

SUDANESE CIVILIAN INITIATIVES FOR ENDING THE WAR

Analysis and Synthesis



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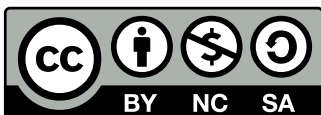
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International IDEA commissioned this study on behalf of the Peace Research Institute at the University of Khartoum (PRI). It analyses different initiatives with the ultimate goal of providing a platform for national civilian actors to work together and build a common position on the regional and international diplomatic efforts in progress. The analysis provides a succinct summary of these civilian initiatives, a matrix indicating areas of commonalities and differences, and recommendations or policy options for bridging the differences between them.

It is clear from the results of the matrix analysis that the commonalities are far greater than any differences. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there are disparities in several aspects, which determine—both individually and collectively—their potential impact on the political and diplomatic process. These initiatives do communicate and interact with each other and share the aim of building a broad civil forum. Examining and following their activities makes it clear that their overall objective is to actively participate in the upcoming political process, and to have a role in the design of transitional, post-war structures.

A broad coalition of civilian voices can—through the thorough-going the participation of their representatives in all negotiations—offer ‘consensual legitimacy’ to any serious endeavour for ending the war. The Report closes by suggesting some recommendations for how to approach such coordination.

- It is important that the representative voice of Sudanese civil society is fully coordinated before starting the political process facilitated by external mediators. A round table to be attended by the most comprehensive initiatives is recommended, to come up with a joint working plan. An acceptable, independent national body should take up the task of coordinating the round table with the help of Sudanese experts.

These initiatives do communicate and interact with each other and share the aim of building a broad civil forum.

It is important that the representative voice of Sudanese civil society is fully coordinated (if not united) before starting the political process facilitated by external mediators.

- Young people have largely been sidelined in areas of decision making since the downfall of al-Bashir's regime in 2019. Engaging more proactively with the youth who are the actual vanguards of the revolution would seem the obvious approach for galvanizing a political process in the country.
- The military seems to be the 'elephant in the room' to which most initiatives have paid scant attention. A special effort should therefore be dedicated to bridging gaps of vision on the role of the military in the transitional period and on security sector reform.
- Most political actors continue to emphasize their differences with others without even having conceptual clarity about points of convergence and points of difference. Discussing topics of divergence in workshop-style meetings, supported by the research matrix and credible facilitators, may smooth out many misunderstandings.
- The current political environment in Sudan is charged with mistrust and conspiracy theories abound. Moreover, many actors seek to capitalize on the multiplicity of mediators' platforms to avoid a genuine process of consensus-building. International and regional bodies helping the Sudanese to get over the current political stalemate should carefully coordinate their efforts to avoid falling into the trap of encouraging more polarization between political actors.

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND

Inspired by widespread protests that removed Omar al-Bashir from power in 2019, transitional efforts in Sudan offered a great opportunity for long-needed political and policy reforms. However, the transitional period faced many political, security, social and economic challenges, culminating in the eruption of the current phase of conflict on 15 April 2023. Within four months, war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had left enormous suffering: dead and wounded civilians that have not yet been accurately counted; thousands of families forcibly displaced; most hospitals out of service; and life-saving medicines unavailable. Water, electricity, gas, communications, Internet and other services have been totally disrupted in most areas. Public and private properties have been looted and hundreds of factories, bank facilities, and markets burned. Furthermore, the continuation of the chaos threatens to plunge the country into full-blown civil war and even further fragmentation.

It has dawned upon all actors and stakeholders, at local, regional, and international levels, that such a war cannot be stopped unless the Sudanese make a tremendous national effort to come together to propose effective solutions. However, recent experience shows that the deep political and societal divisions outweigh the appetite and/or capabilities of Sudanese elites to lead a constructive dialogue. For many Sudanese men and women, however, the war represents a rare opportunity—perhaps the final one—to achieve political reforms that will define and shape the country's political future.

Since stopping the war is currently the highest priority of the Sudanese people, many initiatives led by civilian bodies have emerged. There is much variation among these initiatives depending on their main objectives and the background and experience of those leading them. While some are concentrated on humanitarian relief, others are attempting to address the linked issues of state formation, good governance, peacemaking and development.

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1.1. ABOUT THE REPORT

The Peace Research Institute of the University of Khartoum (PRI) undertook an analysis of these different peacebuilding initiatives, with the ultimate goal of providing a platform for national civilian actors to work together and build a common position on the regional and international diplomatic efforts in progress. The current Report therefore aims at providing a comprehensive analysis and suggesting policy options and recommendations to the PRI for moving forward with the civilian initiatives. Other specific objectives include:

- provide the PRI with a thorough understanding of these initiatives based on nuanced analysis, and looking at the areas of commonalities and differences; and
- suggest to the PRI an action plan that aims at resolving areas of divergence.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The assignment was accomplished through the following steps: (a) rigorous and objective analysis of 15 selected initiatives, with a succinct summary of each initiative; (b) review of available literature and publicized events concerned with civil initiatives; (c) development of a detailed matrix that includes both areas of commonalities and differences among the initiatives; and (c) an online consultation workshop in September 2023 to present, discuss and validate the findings and recommended policy options resulting from the analysis.

The two-hour workshop involved a total of 24 Sudanese participants, representing both genders and from diverse backgrounds. The participants included broad-minded personalities, and people with recognized visionary and strategic political orientation. They unanimously commended the findings of the Report and the accompanying policy recommendations, as well as offering queries and suggestions that have been subsequently incorporated. The main recommendation made by the consultative workshop is that the University of Khartoum should play the role of an independent facilitator because of its institutional capacity and the respect accorded to it by the Sudanese public.

Chapter 2

SUMMARY OF 15 SELECTED INITIATIVES

2.1. NATIONAL MECHANISM TO SUPPORT CIVIL DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

The platform of the National Mechanism to Support Civil Democratic Transition (NM) was established in November 2022 to achieve the goals of the December Revolution. The specific objectives of the endeavour were, first: contribute to the restoration of the peaceful civil path by seriously communicating with the parties to the conflict and all relevant entities; and second: initiate a national dialogue that includes all parties committed to the principles of the December Revolution.

The NM formed a 15-member Working Group for Political Deliberations which organized online meetings and engaged in dialogues with other concerned parties, and produced a report on the findings.

The NM's Working Group report arrived at conclusions and recommendations, most importantly: (a) the need to work towards a ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the reduction of violence and hate speech, with an emphasis on the need for the military component to leave the political scene; (b) the need to form an independent civil legal investigation committee on the events of 15 April 2023 and beyond; (c) to adopt comprehensive and independent national reconciliation programmes; (d) to hold a round-table conference as an introduction to deliberation on the intellectual and political programmes of the Sudanese forces; (e) to urgently push the conflicting parties to reach an agreement to stop the war and embark on reconstruction planning, benefiting from Saudi–American mediation and the experiences of other countries; and (f) to support the formation of a consensual transitional government (achieving peace, restoring civil space, completing the political process, integrating the armies into one national army, and leading to free and fair elections).

The platform of the National Mechanism to Support Civil Democratic Transition (NM) was established in November 2022 to achieve the goals of the December Revolution.

The NM initiative has produced several other documents and consultations, including:

1. Two papers on post-war reconstruction planning and strategies.
2. A proposal to form an interim government, presented to several elected trade unions, political and civil groupings, and resistance committees.
3. A summary of the proposed package of measures and immediate tasks to stop the war and restore the homeland.
4. A separate public statement calling for the formation of a crisis government of independent civil competencies with experience and credibility—an emergency government capable of dealing with the effects of war and preparing for free elections to local and parliamentary government.
5. A statement welcoming the launch of negotiations between the SAF and RSF which began on 6 May 2023 in Jeddah, as part of the American-Saudi initiative as part of wider local, regional and international efforts.
6. Organization of the Arkawet Conference, which came up with several recommendations.

2.2. SUDANESE CIVIL ACTORS AND ACTIVISTS SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE

A small number of civil actors worked together to summarize over 15 initiatives proposed by a variety of Sudanese groups aiming at stopping the war, and achieving lasting peace, reconstruction and ‘restoring the democratic path through a national founding project’. These groups include civil groupings that believe in the principles and goals of the December Revolution, resistance committees, women’s and youth organizations, trade unions, and national political parties. These bodies include those formed before and after the outbreak of the war by opinion leaders and initiators, and community or professional groups in the Sudanese diaspora.

Following a series of consultations, this initiative’s major output was a ‘Declaration of Principles Document for the Civil Revolutionary Forces to Stop the War and for National Action’.

Following a series of consultations, this initiative’s major output was a ‘Declaration of Principles Document for the Civil Revolutionary Forces to Stop the War and for National Action’ endorsed by over 70 civil entities from different professional backgrounds—however, no political party has endorsed the document. The Declaration understands the ongoing war to be a coup of the SAF, the RSF and the armed movements against the civil-democratic transition which stood on 25 October 2021 on the pathway of achieving a civil-democratic state. The general principles of the Declaration include giving highest priority to stopping the war and protecting civilians from the armed conflict, forming a unified, professional army with a new national leadership,

and establishing an executive transitional authority. The latter would be based on broad national consensus and governed by the principles of the rule of law and accountability.

The initiative urgently calls for deep and constructive dialogue on issues of federalism, the nature of the state, equal citizenship, and how to distribute resources fairly among the regions of Sudan. These issues find their natural place in the founding constitutional conference engaged in this document to achieve consensual legitimacy for laying the foundations of the state.

Among the practical steps identified in the Declaration are the establishment of a coordinating body between the various initiatives and groups (consisting of male and female representatives of all civil groupings) which would also play a role in representing civilians in ceasefire and peace negotiations. Two further primary tasks assigned to this coordinating body would be: to develop an integrated vision for joint work; and to coordinate communication with countries and regional and international organizations supporting Sudan in its transition.

2.3. CONCERNED SUDANESE

Concerned Sudanese, operating under the name of the Core Sudanese Working Group (CSWG), is a think tank formed by concerned Sudanese men and women to examine the situation precipitated by the war. The overall strategic objectives of the group are sustained peace and political stability. Thus, the CSWG believes that the current crisis could also be viewed as an opportunity for inclusive, civilian state-building through a clearly defined, and well-articulated post-war political project. The CSWG attempts to conceptualize an overarching framework that allows Sudanese individuals from different political backgrounds to work together as a national working group.

The proposed framework marks the first steps in forming a broad national alliance in favour of democratic governance and building consensus among this coalition of the willing. One key recommendation of the CSWG is to convene a round table and a consensus-building dialogue among the Sudanese themselves, bringing the country close to constitution-building.

Among various means of achieving its defined objectives, the Concerned Sudanese group embarked on producing a series of policy papers. The first paper has already come out under the title 'Ending the 15 April 2023 War and Sustaining Peace in Sudan'. The CSWG then organized a public online seminar to discuss the policy paper and its implications.

What distinguishes the Concerned Sudanese from other initiatives is the commitment to professionalism in organizing its activities and managing its functions. For this purpose, the CSWG has crafted a statute of general directives and internal regulations for management of the work team, work

Among various means of achieving its defined objectives, the Concerned Sudanese group embarked on producing a series of policy papers.

mechanisms within the team, the general approach to producing and editing policy papers and reports, cooperation and joint action.

2.4. NATIONAL CONSENSUS FORUM

The National Consensus Forum (NCF) is a group of known professionals of varying political backgrounds. Addressing itself to all political forces, the NCF's proposals are based on three pillars: unity of Sudan, integrity of the Sudanese state, and completion of the democratic transitional process. The NCF refuses all calls for dividing or separating any part of the country, urges political support to the SAF in its fight against the rebels, objects to the presence of parallel armed forces, and entrusts the task of security sector reform to the SAF alone.

For the completion of the democratic transition, the NCF calls for (a) accelerating the selection of a prime minister, based on the criteria of qualification, non-political affiliation, administrative experience, good conduct, transparency and integrity; (b) formation of a civilian government whose main task is to prepare for presidential elections within a period not exceeding one year; and (c) issuing presidential orders by the resulting elected president for parliamentary elections and a constitutional conference.

2.5. SUDAN PEACE, DEVELOPMENT, AND DEMOCRACY PLATFORM (SPDP)

The SPDP is (a) a group of politically unaffiliated Sudanese from various professional backgrounds; it is also (b) a mechanism for coordinating and uniting different civilian initiatives for ending the war; and (c) an Internet platform for communication and coordination between its members and other concerned Sudanese groups. The group's main thesis is that although the underlying cause of the war lies in the struggle over power by two armed forces, this reflects the structural fault in the formation of the Sudanese state. The initiative advocates for the reasonable representation of civil actors in the ongoing negotiations for ending the war, which in turn calls on these forces to have a united vision, and a plan for ending the war and the final destination.

The SPDP's overall objective is to organize, coordinate and unify the responses of civil society peacebuilding efforts in Sudan in two stages: that of ceasing hostilities, working to end the war, and forming the transitional civil authority; followed by the transitional period, including reconstruction and development projects.

To achieve its objectives, one of the SPDP's specific tasks is to design a 'process' for unifying civilian initiatives, agreeing on a strategy and plan to stop the war, for reconstruction, and to restore the civil authority. The process

involves: (a) organizing a civilian forum based on individual representation, communicating with the leaders of the initiatives to discuss the tasks and the main themes; and (b) working with civil groups, political alliances, and civil society organizations, to convene a conference to discuss the recommendations of the forum (An update on this is unavailable).

2.6. TOWARDS ENDING THE WAR, FOUNDING AND REBUILDING

This initiative is a kind of political statement by a small number of intellectuals and opinion leaders, addressed to the Sudanese people in general and civil and political actors in particular. For this initiative, the essence of the war crisis is embodied in the failure of post-independence Sudan to accomplish its foundational tasks—to reach consensus on a social and political contract in which rights and obligations are based on equal citizenship, and to adopt a democratic political system that achieves equal development and social justice.

The statement holds the leaders of the SAF direct responsibility for the current disaster in the country, by allowing the RSF to grow and expand. On this account, the army leadership has also distanced itself from carrying out its core duty to protect the Constitution and support civil democratic transformation. On the other hand, however, the SAF remains the only force that has the right to monopolize the legitimate use of violence. The presence, unity, nationality and cohesion of the armed forces, susceptible to reform and professionalism, within the framework of constitutional legitimacy, is one of the basic pillars of the state.

The statement calls on all national political and civil forces to agree on forming the broadest national civil front to stop the ongoing armed conflict, to withdraw the legitimacy of the use of violence by any party other than the SAF, and to initiate a new path of democratic transformation.

2.7. NATION'S ENTITY INITIATIVE FOR STOPPING THE WAR

The initiative aims at: (a) stopping the war between the SAF and RSF; (b) putting in place guarantees for the implementation of the terms of this initiative by both parties; (c) providing in sufficient assurances against future renewal of the war; and (d) forming a stable transitional government.

Contrary to all other initiatives, this endeavour calls for preserving the presence of the RSF as a separate army situated in the states of Darfur only. The initiative envisages the complete withdraw of the SAF from all states of Darfur, with military security there to remain under the responsibility of the RSF and the armed struggle movements. These would constitute the organized army of Darfur. After its formation the Darfur 'federal' army would then sign a peace

agreement with the SAF. Federal governance for the Darfur region would see a government appointed by Darfur notables from the native administration, university professors, and commanders of the Joint Armed Forces.

2.8. NO TO WAR IN SUDAN

This initiative has produced a preliminary document laying out in general terms a two-stage process. The first stage concerns stopping the war and deals with short-term procedures including the cessation of hostilities; stopping mobilization activities online; formation of a crisis management government to oversee protection of civilians and their property; humanitarian operations; and normal civil service business. This stage then turns to establishing a mechanism for crisis management composed of Sudanese nationals and foreign experts lead by a United Nations representative; developing a national perspective for peace and comprehensive political settlement; and finally, a comprehensive political dialogue that ends with a document for political settlement.

The second stage concerns governing the Sudanese state. This includes signing of the final document of the political settlement; formation of the executive government (with different levels of federal units), the legislative body, the judiciary and other justice institutions in addition to 10 commissions including one for elections; conducting elections procedures; and implementing a federal governance system. The latter would be based on rotating the capital city between the regions every four years, with the head of the government to be chosen from the region of the capital.

2.9. SUDANESE EXPERTS AND FACILITATORS GROUP

The Sudanese Experts and Facilitators Group (SEFG) is an independent Sudanese platform, working voluntarily to produce ideas and propose initiatives.

The Sudanese Experts and Facilitators Group (SEFG) is an independent Sudanese platform, working voluntarily to produce ideas and propose initiatives. The SEFG position can be summarized as follows:

1. Stopping the war is the highest priority. It should start with a truce that allows for a safe exit of civilians, the restoration of services and the delivery of humanitarian aid.
2. Urging international humanitarian organizations to support the civil forces initiatives.
3. Calling for 'besieging the rhetoric of war' and regional, tribal, and ethnic intolerance.
4. Urging the Sudanese civil forces to unite their initiatives to stop the war and achieve peace.

5. The SEFG supports the US–Saudi initiative and calls on those actors to undertake the following:
 - a. expand their platform to involve the tripartite and quadruple mechanisms and the European Union;
 - b. put more pressure on the warring parties to take their obligations seriously;
 - c. intensify pressure on foreign parties encouraging the continuation of war;
 - d. establish mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire;
 - e. call for the participation of civilian stakeholders in the negotiations;
 - f. address the root causes of war as a prerequisite for a democratic civil state with a professional army;
 - g. mobilize international resources to provide relief and support reconstruction;

2.10. THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE OF THE TEACHING STAFF AT EL-FASHIR UNIVERSITY FOR STOPPING THE WAR AND ACHIEVING PEACE IN SUDAN

The teaching staff at El-Fashir University launched this initiative with the following appeals to the parties of the conflict:

1. Immediate ceasefire and begin negotiations to reach a sustainable solution to the conflict.
2. Enable delivery of humanitarian aid and protect humanitarian workers.
3. Implement the Geneva Convention of 1949 and other international laws related to the protection of civilians, and prevention of war crimes.
4. Revive legal services and police stations and facilitate citizens' access to them.
5. Parties to the conflict are urged to adopt dialogue, negotiation and peaceful means.
6. The geographical, social and cultural complexities make this war an easy tool to further fragment Sudan and threaten its social stability in the long run. The way to a solution in the short and long term lies in the following:
 - a. making a permanent constitution to meet the aspirations of the Sudanese people;
 - b. forming a civilian government in accordance with the models of good governance;
 - c. enacting laws to manage diversity and ensure equality and fair representation;

- d. criminalizing hate speech (inciting hatred with racist or discriminatory tendencies);
- e. reforming political and party institutions and ensuring the existence of professional and unified armed forces that reflect the diversity of Sudan;
- f. accelerating peacebuilding processes;
- g. modernizing agricultural and industrial sectors to expand job opportunities for young people and to achieve development; and
- h. representing Sudanese academics in the legislative and advisory bodies.

The Sudanese Women for Ending the War is an initiative adopted by 13 activist women's organizations using the slogan 'together for ending the war and building a country of democracy and justice'.

2.11. SUDANESE WOMEN FOR ENDING THE WAR

This is an initiative adopted by 13 activist women's organizations using the slogan 'together for ending the war and building a country of democracy and justice'. They advocate for building a democratic state based on civil governance, equal citizenship rights and a substantive, fair role for women in the political process. The grouping intends to cooperate with other bodies to achieve the following common objectives:

1. Immediate stopping of the war.
2. Coordination and cooperation of civil forces to help internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.
3. Evacuation of military forces from residential areas and public facilities.
4. Protection of civilians from all forms of violence.
5. Following up cases of missing persons and those arrested by the warring parties.
6. Withdrawal of the military from the political scene, formation of a unified national army and disbanding of all militias as part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.
7. Formation of a caretaker emergency government.
8. Rule of law/legal reform and reform of security sector institutions.
9. Prosecution of all who have committed crimes against civilians.
10. Value and support international and regional organizations as well as friendly countries that are making concerted efforts to end the war.

2.12. THE PORT SUDAN CONFERENCE FOR CIVIL FORCES

This initiative urgently calls for a dialogue conference for all Sudanese civil groupings in Port Sudan to discuss the realities of the current war and to arrive at a home-grown solution. The parties to the conference have been identified as including: (a) trade unions, and professional and other advocacy bodies; (b) resistance committees; (c) civilian political parties; and (d) initiatives, eminent persons and academics.

From looking at texts and announcements by various civilian actors the initiative was able to identify three common elements that can be the starting point for the envisaged conference:

1. Exert efforts to stop the bloodshed between the army and the militias.
2. Civilian rule should be a national Sudanese concern based on the recognition of sovereignty and unity of the country with no international intervention.
3. Continuity of the Sudanese state as the historical constitutional and legal institution that monopolizes power through its armed forces.

2.13. EAST SUDAN PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE FOR ACHIEVING PEACE IN SUDAN

This initiative is supported by eminent personalities and civil forces from Eastern Sudan including academics and other intellectuals, non-governmental organization workers, civil society activists, regional parties and native administrators. They emphasize the belief that the resolution to Sudan's crises lies in a civilian democratic order based on the principles of justice and fairness. They intend to participate in all activities that aim at ending the war according to six principles:

1. Ceasefire and end to the war.
2. Preservation of the unity of Sudan's territory and its people.
3. Acceptance of the fact that geographical, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity represents an important element of power for the Sudanese people.
4. Laying principles of justice and establishing institutions upholding equal citizenship.
5. Equal citizenship for all Sudanese people is the basis for all rights and obligations.

6. Agreement on a governance system that suits Sudan and is accepted by its people.

Based on the above principles the initiative aims at achieving the following objectives: end the war through a political process to address its root causes and achieve peace; build a unified national army; establish a national mechanism to supervise humanitarian relief; establish a civilian government to manage the transitional period; and draw up a roadmap for reconstruction.

To achieve the above objectives the initiative advocates a comprehensive conference of national dialogue, a higher national committee for IDPs and a national fund for compensation and reparations. Lastly, the initiative appreciates the role of Sudanese initiatives, that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the US and neighbouring countries, and other international and regional efforts aiming to end the war.

2.14. SUDAN ALL INCLUSIVE NATIONAL CONVENTION

This initiative starts with the assumption that ‘a focused, internationally-backed effort under the umbrella of the African Union (AU) is required to re-elevate Sudanese civil society as a key stakeholder—and rightful leader—in the peace and reconstruction processes for Sudan’. The primary objective of the Sudan All Inclusive National Convention is to effectively organize and synchronize domestic civil society responses to the conflict.

Preparation for a National Convention has involved drafting and endorsing a ‘Sudanese National Project’. This states that effectively addressing the acute stages of the current war involves: (a) permanent cessation of hostilities; (b) addressing the humanitarian issues and resumption of essential services to allow the safe return of refugees and IDPs; (c) restructuring and reform of the state and government institutions; and (d) building a national consensus for long-term peace and stability based on human and economic development.

The main elements of the National Project will be captured in a masterplan to be discussed and endorsed by representatives of civil society. The latter forum (i.e. the National Convention) will be attended by concerned Sudanese, participating in their individual capacities and reflecting diverse political viewpoints, identities and constituencies.

The Sudanese National Project documentation (and by extension the agenda for future discussion) prioritizes the following:

1. The role of Sudanese civil society in ending the war.
2. Organization and protection of Sudanese-led humanitarian actions.
3. The return of refugees and IDPs.

4. Peace, security, transitional justice and national consensus.
5. Security sector reform under a unified national army.
6. Institutional reform for the Sudanese state and the civil service institutions.
7. Human and economic development programmes.
8. Structures, programmes and priorities of the transitional period.

2.15. CONGREGATION OF SUDANESE ACADEMICS, RESEARCHERS AND EXPERTS

The initiative's founders emphasize the grave situation created by war leading to the deterioration of security, human displacement of people and an almost complete collapse of services. They took it upon themselves to address the situation as neutral experts to help lay the foundation for peace and transition to reconstruction and development through three pillars: (a) establishing peace by ending the war and relaunching basic services; (b) establishing a purely civilian government from independent technocrats who are free of partisanship and ethnic loyalties; and (c) reconstructing the country by starting a comprehensive development programme based on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals approved by the UN in 2015. Members of the initiative shall participate in this endeavour side by side with international and regional organizations in addition to civil society.

Chapter 3

ANALYSIS OF INITIATIVES

Due to the large number of civil peacebuilding initiatives that have sprung up, this Report has resorted to selecting the 15 initiatives above as the more widely known and coherent, and led by notable persons. The selection considered only those initiatives that were announced and had circulating literature until 20 August 2023, when the study was concluded.

Following the adopted methodology, a matrix has been created on the basis of the 17 most crucial issues (criteria) addressed by the initiatives in approaching the problem of war in the country (Table 3.1).

As well as defining the commonalities and differences in their approaches, analysis, areas of interest or emphasis, the matrix may also reflect other aspects of relationships between the initiatives and their connections to political parties.

All of the initiatives fully agree on ending the war being the highest priority objective. The primary common concern of the initiatives is an immediate cessation of hostilities.

3.1. THE COMMONALITIES

At first glance, the matrix might give the impression that the initiatives are equally divided in terms of commonalities and disparities. This is explained by the following factors: (a) the issues examined do not have the same weight and differences are mostly on minor, resolvable issues; and (b) the differences in many cases are not substantive (on the issue itself) but on whether the issue is explicitly addressed. A closer look makes it clear that the commonalities outweigh the differences between the initiatives by a very large margin.

To start with, all of the initiatives fully agree on ending the war being the highest priority objective. The primary common concern of the initiatives is an immediate cessation of hostilities (supported by, e.g. stopping mobilization activities online) and opening safe corridors for providing humanitarian aid and government services. Besides, the initiatives have commonalities on

Table 3.1. Matrix of the initiatives' key areas of commonality and difference

Initiative	Party reform	Justice sector reform	Security sector reform	Causes of war	Have mechanisms	Accept external role	Unified civil front	Elections	Reconstruction	Transitional/justice	Army participation	Federal governance	Civil democratic government	Transitional government	Constitutional conference	Comprehensive peace	Ending the war
Sudanese Civil Actors and Activists Speak with One Voice	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	√
Concerned Sudanese	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	√
The National Mechanism to Support Civil Democratic Transition	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	√	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	√
The Sudan Peace, Development, and Democracy Platform (SPDP)	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	√
National Consensus Forum	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
Nation's Entity for Stopping the War	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	√
Towards Ending the War, Founding and Rebuilding	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	√
No to War in Sudan	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	-	-	-	√	√	√	-	√	√

Table 3.1. Matrix of the initiatives' key areas of commonality and difference (cont.)

Initiative	Party reform	Justice sector reform	Security sector reform	Causes of war	Have mechanisms	Accept external role	Unified civil front	Elections	Reconstruction	Transitional/justice	Army participation	Federal governance	Civil democratic government	Transitional government	Constitutional conference	Comprehensive peace	Ending the war
Sudanese Experts and Facilitator Group	-	-	√	√	-	√	√	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	√
The Teaching Staff at El-Fashir University for Stopping the War and Achieving Peace in Sudan	√	-	√	-	√	√	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sudanese Women for Ending the War	-	√	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√
Port Sudan Conference for Civil Forces	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√
East Sudan People for Achieving Peace in Sudan	-	-	√	√	-√	-	√	-	√	√	-	-	√	√	√	-	√
Sudan All Inclusive National Convention	-	√	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	-	-	√	√	-	√	√
Congregation of Sudanese Academics, Researchers and Experts	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	√

major issues regarding the process of sustaining this: civil and democratic governance; a united civil front; transitional government; comprehensive peace; and a constitutional conference.

Secondly, almost all the initiatives aspire towards civil democratic governance in the country following the end of the war, regardless of variations in the meaning of the concept and the means of achieving it. This aspiration is strongly expressed in these initiatives in the calls for adopting two actions simultaneously: (a) civilian representation in ceasefire and peace negotiations, independently of the SAF and RSF; and (b) formation of a broad national alliance and consensus among different actors with the requisite political will—a genuine desire to transform the country towards democracy and establishing good governance. Thus, (c) most of the initiatives call for establishing a united civil front to end the war and restore the civilian-led democratic transition.

There is only one initiative (Nation's Entity for Stopping the War) that does not pay attention to civilian governance apart from calling for a peace agreement between the Darfur 'federal' army—after its formation—and the SAF.

Thirdly, the great majority of initiatives stress the need for forming a transitional government, despite differences in opinion on the nature and tasks of this authority. The terms used to describe it include: 'transitional government based on broad national consensus'; 'a crisis government of independent civil competencies'; and 'an emergency government capable of dealing with the effects of war and preparing for elections'.

Fourthly, more than three quarters of initiatives aim explicitly at achieving lasting and sustainable peace and a comprehensive political settlement; accelerating the peacebuilding processes; reconciliation; and reconstruction of war-ravaged areas.

Finally, almost half of the initiatives refer to the imperative of holding a constitutional conference or round table, or an inclusive national dialogue, to endorse a political consensus around the state's founding questions. Federalism as the basis of a post-war system of governance has been addressed by only two of the initiatives, which call for an urgent need to launch deep and constructive dialogues on issues of federalism, the nature of the state, equal citizenship, and the means for an equitable distribution of resources among the regions of Sudan. In this regard, one of the initiatives (No to War in Sudan) proposes rotating the capital every four years with the head of the government to be chosen from the region of the chosen capital.

3.2. THE DIFFERENCES

There are three kinds of divergence between the various initiatives.

First, the ‘devil in the detail’, latent differences that lie within some of the major commonalities already outlined—for example the nature of civil and democratic governance; the composition of the united civil front; the formation of the transitional government; how to realize comprehensive peace; and the organization and timing of any constitutional conference.

Second, where important issues or emphases are addressed by some initiatives and overlooked by others, including:

The majority of the initiatives have not dwelt on the issue of the army; this by no means indicates negligence or a lack of concern, particularly when the call for one national army now enjoys considerable consensus in the country.

1. Army participation. About one quarter of the initiatives acknowledge the SAF as the only force that has the right to monopolize the legitimate use of violence, and call for the creation of one, unified, professional, national army, with a new national leadership. Though the majority of the initiatives have not dwelt on the issue of the army, this by no means indicates negligence or a lack of concern, particularly when the call for one national army now enjoys considerable consensus in the country.
2. Elections. About one third of the initiatives have made reference to elections, either calling for general elections or preparing for presidential elections (within a year of a transitional government having been formed).
3. Civil grouping’s own internal management. How far internal mechanisms go for achieving their respective stated objectives is an important difference between the initiatives. Only 5 of these main 15 have developed regulations for managing their work or mechanisms for communication and coordination between their members and other concerned Sudanese groups. These are: Sudanese Civil Actors and Activists Speak with One Voice; Concerned Sudanese; the National Mechanism to Support Civil Democratic Transition; the Sudan Peace, Development, and Democracy Platform (SPDP); and Sudan All Inclusive National Convention. These initiatives are communicating and interacting with each other to build a broad civil forum.

4. Reconstruction. Although reconstruction is a major task for the post-war government, not many initiatives have put emphasis on the issue (about one quarter), perhaps considering it as only a natural, routine or inevitable duty of post-war government. However, one initiative—the National Mechanism to Support Civil Democratic Transition—has produced two papers on ‘Post-war Reconstruction Plan and Strategies’.
5. International relations. About half of the initiatives call for coordinating communication with third countries and regional and international organizations (i.e., those supporting democratic transition in Sudan). This does not necessarily mean that those initiatives which do not mention foreign relations are oblivious to their importance, or are against diplomatic engagement. For instance, some have issued narrower statements welcoming the US–Saudi initiative and Jeddah negotiations between the SAF and RSF. However, only one initiative—Port Sudan Conference for Civil Forces—rejects international intervention wholesale (as threatening internationalization of the Sudanese crisis). Coupled with that, they also object to the formation of a government in exile.
6. The great majority of initiatives have not dwelt on the important issue of criminal and transitional justice, with three exceptions: Sudanese Women for Ending the War; Sudan All Inclusive National Convention; and the East Sudan People’s Initiative for Achieving Peace in Sudan—which has outlined the principles of justice and establishing state institutions upholding equal citizenship.
7. Only two initiatives have paid attention to the question of the justice sector reform (Sudanese Women for Ending the War, and Sudan All Inclusive National Convention).
8. In contrast to the justice system reform, the issue of security sector reform has been highlighted in six initiatives, which emphasizes the importance of this issue in achieving the rule of law.
9. Reform of political parties also does not seem to be among initiative’s priorities, except in one case, the National Initiative of the Teaching Staff at El-Fashir University for Stopping the War and Achieving Peace in Sudan—which calls for reforming political and party institutions.
10. The initiatives differ in their attention to, and explanations of, the cause of the current war. Though the majority have not provided any causes for the war, about one third do so and are divided in their explanations. While for some initiatives the root causes lie in the struggle over power by two armed forces, reflecting the structural fault in the formation of the

Sudanese state, others attribute the direct cause of the ongoing war to the 25 October coup of the SAF, the RSF and the armed movements against the civil-democratic transition.

The third kind of difference, and perhaps more important than the two already discussed, are those reflective of political affiliations, supporter backgrounds and shades. The leaders of initiatives might not be politically affiliated but still have different political leanings. In terms of the implications for a resolution of the crisis, such differences have greater weight in actual terms because of the conflicting interests of political elites and their supporters and/or sponsors.

These initiatives do not yet reflect the aspirations and demands of large sectors of the Sudanese people in various parts of the country, and the stakeholders most affected by the war such as IDPs and refugees.

It is important to note that taken as a whole, these initiatives do not yet reflect the aspirations and demands of large sectors of the Sudanese people in various parts of the country, and the stakeholders most affected by the war such as IDPs and refugees. Rather, they are largely led by groups of urban based activists, professionals and intellectuals in the capital city, Khartoum, as well as Sudanese in the diaspora. Only one initiative is from Darfur rather than Khartoum—the National Initiative of the Teaching Staff at El-Fashir University for Stopping the War and Achieving Peace in Sudan. It is also worth noting that the current analysis Report does not include civil initiatives developed at local and micro levels in different parts of the country.

3.3. SYNTHESIS

It is clear from the results of the matrix analysis that commonalities between the civil initiatives are far greater than any differences. The initiatives have common positions on the most important issues in the agenda of the process of ending the war, namely: stopping the war; civil and democratic governance; a united civil front; transitional government; comprehensive peace; and a constitutional conference.

Despite these commonalities on issues, it is important to note that there are disparities between the various initiatives in a number of aspects, which determine—both individually and collectively—their potential impact on the political and diplomatic process. These factors include the groupings' degree of public outreach, defined internal management mechanisms, external network, experience and technical capacity. Most importantly, the leading personalities and promoters involved play an important and observed role in creating leverage and lending weight to any given initiative. Applying these criteria to the 15 initiatives examined, 5 appear to be more active and dynamic than the rest and seem to hold the potential for having an impact. These are, without ranking:

- Sudanese Civil Actors and Activists Speak with One Voice;
- Concerned Sudanese;
- the National Mechanism to Support Civil Democratic Transition;

- the Sudan Peace, Development, and Democracy Platform (SPDP); and
- Sudan All Inclusive National Convention.

These initiatives do communicate and are interacting with each other to build a broad civil forum. In fact, some initiatives either completely adopted the position and documents produced by other groups without producing their own document (e.g. a group that calls itself 'The National Initiative for Resolving the Sudanese Crisis' has adopted the main document of Concerned Sudanese without having any document of their own) or decided to merge with other groups after negotiating their positions. For example, Civil Conglomeration for Peace and Development has merged into the group Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan—and for this reason the two have not been treated as separate initiatives in this analysis. As the processes of coordination and amalgamation between initiatives continue, it is expected that their ultimate number will be significantly reduced.

Examining the beliefs (explanations) and activities of these initiatives makes it clear that their overall objective is to actively participate in the upcoming political process and to have a role in the design of the transitional post-war structures. The specific objective of the main five listed above is to create a broad coalition to unite the voice of civil society representatives in all negotiations, lending them consensual legitimacy. In general, the five have not spared any effort in trying to coordinate with each other seeking to establish a coordinating mechanism to reach the various objectives.

However, it is not possible to fully and correctly comprehend how the civil initiatives work, or their impact, in isolation from the fragile political situation. This is marked by a unified vision and, in particular, division between the political parties—the Forces for Freedom and Change-Central Council (FFC-CC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change-Democratic Bloc (FFC-DB)—counterparts with whom the civilian-led initiatives are obliged to interact. Though civil society organizations and political parties have their defined domain of competence, they are both part of civil society per se. In this regard, it is worth noting that 'Civil Forces Alliance' was one of the founding blocks of the FFC before it withdrew from the Central Council in January 2022.

Under the auspices of the AU, a meeting was planned for facilitating a 'Civilian Dialogue' between Sudanese stakeholders. The five major civil initiatives were invited. The objective of the meeting was to bring together civil activists and politicians to form a civilian 'united front, aligning to consensus-based ideas and plans'. Unfortunately, the meeting was suddenly cancelled without enough explanation being provided. The scene is reminiscent of the events of September 2019. It is important to note that this Report does not analyse the policy stance or approaches adopted by the political parties, nor does it dwell on the vision announced in August 2022, by the Vice President of the Sovereignty Council.

Examining the beliefs (explanations) and activities of these initiatives makes it clear that their overall objective is to actively participate in the upcoming political process.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

Against this backdrop, one important observation to be noted is that all the initiatives discussed—including the best organized and coordinated—follow the same approach of designing the framework and structures of the transition as in the past, which ended in failure. The repeated recipe is to: create a civil–political alliance through consensus, agree on a constitutional document, form the government and other state institutions, and end the transition by organizing general elections.

During all the transitional periods, Sudanese political and civil actors alike have been preoccupied with issues related to participation in governance institutions or other structures of authority. Notably, this has been to the detriment of placing foundational state-building and constitutional issues at the top of the agenda for dialogue. The war and its aftermath should be treated as a valuable opportunity for learning the lessons from past failures and revising the discredited approaches of struggling over power in the transition.

Initiatives failed to address the cardinal issue of their relationship with political parties, that is how the parties could be engaged in the efforts to stop the war and rebuild state institutions.

It is remarkable that most initiatives have ignored the issue of federal governance. In many ways, this can be considered as having been a missed opportunity at the dawn of independence for putting the country on the correct track of state-building and national integration. The current war is a stark reminder of the possibility of more disintegration facing the country after the separation of South Sudan in 2011.

Lastly, a comment on the most important gaps or ignored issues. Firstly, the peace situation in places other than Khartoum has been completely ignored. Secondly, the initiatives did not attempt to show how and on what basis a ceasefire could be achieved. Thirdly, initiatives failed to address the cardinal issue of their relationship with political parties, that is how the parties could be engaged in the efforts to stop the war and rebuild state institutions.

4.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In terms of substantive issues, the areas of agreement among most initiatives are obviously greater than the differences. There are no substantive differences in the positions of the five most comprehensive initiatives. Bridging the gap between them is therefore important for creating a critical mass that can help in achieving a consensus between civilian actors at large.
2. Most political actors keep emphasizing their differences with others without even having conceptual clarity about points of convergence and points of difference. For example, the role of the military during the transitional period is an area of ambivalence for most initiatives—to the extent that some either kept silent about it or called for its complete withdrawal from the political scene. Discussing topics of divergence in workshop-style meetings, focusing on the results of the research matrix and presided over by credible facilitators, may smooth out many misunderstandings and help improve trust between political actors.
3. The military seems to be the ‘elephant in the room’ to which most initiatives have paid scant attention. The issue here is not whether they should be out of politics, as most initiatives recommended, but rather how to achieve such a goal given that they are monopolizing power right now. A special effort should therefore be dedicated to bridging gaps of vision on the role of the military in the transitional period and on security sector reform.
4. The current political environment in Sudan is charged with mistrust and conspiracy theories abound. Moreover, many actors seek to capitalize on the multiplicity of facilitator/mediator platforms to avoid committing to a genuine political process of consensus-building. International and regional bodies helping the Sudanese to get over the current political stalemate should carefully coordinate their efforts to avoid falling into the trap of encouraging more polarization between political actors.
5. The widespread socio-political movement that started in 2013, upscaled vigorously in December 2018 and ultimately led to the downfall of Omar al-Bashir in April 2019, was largely the making of young members of Sudanese society. Nevertheless, young people have largely been sidelined in areas of decision making since then. Engaging more proactively with the youth who are the actual vanguards/fuel of the revolution would seem the obvious approach for a galvanizing political process in the country.
6. It is important that the representative voice of Sudanese civil society is fully coordinated (if not united) before starting the political process facilitated by external mediators. A round table to be attended by the most comprehensive initiatives is recommended, to discuss the pertinent issues and to come up with a joint working plan. An acceptable, independent national body should take up the task of coordinating the round table with the help of Sudanese experts.

7. It is clear from the analysis that all civil groupings (parties, trade unions and civil society organizations) in Sudan need to reform their internal institutional setups and strategies. To date, civil society has been preoccupied with access to participating in transitional structures to the detriment of the more important discussion pertaining to state-building. It is time to put issues such as the Constitution and the nature of the state (e.g. decentralization and federalism) at the centre of consensus-building among civil and political actors.

4.2. A ROADMAP FOR MOVING FORWARD

To move forward with the task of helping civil society initiatives to coordinate through the Peace Research Institute, the following steps should be taken:

Step 1

Hold an online round-table meeting to be attended by selected initiatives to discuss the pertinent issues and to come up with a joint working plan.

- Taskforces should be formed, each dedicated to discussing one issue. Members of the taskforce should be representatives of different initiatives plus a rapporteur from PRI to direct discussion and help them formulate the outcome. Differences should be documented at this stage without attempting to resolve them.
- To engage more proactively with the organized youth population, initiatives should be encouraged to include young women and men in their representatives.
- Wider women's representation should also be actively pursued and encouraged.

Step 2

Hold an in-person meeting for the same group in a friendly environment outside Sudan in one of the neighbouring countries.

- The meeting should be dedicated to discussing topics of divergence in a workshop format, presided over by credible facilitators. Differences should be settled or put in the form of alternative options to be agreed upon by acting political forces later.
- The outcome for each topic taskforce should be carefully documented to be later integrated and harnessed in a general document.

Step 3

Hold an in-person meeting for a selected group representing political parties in a friendly environment outside Sudan in one of the neighbouring countries.

- The meeting should be dedicated to discussing topics of divergence in a workshop format, presided over by credible facilitators. This will help smooth out many misunderstandings and help improve trust between different political actors.
- It is time to put issues such as the Constitution and the nature of the state as well as its main institutions at the centre of discussion between civil and political actors.

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This Report's results of the analysis show clearly that commonalities between the civil initiatives for ending the war in Sudan are far greater than any differences. Nevertheless, there are disparities in several aspects, which determine—both individually and collectively—their potential impact on the political and diplomatic process. Examining the commitments and activities of these initiatives makes it clear that their overall objective is to actively participate in the upcoming political process, and to have a role in the design of transitional post-war structures. A broad coalition to unite the representative voice of civil society in all negotiations can offer 'consensual legitimacy' to any serious endeavour for ending the war.

It is important that Sudanese civil society's voice is fully coordinated before starting the political process facilitated by external mediators. A round table attended by selected initiatives is recommended, to come up with a joint working plan. An acceptable, independent national body should take up the task of coordinating the round table with the help of Sudanese experts. The current political environment in Sudan is charged with mistrust and many actors seek to capitalize on the multiplicity of mediators' platforms to avoid committing to a genuine political process of consensus-building. International and regional bodies helping the Sudanese to get over the current political stalemate should carefully coordinate their efforts to avoid falling into the trap of encouraging more polarization between political actors.