum: MOFEP, 2021, 26.

Spatial inequality is as old as Sudan itself—in many respects, it *is* Sudan. When nineteenth-century colonialists created Sudan, they organized a commercial zone at the centre where the country's surpluses and profits were concentrated. Other areas were treated differently. The south was a zone of predation, where merchant raiders enslaved people and looted food and forest goods. Darfur—which was violently incorporated into Sudan over four decades starting from 1874—was a deficit zone, with the state scarcely recouping the costs of occupation.

Investment was directed to the central commercialized zone, while the peripheral peoples of Darfur, the south and most other areas in Sudan provided the labour. At first, they were brought to work as slave farmers. These were eventually replaced by migrant workers, however, impelled out of their home areas by the need to earn money to pay taxes or manage the new market systems introduced by colonialists and merchants.

The spatial (re)organization of production—bringing workers from poor chaotic peripheral areas to labour markets near the centre—became the main task of Sudanese rulers. The Sudanese system meant that development unfolded at differing speeds—generating different rates of profit and different social crises—in different zones of the country. Sudanese rulers managed to make this unequal system work for them.

Spatial inequality offers several advantages for rulers. In particular, they can use spatial inequality to generate easy profits by exploiting the price differentials arising from fragmented markets; and they can use it to simplify social control by placing spatially distinct, unequal populations at odds with each other (see Box 2).

Box 2. Spatial inequality: Easy profits and social control

Easy profits: Spatial inequality creates markets fragmented between the commercialized centre and the partially commercialized periphery. It therefore makes sense for merchants to make profits from the hinterland's cheap labour and commodities rather than investing in improved productivity.

Social control: Spatial inequality keeps the centre's urban population and the largely rural populations of the periphery at odds, making it easier for governments to control dissent. The misalignment between rural and urban radicalism lies at the heart of the current political crisis, with rural and urban protestors finding it difficult to work together because their interests are opposed. While the wealth produced by rural workers forms the basis of the country's exports, the foreign currency they earn gets spent in cities rather than the countryside.

The system of spatial inequality requires constant reworking, however, and it is this that lies at the root of the past few decades of war. For the majority of the twentieth century, most of the country's exportable wealth came from the centre—from cotton schemes along the Nile valley. Workers from the peripheries would migrate to these schemes in order to earn wages. In the 1980s, however, a massive continental debt crisis dramatically increased Sudan's foreign exchange requirements. Cotton prices were declining and Sudanese cotton yields were very low following several decades in which the state and merchants had refused to invest in the schemes. This crisis swept away the parliamentary regime of the 1980s and brought to power a coalition of Islamists, security men, merchants and bankers led by Omar al-Bashir.

To address the crisis, Bashir's government undertook the most sweeping reworking of the spatial organization of production in Sudan's history, turning away from the agricultural schemes along the Nile and focusing instead on recently discovered oilfields in Upper Nile (now part of South Sudan). Southern Sudan was in revolt at the time—the southern-based rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) controlled nearly all the territory of the south when Bashir took power and rejected any development of oil resources before Sudan's system of spatial inequality had been addressed.

In order to defeat the SPLA, Bashir improvised a new form of governance in peripheral areas affected by the insurgency, based on low-cost rural militias. These militias, recruited on the basis of ethnicity or sectarian affiliation, were used to push back the SPLA and clear people living in Upper Nile pastures where the oil lay. While they are often called tribal militias, it is probably fairer to call them neoliberal militias, as they were invented to address the debt crisis that dismantled public services and ended state-led development across the African continent, and moreover required African countries to respond with greater alacrity to global market signals. Sudan became an oil exporter in 1999, which ultimately lubricated the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. This gave the SPLA-led government in Juba a half-share of oil revenues, and a pathway to independence for South Sudan, which duly came to pass in 2011.

All this apparently vindicated the SPLA's war to redress spatial inequality—armed insurgents succeeded in seizing control of the natural resources of the periphery and using them to create a new polity for South Sudan. South Sudan's independence did not, however, end Sudan's long history of militias wars. Instead, the twenty-first century saw the spread of militia wars across Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Insurgents in these areas, inspired by the CPA, hoped to gain greater control over the resources in their vast territories.

When South Sudan seceded, Sudan lost a third of its territory, a third of its population, and most of its exploitable oil reserves. Bashir's choices were constrained. The World Bank argued for an agricultural growth strategy, believing that would allow agricultural workers—a predominantly female group who make up the majority of the rural labour force, and who are amongst the most exposed to rural violence—a better chance of participation in Sudan's future. But Sudan's agricultural sector was in steep decline.[17] Promoting 'inclusive growth' across a sector that was stressed by climate change and conflict, only partially incorporated into commodity and land markets, and beset by decades of stagnant yields and under-investment was too daunting a challenge, and Bashir's need for foreign currency was pressing. Rather than trying to make agriculture work for people, he once again reorganized rural Sudan, this time around a new gold industry. In the space of two or three years, he turned Sudan into one of the world's biggest gold producers. In 2009, gold accounted for about 4 per cent of export earnings: in 2012, it accounted for 53 per cent (production went up from 14 to 44 tons).[18] In 2014, the Sudanese authorities estimated that about one million workers (about 11 per cent of the total workforce) were working in gold mining.[19] Many of these workers came from farms in poor areas—and their departure put more strains on agricultural production.[20]

Sudan's system requires rural workers to underwrite urban consumption and urban service sectors. Before oil, the rural workers who generated Sudan's foreign currency were based in commercial farms on rich clay soils in the provinces immediately south and east of the capital. The labour force—slaves and then migrants—was relatively easy to police. During the oil boom, foreign currency came from oil wells, which lay in two main locations of the insurgent zones of the south. Bashir used his militia system to clear the oil areas of population, and repurposed his militias to control the pipeline which connected oilfields to the port.

17 World Bank, 'Sudan Country Economic Memorandum: Realizing the Potential for Diversified Development', Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2015: 47, 52.

18 Central Bank of Sudan, '50th Annual Report,' (Khartoum: Central Bank of Sudan, 2010), 148, 172; Central Bank of Sudan, '53rd Annual Report,' Khartoum: Central Bank of Sudan, 2013: 141, 161.

19 International Monetary Fund, 'Sudan 2014 Article IV Consultation and Second Review under Staff-Monitored Program—Staff Report; Press Releases; and Statement by the Executive Director for Sudan,' Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2014: 44

20 Sandra Calkins, Who Knows Tomorrow? Uncertainty in Eastern Sudan, New York: Berghahn, 2016: 119; Magdi El Gizouli, 'Himeidti: the new Sudanese man,' Still Sudan blog, 17 May 2014, stillsudan.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/himeidti-new-sudanese-man.html.

Sudan's gold reserves, however, needed a new security architecture. They were scattered across the north-eastern desert, Darfur, and the farmlands of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. In 2011, aside from the north-eastern desert, there were insurgencies in all these places. The shift to gold required the productive efforts of thousands or even millions of miners, who had to move from farms and pastures to hundreds of gold mines across a vast terrain. Bashir's militia system was repurposed for this demanding task. In response to the insurgencies in Darfur, Bashir created new counter-insurgency militias, after 2014 promoting the most capable of these militias into the RSF. In 2017, the Rapid Support Forces Act came into law, establishing the militia as a legally regulated force. Prior to that, in the harsh Operation Decisive Summer campaign lasting from 2014 to 2016, the RSF expelled most Darfurian insurgents from Sudanese territory, and fought the insurgents of the Blue Nile and South Kordofan to a standstill. The RSF was effectively positioned to organize rural governance and resource extraction, and played an increasingly important role in managing gold flows across Sudan's vast territories. Long before the JPA signatories reached agreement on using local revenues to fund peace, Sudan's militias were using local revenues to finance war and allowing security men to accumulate private fortunes.

As well as helping increase the country's exports, Sudan's militia system performed another important function—the de-democratization of peripheral Sudan. Today, Darfur is mostly led by armed politicos who, surrounded by bodyguards, pose in uniforms while clasping military hardware. None have been elected, but all have the capacity to turn young men from the periphery's social groups into armed forces recruitment pools, using them to control natural resources and production. While Bashir's reworking of spatial inequality was one of the reasons he enjoyed the longest incumbency in modern Sudanese history, the legacy he has left is an anti-democratic, militia-ridden system of rural governance that has spread across the country's conflict zones, hampering the policies needed to address poverty and inequality. The wars have displaced millions of people and overturned relationships to land. Democratic forums are needed to address this land crisis and develop appropriate services for people forced to migrate from their lands.

Another legacy of Bashir's era is a reconsideration of spatial inequality in the country and the 'centre–periphery' paradigm. Sudan is too complicated a country to fit into a simple binary that overlooks many dimensions of its multidimensional inequality. Some areas don't fit into such a binary, leading to the emergence of terms such as 'the inner periphery' and 'the outer periphery'.[21] Huge displaced populations mean that peripheral people are now everywhere: one Darfurian interviewed for this report stated, 'Darfur is not only a geographical thing—it's social. It's spread out all over Sudan'. Moreover, the spread of hunger means that experiences of marginalization are not confined to places like Darfur.

For many years, successive governments prioritized urban over rural food security. It was a simple system: city people ate imported wheat, and rural people ate mostly locally produced grains such as sorghum or millet. Wheat imports were subsidized, with the foreign exchange used to buy them earned mainly from exports of gold, livestock and crops. In effect, the dollars used to pay for urban wheat consumption came from the wealth produced by rural sesame farmers, sheep herders and miners. Ultimately, Bashir's rule came to an end because he was unable to maintain this system of circulating rurally produced wealth via international markets to finance urban consumption. Now, hunger is levelling out differences between Khartoum and the rest of the country. In April 2021, the proportion of people living in the crisis or emergency phase of food insecurity in Khartoum was 14 per cent, just below the median of 17 per cent (see figures 2 and 3).

21 Thomas and De Waal, 'Hunger and Sudan's political marketplace', 11.

Figure 2. Percentage of Khartoum population enduring crisis or emergency phase of food insecurity, 2012–2021[22]

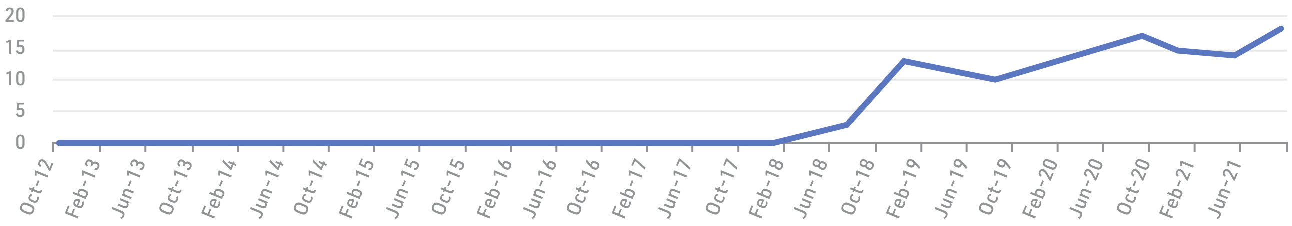
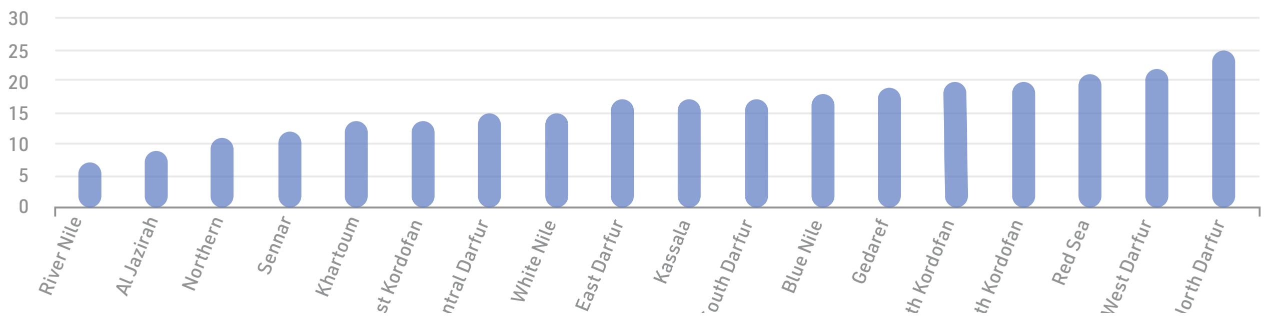


Figure 3. Percentage of state population enduring crisis or emergency phase of food insecurity, April 2021[23]



Sudan's deep-rooted spatial inequalities have always required constant reworking. But the last decade has witnessed changes to the spatial distribution of inequality and production that challenge the centre-periphery paradigm itself. One of the clearest indicators of the decaying explanatory value of the paradigm is the SPLA—an armed movement which made the ending of spatial inequality its prime goal, and argued that marginalized people all across Sudan would benefit from a fairer distribution of wealth and power. In 2011, it was split into southern and northern Sudan People's Liberation Movements (SPLMs). The southern SPLMs split into four major factions in the course of the South Sudanese civil war which began in 2013. In 2017, the northern SPLM split into two factions, as a result of disagreements over negotiating strategies and internal tensions. Only one of those factions, SPLM-North (Agar), signed the JPA. After the October 2022 coup, the SPLM-N (Agar) faction split again, with its chairperson Malik Agar continuing to support the government, and his deputy Yasir Arman joining the FFC. This split allowed Arman to continue mobilizing with the urban opposition, and allowed Agar to maintain his positions in the Sovereignty. The Arman-Agar split was amicable, and it reflects the fact that the movement can no longer end marginalization by unifying the interests of the peoples of the centre and the periphery.

The JPA, however, is based on an understanding of the relationship between the centre and periphery which is not very different from that articulated by the SPLA in the 1980s. Its remedies are based on the wealth-sharing and power-sharing model developed by the SPLM in the early twenty-first century—with little regard for decades of militia-led de-democratization, decades of violent reorganization of productive systems, and over a decade of urban hunger. The CPA was able to overlook all these changes in a rush for peace—but it delivered no peace for Sudan or South Sudan. The JPA is starting out at an even bigger disadvantage. Unlike previous peace agreements,

22 June 2021 figures are projections. IPC data, available at www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/where-what/eastern-africa/sudan/en/.

23 IPC data, available at www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/where-what/eastern-africa/sudan/en/.

it is being implemented by a government with few financial resources to commit to peace.

Case study: The Kanabi

The JPA is the first Sudanese peace agreement to take into account the needs of migrant workers. These workers lie at the heart of the Sudanese system—which requires periodic massive, violent reorganizations of the spatial order of production. These reorganizations move millions of workers from underdeveloped, conflict-affected areas to work as super-cheap labour on export-oriented farms near the capital. They live in informal rural settlements which are called kambos, which comes from the English word 'camp' and has acquired the Arabic broken plural kanabi.

For much of the twentieth century, these migrant workers produced the wealth that sustained urban consumption and allowed for the development of a service economy. But these achievements came at terrible personal cost. Commercial agriculture in Sudan is amongst the least productive in Sudan, or in the wider region—meaning that kanabi farm labourers work twice as hard for half the pay. Many do day-labour or piece work, some rent land or share-crop. Women dominate the labour force, and most of the piece workers these days are girls, because kanabi boys migrate to towns or goldmines for work.24 Workers mostly have very precarious housing and land rights and very little access to basic services. The matriarch of one kanabi family set out the choices faced by young people in her family:

> Most farmers are women, the children go to school and the men go for gold [one of her sons runs a gold mine in Eastern Sudan, staffed by people from their kambo]. There is a lot more work for women, and women also sell in market. 2010 the problem came, after the collapse of oil economy, the government encouraged people to go for gold. The boys go to university and then they don't get jobs. Some of them go to Libya, it's very hard there.[25]

There are about 2,000 *kanabi* in the Gezira, the fertile triangle of land between the Blue and White Niles to the south of Khartoum, and one local politician and academic estimated that their population may be as high as two million people (Gezira state has a population of about five million).[26] The colonial government set up the world's largest irrigated cotton scheme there in the 1920s. They tried and failed to shape local populations into a commercialized agricultural workforce, and then began importing labour, initially West Africans from Hausa areas, and after 1930 from Darfur—Darfurians from smaller ethno-linguistic groups like Tama now make up the majority of the *kanabi* population. Twentieth-century droughts and insecurity in Darfur kept the labour supply flowing, and lack of basic rights kept wages down.

The *kanabi* illustrate the Sudanese system of the twentieth century—workers were brought to the centre of the state and kept poor. Their situation worsened after 1990. The Gezira scheme had produced most of the country's foreign earnings during the twentieth century, but cotton prices fell just as the African continent was engulfed in a debt crisis. The *kanabi* got even more crowded, Bashir's military-Islamist government withdrew from the cotton trade, and imposed a regime of austerity whose cuts to basic services fell hardest on marginal groups.

During Sudan's era of oil boom and peace agreements, the people of the *kanabi* became a political resource. Bashir's government realized that *kanabi* people could become a constituency for the SPLM, and began to permit permanent housing and provide water and electricity services to a few settlements—maybe about 20 percent

24 Interview with academic researcher studying the *kanabi*, Khartoum, September 2022.

25 Interview with woman farmer, Gezira state, September 2022.

26 Interview with politician/academic, Khartoum, September 2022.

of the total.[27] But these political advances took place in a situation of unequal land rights. Most *kanabi* workers farmed land held by 'tenants'—Gezira people with heritable leases on government or private land that date back to colonial times. Many of these 'tenants' leave the farm work to the migrant workers, but they fear that any recognition of migrant workers' rights will threaten their own land rights.

The JPA made the situation of people in the *kanabi* an issue of national importance. It promised urgent solutions for the housing and services crisis, as well as support for their productive role. It established a National Committee to Address the Issues of Housing and Services for the *Kanabi* Communities.[28]

From some perspectives, the *Kanabi* Committee looks like a far-sighted provision of the peace agreement: an attempt to address the situation of migrant workers—a vast social group whose experiences sum up the Sudanese crisis. From the perspective of the 'tenants' or heritable leaseholders, the committee is likely to spark reactions or even violence. Many observers doubt it will ever be formed—partly because they believe *kanabi* residents are not very politicized. The *Kanabi* Committee did not come about as a result of pressure from people living in the *kanabi*, but from educated activists from *kanabi* communities—led by Dr Ja'afar Muhammadayn, who founded the *Kanabi* Congress in Cairo in 2018. He is seen by many observers as the person who persuaded JPA negotiators to establish the *Kanabi* Committee. These observers claim that Minni Minnawi hoped he could mould *kanabi* residents into a Darfurian constituency at the centre of the state. 'Minnawi saw that he could benefit from them … it's a small political game, not a central issue,' said one FFC observer at the negotiations.[29]

Although the situation in the *kanabi* is a small political game, it affects millions of lives, and it sums up the complexity and depth of the problems that need to be addressed for lasting peace in Sudan. Land questions in Gezira are not as explosive as those in Darfur or Blue Nile or Eastern Sudan—but similar contests between firstcomers, newcomers, and displaced people are being played out. JPA frameworks for resolving these contests hold some promise—but political leaderships do not seem to have the political will or resources to make peace work for people in the *kanabi*.

27 Interview with *kanabi* activist, Khartoum, September 2022.

28 Agreement on National Issues, Article 14.1.

29 Interview with FFC politician, Khartoum, September 2022.

PEACE AGREEMENTS AS REMEDIES FOR SPATIAL INEQUALITY

Remedying spatial inequality is a key objective of twenty-first century peace agreements, with all those signed prior to the JPA proposing a fiscal remedy—that is, increasing allocations from the federal government to the governments of poorer, sub-national administrations (states, regions and special administrative areas). Twenty-first century peace agreements have also endeavoured to ensure sub-national administrations in conflict areas are run by peace agreement signatories—in case of the JPA, this means the leaders of armed movements.

There are three main problems with this fiscal remedy for inequality. First, although space/geography is an important dimension of inequality, it is by no means the only one. The spatial reorganization of production creates new forms of gender, racist, cultural and class inequality and marginalization. Farming and pastoralist households—which contribute over half of Sudan's export earnings – have been turned on their heads by conflict, displacement and gold. In the 1970s, many households in Darfur relied mostly on their own herds or farms for their food consumption. Today, many young men have defected from agriculture or pastoralism, leaving productive tasks to women—primarily older women. Changes to rural gender orders, and the rise of huge non-productive military workforces have placed enormous pressures on old rural production systems. Migration has changed urban gender orders. Bashir's government constantly intervened in gender orders, policing women's fashions and using public order laws to control and extract resources from women workers in the informal sector. Bashir expanded the urban middle class, but surrounded his cities with huge shanty towns and displacement camps—and used public order police to emphasize class and racist discriminations against the people from the wrong side of the tracks. Many of the displaced people in the cities have brought languages and cultures from the peripheries, and although peace agreements routinely call for language and cultural policies befitting Sudan's opulent diversity, the daily socio-cultural experience of young people of peripheral lineages is harsh.

Second, while fiscal remedies periodically swell provincial budgets and payrolls, the underlying reasons for inequality lie in changing systems of wealth production, exchange and distribution, and the changing patterns of migration and gender relations they cause. Peace agreements leave these big questions to commissions—and although these commissions would no doubt be better qualified than the military-commercial ruling class to address them, they never come into existence, and when they do, they are not able to take on the powerful interests that control production, exchange and distribution.

Third, federal wealth is transferred to sub-national administrations in de-democratized zones of Sudan. After the CPA, these sub-national administrations benefited from a real increase in resource transfers from the centre—but most of the resources went on politicized payrolls. These administrations were run by militia leaders who preferred to organize narrow constituencies around these payrolls, perhaps because they did not believe that the constituencies they claimed to represent—marginalized groups defined by ethnicity—would support them in elections. For that reason, both the central and sub-national administrations failed to invest in the land commissions and development funds which were supposed to transfer federal wealth to the mass of people subject to decades of inequality and violence.

Fiscal transfers of central wealth to the periphery for inequality have not worked well in the past. But that is not the reason why the JPA is not likely to repeat them. No—the JPA was signed when there was no wealth to transfer. Instead, the JPA signatories came up with a novel fiscal arrangement, which drew loosely on the CPA. In 2005, the federal government increased federal transfers to sub-national administrations. The Government of Southern Sudan—the autonomous body established in 2005 that was the precursor to the independent Republic of South Sudan—received a half-share of revenues received for oil extracted from southern oilfields, with the exact amount fluctuating in line with production levels and international prices. The sub-national administrations in the rest of the Sudan received an increased percentage of the federal budget—with oil-producing states outside Southern Sudan receiving 2 per cent of revenues from oil produced in their state. Thus, transfers to sub-national administrations reached almost 40 per cent of the federal budget in 2009.

Given the context of a federal government with limited means and a failure by donor countries to disburse promised funds, an agreement was made with the JPA signatories whereby the sub-national administrations would be allowed to use established powers to tax their populations and accept international loans and foreign investment. For a limited period, sub-national administrations were also to be given a 40 per cent share in revenues from natural resources such as gold—a big increase on the 2 per cent oil share the CPA gave to oil-producing states. But while South Sudan's oil flows through visible and monitorable pipeline infrastructure, there is no infrastructure or accounting system for monitoring gold revenues—except perhaps those which are internal to the security forces which are among the chief beneficiaries of the mining sector. The JPA offered two birds in the bush rather than one in the hand—the Sudanese proverb, 'Better a locust in the hand than a thousand winged creatures', probably provides a more sober assessment of the odds at stake than its English equivalent.

At one level, the JPA's devolution of resource mobilization to sub-national administrations is an attractive proposal—how wonderful it would be if some of the profits of gold mines went to provide schools or water networks for the children of miners? It is, though, also a problematic proposal, for two reasons. First, natural resources such as oil, gold, pasture and arable land are not distributed evenly across the country, meaning the proposal to finance peace locally may lead to new forms of inequality. Second, many local resources are currently controlled by networks of security men and merchants, and militia-politicos will likely be tempted to join these networks rather than democratizing them.

Potential remedies for spatial inequality

The CPA, the most consequential of all twenty-first century peace agreements, had two main modalities for remedying spatial inequality through transfers of wealth from the federal government to sub-national administrations. The first of these was to increase transfers from the federal budget to the budgets of northern states, while the second was to transfer 50 per cent of revenues gained from oil extracted from Southern Sudan to the Government of Southern Sudan in Juba, and a 2 per cent share of revenues from oil extracted from South Kordofan and Abyei to the sub-national administrations in those areas. These two remedies also appear in the JPA, but are probably less important than they once were.

Transferring financial resources from federal governments to states and regions

Like previous peace agreements, the JPA envisages the setting up of a National Revenue Fund—the sole institution for depositing government revenues—and a National Commission of Resources and Financial Revenue Sharing and Allocation (NCRFSA). The purpose of the latter is to ensure such revenues are allocated transparently and fairly, and with the aim of redressing 'historical grievances'.[30] On paper, these are revolutionary institutions, putting an end to the grey-zone of balance sheets where the riches of security forces and other well-connected

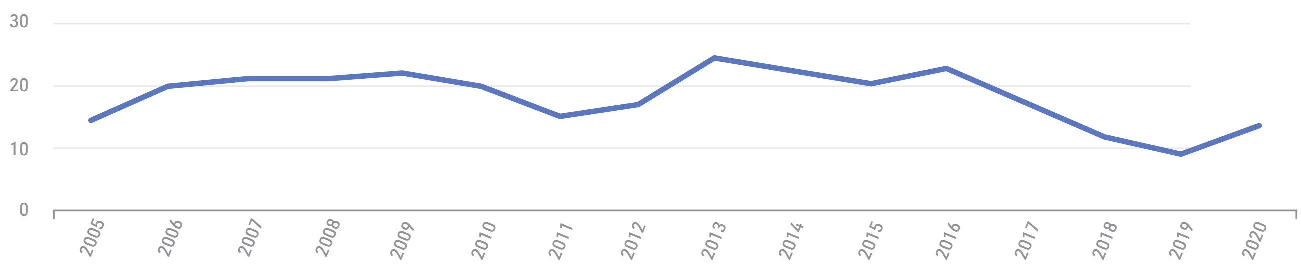
30 JPA, National Issues Agreement, Articles 20–23. Equivalent bodies to the NCRFSA had different names in previous peace agreements.

groups are concealed. Despite their appearance in a succession of peace agreement texts, however, they have never actually existed in any substantial sense.

Transfers to sub-national administrations were an important twenty-first century attempt to counter the hyper-austerity of the 1980s and 1990s—the decades when war spread across Sudan's peripheries. In those years, federal government choked off most funding to sub-national administrations, effectively resulting in the crash privatization of social services, which are mostly provided by sub-national administrations. It also represented a kind of crash monetization of peripheral societies, which until the 1970s had largely been self-sufficient in food. On the one had, peripheral people were losing land, herds and other productive assets to war, while on the other they had to find resources to finance health, education and survive displacement—as well as buy food.

Twenty-first century transfers to sub-national administrations (see Figure 4) were not made with the aim of reversing these dramatic changes to peripheral societies. Instead, most of the money went to the payrolls of sub-national administrations, providing an important financial stimulus for economically damaged conflict zones. These transfers went to all states, however, not just conflict-affected ones, and in fact were more likely to go to states not affected by conflict.[31] At present, it is likely they are in decline again, meaning sub-national administrations once again face declining budgets.

Figure 4. Current and capital central government transfers to northern Sudanese states (2005–2011) and all states (2012–2020) as a percentage of total central government expenditure[32]



A recent RVI research paper—'The Costs of Peace'—attempted to quantify the Sudanese government's financial allocations to supporting implementation of the JPA, basing its analysis on the federal budgets of 2021 and 2022. The paper measured investments in peace using two main indicators: 1) current and capital transfers to states affected by conflict; and 2) peacebuilding funds. Execution rates were low: only 58 per cent of 2021 budget allocations were disbursed, while allocations for transfers to states and development projects were much lower.[33]

According to people interviewed for this paper, there was no real increase in current or capital transfers to conflict-affected states. The money intended for peacebuilding funds and commissions did not even go towards JPA implementation—divisions between signatories meant that these funds and commissions had no legal existence. Instead, they went to commissions and funds set up under the terms of defunct peace agreements of the Bashir era, which appear to have survived the revolution.

31 International Monetary Fund, 'Sudan: Selected Issues', Washington D.C.: IMF, 2012: 58.

32 Edward Thomas and Magdi El Gizouli, 'The Costs of Peace: Financing the Juba Peace Agreement in Sudan's New Political Economy', Research Paper, Rift Valley Institute, 2022, 7.

33 Thomas and El Gizouli, 'The Costs of Peace'.

In the 2021 budget, the JPA's financial requirements were estimated at SDG 184 billion—roughly the same as the budgeted allocations for consumer subsidies, or for the health and education sectors combined. Actual allocations were only SDG 54 billion. Inflation deeply eroded the value of these allocations over the course of 2021 and an amended budget in September 2021 increased the face value of the peace budget. Even so, taking into account inflation, the real value of allocations decreased. The 2022 budget increased the face value of allocations for peace, but once again they decreased in real value.

Shares in revenues from natural resources as a way of paying for peace

Like the CPA, the JPA shares revenues from natural resources—not just oil—between federal and sub-national governments. It also significantly increases the share of revenues to sub-national governments: at 30 or 40 per cent, these are almost on a par with the half-share of oil revenues the pre-independence Government of Southern Sudan enjoyed.

Each of the five tracks has led to a different variant on wealth-sharing. For some tracks, 30 or 40 per cent of all sub-national revenues are to be shared with the federal government; while for Darfur, 40 per cent of revenues from mineral extraction are to be shared, though not tax revenues. In most regions, these arrangements will last for ten years, apart from one where they are slated to last for seven years (see Table 1).

Table 1. The share-out of wealth in the JPA and its additional protocols[34]

Darfur Track Agreement, Chapter 2, Article 25	The Parties agree to allocate 40% of the nation's net revenue from mineral and petroleum resources located in Darfur to the region for a period of ten years. The Darfur Region shall allocate 3% of the revenue from natural resources for local population in areas from which these resources are extracted.
Two Areas Track Agreement, Article 16.1	For a period of ten years, the state/regional government shall receive forty per cent (40%) of income from the revenue of natural resources, extracted wealth from the state/region, tax revenue from the state/region, and taxes levied in the state/region, with the remaining sixty per cent (60%) going to the national government.
Eastern Track Agreement, Article 58	The Parties agree to allocate 30% of the Federal government's net revenue from mineral and oil resources extracted from the states/Region of Eastern Sudan for the benefit of these states/Region for a period of seven years.
Northern Track Agreement, Article 2	The Parties shall allocate a share of the revenues of the Merowe [hydroelectric] Dam to the two states/the region in accordance with the law.
Protocol to the Central Track Agreement, Article 1.1	Income from the revenue of natural resources, extracted wealth, taxes and other dues, and taxes levied in the state/region will be divided by a proportion of thirty per cent (30%) for the regional government and a proportion of seventy per cent (70%) for the national government, for a period of ten years.
Protocol to the Northern Track Agreement, Article 1.1	Income from the revenue of natural resources, extracted wealth, taxes and other dues, and taxes levied in the state/region will be divided by a proportion of thirty per cent (30%) for the regional government and a proportion of seventy per cent (70%) for the national government, for a period of ten years.

34 Translations of the articles in the two protocols are unofficial.

Many former armed movements' representatives interviewed for this report regarded these shares of revenue as one of the biggest successes of the peace agreement, as they promise a future in which peripheral peoples control their own natural resources. Although these natural resource revenues can be earned from oil, it is likely that most will in fact be earned from gold. Some of the problems with gold as a sub-national revenue source are discussed further in section 4, with one important challenge being that of controlling revenues. Militias are heavily involved in securing mining areas, and their control over gold resources is key to maintaining their financial clout. It will therefore take time and political miracles for sub-national administrations to resolve the security problems and develop accounting systems and infrastructures needed to gain control over these gold resources.

Other modalities: Foreign credit and investment

The possibilities for financing peace from federal transfers and development funds are somewhat remote. The JPA allows another path for sub-national administrations to finance peace, however: they can contract foreign or domestic loans, accept grants and foreign aid, and receive investments.[35] The power of sub-national administrations to contract loans from international creditors is a constitutional right of state governments which long predates the JPA.[36] Foreign investors and creditors are, however, likely to attach stiff conditions to any investments or loans, potentially demanding access to or control over productive—and already violently contested—resources such as land, water and ore.[37]

Current possibilities

At present, the main modalities for financing the JPA are not really working, which is partly why sub-national administrations are reportedly increasing local taxes—additional finance is needed to pay for the various new posts required by the peace agreement. The JPA sets out in some detail the various taxes sub-national administrations can use to raise revenue.[38]

The following section looks in further detail at the possibilities for increasing funding for peace through local taxation, natural resource revenues and foreign credit and investment.

35 Darfur Agreement, Chapter 2, Article 21; and Two Areas Agreement, Article 13.

36 Interim National Constitution, 2005, Article 203.

37 The principal on most of Sudan's debts dates back to the 1970s, when the government adopted a debt-financed national development programme, and allowed individual ministries to contract debts without coordinating with the finance ministry or the planning agency. When a global financial crisis swept away African development programmes in the 1980s, the finance ministry did not know how much money Sudan owed. See Tim Niblock, 'Sudan's Economic Nightmare', MERIP 135 (1985); Interview with former finance ministry official, Khartoum, September 2022).

38 Thomas and El Gizouli, 'The Costs of Peace', 5–6.

FINANCING THE JPA

While the JPA applies to all states in Sudan aside from Khartoum state and North Kordofan, it does so unevenly. Implementation in Eastern Sudan was suspended in December 2021, for reasons discussed below. In Central and Northern Sudan, JPA signatories compete with more established political parties, and new movements—such as the Resistance Committees—that are more active. In South Kordofan, much of the territory is controlled by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu's faction of the SPLM-N, which did not sign the peace agreement. Meanwhile, Malik Agar's faction of the SPLM-N, which did sign the peace agreement, is attempting to recruit soldiers and find the financial resources to include them on the civil service list—with little progress.[39]

Regardless of the fact that central government has disbursed very little money in support of the JPA, the other signatories are in urgent need of funds, if only to finance the proliferation of posts called for by the agreement. These concerns are most pressing in Darfur and Blue Nile, where former armed movements are leading sub-national administrations.

Local taxation

Interviewees for this report suggested that sub-national administrations in need of funds are increasing local taxation. Expropriating more money from producers who have suffered from long wars is, however, an unjust way of financing peace, and counter-productive too, as it prolongs recessions. Moreover, it is barely legal: the political crisis brought on by the coup means that these administrations do not have legislatures, without which tax laws cannot be adopted. Even so, tax rises are happening, at both a local and national level, due to the immediate requirements of JPA implementation.

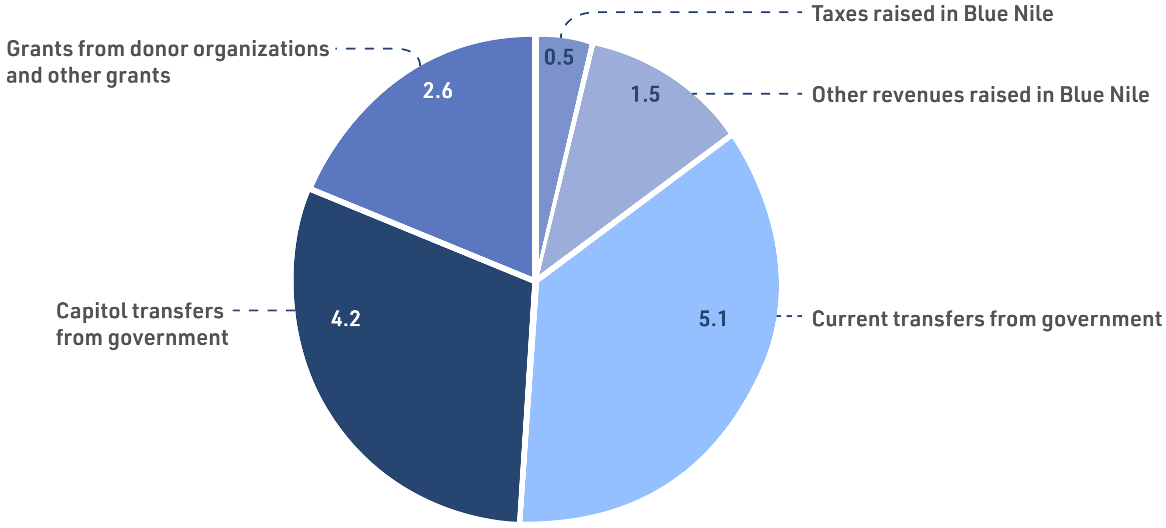
Researchers for this study collected state budgets in two conflict-affected states and interviewed finance ministry officials in five conflict-affected states, asking whether the JPA had changed their respective state's financial situation. All said they had received no new resources as a result of the JPA, with states still heavily dependent on grants from the federal government and from international organizations to fund their operations. Taxation and other locally-generated revenues made up only a small proportion of total revenues. Here, Blue Nile state's 2021 budget provides an instructive case study.

Case study: Balancing the books in Blue Nile state in 2021

Blue Nile state had a population of over 1 million people in 2021, about 100,000 of whom were displaced or refugees. Many people from the state live as refugees in neighbouring Ethiopia and South Sudan. Total revenues projected for the state in 2021 came to SDG 13.9 billion (see Figure 5), which, at the start of the year, amounted to USD 253.4 million at official rates, and about USD 69.7 million at parallel exchange rates. By the end of 2021, however, it was worth only USD 31.9 million at the unified exchange rate—a nightmare for financial officials!

39 Interview with academic, South Kordofan, October 2022; and interview with finance ministry official, South Kordofan, October 2022.

Figure 5. Sources of revenue for Blue Nile state, 2021, in billions of Sudanese pounds[40]



Locally-generated revenues amounted to just under 15 per cent of total revenues, with different taxes imposed by different ministries. Business profit taxes and traffic taxes go to the finance ministry, while tourist taxes go to the Higher Council for Culture and Information. Localities also levy taxes on herds, market stalls, petrol stations and gold, though these taxes yield very little. Non-tax revenues, meanwhile, include revenues from a host of licences and administrative fees.

Locally-generated revenues decreased in 2022 according to one state official, thereby increasing dependence on central government transfers—despite the fact these are shrinking in real value. The main reasons behind the contraction in local revenues were inflation, recession, poor harvests and traders exiting from the market due to a collapse in purchasing power. In response, local fuel taxes were increased, with fuel prices having already increased dramatically when fuel subsidies were lifted in 2021. Officials claim they need more revenue to cover the costs of new civil service posts which are linked to the JPA. According to another state official, some of these are reappointments. Between 2000 and 2010, federal transfers to Blue Nile state were among the highest in the country, per capita. Across the country, about 60 per cent of these transfers went on wages, and it seems unlikely that Blue Nile was an exception to the national trend.[41] In 2007, Agar was appointed governor of Blue Nile state and the state government. Many officials appear to have been linked to the SPLM—when conflict broke out in Blue Nile in 2011, hundreds of officials were reportedly sacked. After the signing of the JPA, and the reinstatement of Agar, many of those officials were reappointed, and claimed wages due to them. In addition, high-ranking officials were appointed after the signing of the JPA. 'These appointments increase the burden on the public [state] budget, and reduce [availability of funds for] development projects,' said one official.[42]

Another official said that no funds had been allocated to support the voluntary return of displaced people. There

40 Blue Nile state Ministry of Finance, '*mulakhkhaṣ muṣaddaq li-muwāzinat al-ʾāma lil-ʾām al-mālī 2021*' ['Certified Summary of the General Budget for 2021 Financial Year'], unpublished spreadsheet.

41 IMF, 'Sudan: Selected Issues', 2012: 53, 58

42 Interview with state ministry official, Blue Nile state, October 2022.

was no money even for a commission for displaced people.[43] Blue Nile state officials interviewed for this paper regretted the failure to address root-cause issues like displacement. But investment in services or reconstruction appeared impossible in the current macro-economic climate. Across the country, officials reported that state treasuries had tiny reserves, and that they felt happiness and relief if they could cover the wage bill.

Pressures on the Blue Nile wage bill have led the state to increase taxes. One official said that the state government had benefited from its share of an increased national tariff on petrol, and had also increased state fees for licences and registrations by 15 per cent.[44] But local tax revenues are very low—and poorer, conflict-affected states appear to have much more significant dependence on federal revenues. In 2010, for example, federal transfers accounted for 86 per cent of the Blue Nile state budget, but only 38 per cent of Khartoum state budget.[45]

Tax revenues in conflict zones are lower in part because conflict undermines tax collection. Even if such conflict were to subside, however, it will be difficult to increase the tax burden on the farmers and herders who produce most of the region's wealth (other sectors, such as services, were badly hit by the conflict). The immiserated victims of two decades of conflict should not have to pay an outsized contribution—if they are asked to do so, this may simply lead to more competition over local resources.

One major revenue source in Blue Nile state is income from electricity generated by dams on the Blue Nile river. While the JPA left open the possibility of the state administration receiving a share of these revenues, this would require the establishment of peace process commissions. The lack of progress on peace has huge implications for a population with very high levels of displacement—this includes internally displaced people and refugees who have moved to Blue Nile state, as well as local people who have become refugees in neighbouring countries. Displacement has aggravated competition over productive assets such as land, and forced people who have lost their lands or herds into greater dependence on markets for food, health and education. Conflicts over land and the political representation of different ethno-linguistic groups are spreading, displacing over 30,000 people in the past year alone, with the lack of political process making it impossible to act on these local crises. Malik Agar, chair of the Revolutionary Front faction of the SPLA-North, and the leading figure in Blue Nile politics, observes:

> Expectations are high, and people are not seeing [results]. Stopping war needs dividends. Blue Nile's revenue is generated by 1.2 million people, many of whom are refugees in South Sudan or Ethiopia. All the Ingessana are refugees. We need to ease the tax burden by generating wealth from other sources.[46]

But rather than bringing peace dividends, the JPA, combined with macro-economic measures that have pushed inflation into triple figures, have made life even more unliveable for displaced people. One displaced woman said:

> We have never been supported by the government … The committees for displaced people were in constant communication with the governments of localities, to [ask them to] open schools and support health centres and repair water pumps, but I am sorry to say that the government handed [all this] over to the NGOs.[47]

Resources are needed to address land conflicts in Blue Nile in a democratic and consensual way. They are also

43 Interview with state ministry official, Blue Nile state, October 2022.

44 Interview with state ministry official, Blue Nile state, October 2022.

45 World Bank, 'Sudan: State-level Public Expenditure Review. Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction and Basic Service Delivery. Synthesis Report – Summary for Publication.' Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2014: 18.

46 Interview with Malik Agar, chair of the SPLM/A-Revolutionary Front, Khartoum, September 2022.

47 Interview with displaced woman, Blue Nile state, October 2022.

needed to meet demands for basic services such as health, education and water. Such investments might mitigate competition over resources, which has been greatly aggravated by war, climate change and an ever-increasing reliance on markets to meet food needs.

Natural resource revenues

Increased state-level taxation is an unpromising source of financing for the JPA. But the JPA offers other possible avenues of financing, such as the 30–40 per cent of local revenues from natural resources allocated to state and regional governments in accordance with the JPA's wealth-sharing arrangements. There is something compelling about keeping the mineral wealth of a poor, conflict-wracked area in that locality—middlemen are cut out, and there may be more accountability for wealth spent locally. Even so, financing a peace deal aimed at remedying spatial inequality through local resources holds challenges of its own. Natural resources, like financial resources and development infrastructures, are unevenly distributed across Sudan, meaning some conflict-affected states have much bigger endowments than others.

One way of examining the uneven distribution of natural resources in Sudan is to look at the reports of the Chamber of Zakat. Zakat is an Islamic alms tax, and is a legal requirement in Sudan, collected by a parastatal body with historical links to the Islamist movement. Although the Chamber of Zakat has often been criticized for a lack of transparency, it keeps better public records than most ministries. These records show the zakat contribution of each state from crops, livestock, minerals, trade and other relevant productive sectors. The Chamber of Zakat's reports thus provide an idea of the spatial distribution of production not readily available elsewhere.

The latest report—2016—is not recent. Zakat rates vary according to different forms of production: 10 per cent for marketed crops from unimproved rain-fed land; 5 per cent for marketed crops from irrigated land; and 2.5 per cent for mines. While the Chamber of Zakat's statistics are better than nothing, they do not correspond with nationally aggregated data on exports and GDP composition, which indicates that gold and livestock are much more important.

Nonetheless, the Chamber of Zakat data suggests that taxable mineral wealth is distributed very unevenly. As can be seen in Table 2, the Northern Track—the least populous JPA track/region—generated more zakat-liable gold revenue than all the other tracks/regions put together. In fact, nearly all such revenue comes from just one state: River Nile. While gold production in Blue Nile state and Darfur may well be underestimated in this data, this points to another problem for the JPA: tax collection is not a precise or easy process in rural Sudan, and rates of extraction are probably lower in conflict-affected areas. If the Chamber of Zakat, with its powerful connections to the former ruling party, was unable to collect zakat on gold in Blue Nile state in 2016, then what chance has the current Blue Nile state, or a future Two Areas Region, got?

Mineral resources are also implicated in conflict, with the rural governance system improvised by Bashir playing a key role in this. The militia system had its origins in the use of irregular auxiliary forces drawn from local communities in the colonial era. With the debt crisis and the macroeconomic measures of the 1980s and 1990s, however, a major role in rural administration was thrust upon them. The debt crisis pushed national governments of the time to renege on peace processes and rural development plans, which led to rural insurgencies. Bashir's government outsourced counter-insurgency forces to party and so-called tribal militias, while fostering rivalries within and between rural communities in order to facilitate militia formation. These counter-insurgency forces were self-financing—at the start, this meant kidnapping people and looting assets, but this soon evolved into using their coercive powers to control markets and natural resources. Before long, forces associated with the government began fighting each other.

Table 2. Population and zakat collection in 2016, by JPA tracks/regions

JPA TRACK/ REGION	STATES IN JPA TRACK/ REGION	POPULATION IN MILLION, 2016	*ZAKAT* CONTRIBUTIONS, SDG MILLIONS, 2016		
			MINERALS	LIVESTOCK	CROPS
Northern	Northern, River Nile	2.3	58.2	2.8	102.3
Two areas	Blue Nile, South Kordofan, West Kordofan	3.7	0.8	35.6	212.0
Eastern	Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea	5.8	9.7	25.4	380.5
Central	Gezira, Sinnar, White Nile	8.9	0.0	24.8	341.9

Inter-community and inter-militia rivalry has been integrated into business planning, with Jebel Amer, an enormous gold mine in North Darfur, one such scene for this kind of conflict. In 2015, it was controlled by militia associated with a subsection of the Rizeigat group, whose commander Musa Hilal formerly led the Janjaweed—the counter-insurgency forces deployed by the national government during the war in Darfur. Hilal's forces reportedly displaced 150,000 people from areas around the mine. In 2017, a company with family links to Muhammad Hamdan Daglo ('Himedti'), commander of the RSF—another Janjaweed offshoot—took over the mine, and Hilal went to jail.[48] At the time, the RSF had just finished a counter-insurgency campaign expelling most opposition militias from Darfur, and had been legally recognized. The RSF also supplies security for gold mines across other areas of Sudan.[49]

There are similar stories of mass displacement, militia competition and gold rushes taking place across Sudan's chaos zones. In recent months, neighbouring communities in West Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan have been pitted against each other in armed confrontations, with international observers often describing these 'intercommunal clashes' as land-related.[50] Now that most armed opposition groups have joined the government, other armed actors have become informalized. Moreover, the RSF and the army have been accused of becoming involved in the violence.[51]

Case study: A conflict over natural resources and foreign investment in Eastern Sudan

Unlike most of Sudan's other peripheral areas, Eastern Sudan—despite being one of the country's poorest, hungriest and sickest areas—has always been of national strategic importance.[52] All the country's seaports are there, infrastructures connecting the rest of Sudan to the sea run through it, and its grainlands produce about a third of the nation's sorghum. Between 1995 and the early 2000s, the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions, along with other political forces in the area, allied with the southern-based rebels of the SPLA and took up arms

48 'Sudan govt takes control of Darfur's Jebel Amer gold mines', *Radio Dabanga*, 29 October 2020, www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-govt-takes-control-of-darfur-s-jebel-amer-gold-mines.

49 'Sudan deploys RSF militiamen in River Nile to protect gold mining', Sudan Tribune, 3 September 2014, https://sudantribune.com/article51012/.

50 United Nations Secretary-General, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan, Report of the Secretary-General', 1 December 2022, S/2022/898, 4.

51 United Nations Secretary-General, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan, Report of the Secretary-General', 2 September 2022, S/2022/667, 4.

52 Small Arms Survey, Development Deferred: Eastern Sudan after the ESPA, Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2015, 13–14; and CBS, 'Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey', 25.

against the central government. The government countered the threat effectively, as it could not afford to lose the east.

Eastern Sudan is a destination for migrant workers from across Sudan and contains a diversity of languages, livelihoods and ecologies. The Beja Congress, however, was linked to two main ethno-linguistic groups: the Beja group, who speak the Tu-Bedawyi language; and the Beni Amer group, who speak Tigre. Beja people make up about 40 per cent of the population and are divided into three major and several minor territorial groupings, with the most politically important of these being the Hadendowa. Both the Beja and Beni Amer groups were instrumental in forming the Beja Congress in 1954, making it was one of Sudan's oldest regional political groupings. Despite periodic animosities, Beja Congress leaders often stressed that they represented all Beja, Beni Amer and other Eastern groups.[53]

Following the signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement in 2006 between the government and the Eastern Front—a coalition dominated by the Beja Congress—however, relationships between Hadendowa/Beja and Beni Amer political leaders began to unravel, with President Bashir appointing a Hadendowa politician to a senior post in the presidential palace and a Beni Amer politician to a slightly less senior post. According to Aroob Alfaki, an anthropologist from Khartoum University, 'The previous regime used the Beni Amer to tease the Hadendowa [the main Beja group]'.[54]

Eastern Sudan was represented in the JPA negotiations by two factions with their origins in the Beja Congress. The Eastern Track of the JPA was substantially similar to the 2006 Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, though the JPA provided much less detail regarding wealth- and power-sharing arrangements. Eastern Sudan's JPA negotiators were less ambitious too, negotiating a one-off payment of USD 348 million for an Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund, far less than the USD 600 million Eastern Sudan Development Fund provided for in the 2006 peace agreement. In the latter case, however, there was little evidence any of the money had been spent on development in Eastern Sudan. In 2019, the transitional government appointed a new director of the 2006 fund, who explained that only USD 348 million remained in the old fund. According to Salih Ammar, former governor of Kassala state, this formed the basis of the JPA reconstruction fund.[55]

The JPA Eastern Track agreement faced opposition in the east. Political figures associated with the Bashir regime who were not part of the talks began experimenting with Hadendowa chauvinism as a means of rejuvenating their relevance, setting up a council of tribal leaders to oppose the Eastern Track and blocking port roads.

The Hadendowa leaders—according to Aroob Alfaki—wanted conferences, elections and committees to discuss the question of ethnicity and land.[56] They argued that Beni Amer people were Eritrean incomers (their language is also spoken across the border in Eritrea) and denied their indigeneity. As such, they opposed the appointment of Beni Amer politicians to political posts. These animosities spilled over into public discourse. When the fifth-grade curriculum was changed to include a reference to the sixteenth-century Ottoman viceroyship of the *na'ib* of Balaw, with the *na'ib* identified as Beni Amer, Hadendowa protestors took to the streets.[57]

53 John Morton, 'Ethnicity and politics in Red Sea Province, Sudan', African Affairs 88/350 (1989).

54 Interview with Aroob Alfaki, anthropologist from Khartoum University, Khartoum, September 2022.

55 Interview with Saleh Ammar, former governor of Kassala state, Khartoum, September 2022.

56 Interview with Aroob Alfaki, anthropologist from Khartoum University, September 2022.

57 Jonathan Miran, 'Power without Pashas: The anatomy of Na'ib Autonomy in Ottoman Eritrea (17th–19th C.)', *Eritrean Studies Review* 5/7 (2007).

The opponents of the JPA Eastern Track succeeded in making indigeneity a contested category in Eastern Sudan. What struck Alfaki about the protests was the absence of any material demands—this in a context where 28 per cent of the population of the three eastern states is enduring crisis levels of food insecurity, despite growing almost a third of the country's sorghum.[58] The war in Ethiopia has brought tens of thousands of refugees to Gedaref and Kassala, and provoked border skirmishes between the Sudanese and Ethiopian armies. Why, then, should cultural questions create such chaos?

One possible answer lies in the fact that Eastern Sudan is a littoral zone that attracts considerable international interest. Rumours and embassy gossip circulating in the country claim, among other things, that Russia wants to build a naval base near Port Sudan; Israeli and Egyptian traders compete to buy sesame seeds trucked out of the disputed enclave of al-Fashaga by the RSF; a Saudi investor took a 99-year-lease on a million feddans of land near the new dams on the River Atbara in Gedaref state, and hasn't planted anything; the Emiratis are going to invest USD 6 billion in agriculture, including a road from al-Fashaga to Port Sudan; and that the JPA Eastern Track was drafted by foreign intelligence services.

While none of these rumours were checked out for this report, they illustrate the kinds of stories circulating in Eastern Sudan, with one member of the Beja Congress Party in Gedaref claiming that 'There's a conflict between Russia, America, the Emirates, Qatar and Eritrea, everyone is looking for their regional role through Eastern Sudan'.[59] In terms of these convictions, Aroob Alfaki observes:

> People feel there's a lot of international interest in the area and this escalates tensions. They are very afraid of international interest ... and people want ethnic representation, there's more belief in ethnicity. Ethnicity is the way that people formulate claims on the state.[60]

Many people interviewed in Gedaref for this report presented the rise of ethnic feeling as an erosion of democracy. According to one academic, 'It has contributed to the emergence of new tribal leaderships [*naẓārāt*] and new branches of old tribal leaderships: it's produced hate speech and fractured social coherence, especially in Red Sea state'.[61] A member of the Resistance Committees, meanwhile, claimed the new politics of the east was militarizing and tribalizing society: 'Armed movements are trying to recruit residents, new Native Administrations [tribal leaderships] are being set up'.[62] The new tribal elites, like the armed movements, prefer to deal directly with the military rather than work through the new civil politics of the revolution.

The JPA expects state and regional administrations to find the resources to pay for peace, and gave sub-national administrations rights to a share of revenues from natural resources, as well as the right to contract loans and attract investment. In Eastern Sudan, the mere spectre of these investments is aggravating social conflicts.

58 IPC, 'Sudan: Food insecurity levels continue to increase'; and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Special Report: 2021 FAO Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Sudan*, Rome: FAO, March 2022, 22.

59 Interview with Beja Congress Partly representative, Gedaref, October 2022.

60 Interview with Aroob Alfaki, anthropologist from Khartoum University, September 2022.

61 Interview with academic, Gedaref, October 2022.

62 Interview with Resistance Committee members, Gedaref, October 2022.

CONCLUSION

This report has set out the history and context of the JPA—in particular, the deep and seemingly intractable inequalities between Sudan's moneyed centre and its impoverished peripheries that the agreement's remedies are intended to address. These remedies—power-sharing and wealth-sharing—are familiar elements of Sudan's twenty-first century peace agreements, but they failed to resolve the country's long-running crisis.

More recently, the October 2021 coup has not only reversed the limited gains of the macroeconomic measures introduced by the post-revolution transitional government, but intensified the losses by allowing the security forces to maintain control over their patronage systems. At the same time, the leaders of the armed movements now sat at the table of power in Sudan's regions have seemingly turned their backs on any pretence at democratization, preferring instead to retain the limited access to patronage networks achieved through the JPA. As outlined in this report, however, Sudan's macroeconomic crisis has limited the financial resources available for patronage, which will likely lead to intensified competition between the leaderships of these networks. If this does come to pass, the leaders of former armed movements are unlikely to emerge victorious, raising the possibility of another round of violent confrontation.

The report has also demonstrated the historically significant role played by spatial inequality in Sudan's wars and peace agreements. It is partly down to the sheer intractability of this inequality that the remedies proposed by the JPA (and other peace agreements before it) have demonstrated little, if any, progress. Poverty and life chances are distributed unevenly across Sudan, leading to centre–periphery divisions and fractious relations between the country's poorer and more affluent regions. While the majority of citizens suffer under such divided circumstances, Sudan's rulers have taken—and continue to take—advantage, extracting easy profits and maintaining social control through a divide-and-rule approach. Rural and urban protestors have struggled to coalesce behind a common goal due a lack of mutual interests, and this is something that will need eventually to be overcome if any real change is to be achieved.

Although deposed president Bashir's reworking of spatial inequality was one of the reasons he held onto power for such a long time, the system of rural governance he left behind is inherently anti-democratic and prone to violence, impeding the policies truly needed to tackle poverty and inequality. Nor will employing a fiscal remedy for spatial inequality—a key element of the JPA—offer any simple solutions. Granting sub-national administrations the power to increase taxes is both deeply problematic and legally questionable, potentially leading to new forms of inequality and working against attempts at further democratization. Moreover, giving sub-national administrations the right to a share of natural resources revenues, as well as to attract investment from abroad, is already exacerbating social conflicts in parts of the country.

Ultimately, there are no shortcuts to addressing the flawed approach guiding the JPA, with Sudan likely facing a long and tortuous path towards becoming a society less riven by spatial inequalities.

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