

Sudan's Escalating Conflict

On September 26, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) initiated a major offensive against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum and Bahri. This 18-month conflict has claimed over 150,000 lives, displaced more than 10 million people, and shows no sign of cessation. The SAF, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, originally formed from the Janjaweed militia and now commanded by Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), are locked in a power struggle, each claiming legitimacy as the ruling entity of Sudan.

Rooted in a battle for political legitimacy, both the SAF and RSF claim rightful governance of Sudan. SAF seized power through a military coup in 2021, while RSF holds significant territory around Khartoum and other strategic zones, challenging SAF's authority. Ethnic tensions and alliances have further complicated the conflict, with various militias supporting either side, exacerbating the violence, particularly in Darfur and Kordofan.

Despite being under a UN-imposed arms embargo since 2004, the flow of weapons into Sudan has not been effectively blocked. Both factions are reportedly receiving illegal arms from external sources. The RSF is reportedly armed by countries including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and facilitated by the Wagner Group (Russia), while SAF is reportedly supported by Russia and Egypt and receives advanced weaponry despite embargo restrictions.

South Sudan's oil pipeline through the Red Sea is at risk, and further destabilization in the region threatens vital energy routes. South Sudan's economy largely depends on the oil it exports via neighboring Sudan. The drop in oil revenues has compounded South Sudan's long-standing problem of official mismanagement.

Furthermore, the conflict has resulted in large-scale displacement, with millions living in precarious conditions along Sudan's borders. The capsizing of a boat off Tunisia in February 2024, killing 13 Sudanese refugees, highlights the risks of migration stemming from the conflict. As the war continues, similar incidents are likely, placing pressure on European countries already grappling with migrant influxes.

Sudan's civil war, though largely overlooked, presents a high-impact threat across three regions: North Africa, the Red Sea, and Europe. The conflict threatens regional security and global trade routes and has the potential to further escalate humanitarian crises. The situation demands close monitoring, as further escalation could lead to severe disruptions in both geopolitical and economic spheres.