

# QATAR FOREIGN POLICY IN SUDAN

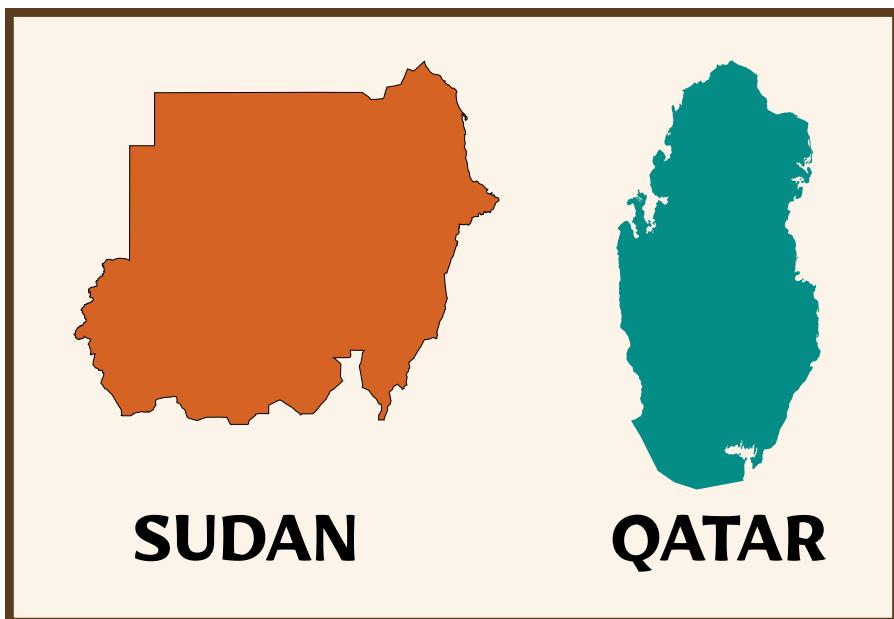


A Study on Qatar's Foreign Policy in  
the Republic of Sudan: Objectives,  
Means, and Outcomes...

دراسة حول السياسة الخارجية القطرية في جمهورية  
السودان ... الأهداف و الوسائل و النتائج...



# **A Study on Qatar's Foreign Policy in the Republic of Sudan: Objectives, Means, and Outcomes...**



# Summary

This study examines the foreign policy of the Qatari government in Sudan, highlighting the soft power tools through which it was able to intervene and influence Sudanese decision-making. This was achieved through the strategic use of economic resources, the influence of the Al Jazeera media network, and diplomatic mediation — mediation that has traditionally been the domain of major powers due to their possession of genuine political pressure tools and means of persuasion and deterrence.

For over two decades, the Qatari government consistently played the role of mediator in various internal and external conflicts in Sudan, attempting to portray itself as a peacemaker seeking stability in the country. Its mediation efforts yielded mixed results, ranging from relative success to outright failure. These initiatives were widely criticized, with some questioning their true agenda and the actors behind them, as they failed to produce tangible solutions and were often limited to temporary and fragile agreements that collapsed at the first real test.

Many observers argue that Qatar presented one of the worst experiences in Sudan's peace efforts, particularly following its sponsorship of mediation efforts that led to the signing of "peace agreements" between the Al-Bashir government and opposition movements. Despite the media hype and extensive promotion, these agreements failed to halt the conflict—especially in Darfur—where violence escalated, and the number of displaced persons and refugees increased. Moreover, the various mediation attempts failed to bring about any fundamental change in the dynamics of the Sudanese conflict.

To gain a deeper understanding of Qatar's foreign policy in Sudan, this study attempts to identify its key features and sources of influence that enabled the Qatari government to assume the role of mediator in these various conflicts.

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# Introduction

With the accession of Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to power in Qatar in 1995, following a bloodless coup against his father, the new emir appeared determined to reshape his country's foreign policy in a manner different from before. However, he faced a lack of welcome from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and some Arab states regarding the coup in Qatar, which created a regional environment around Qatar that could be described as almost hostile. This pushed the new emir to base his foreign policy on seeking protection from a power that would support his hold on power.

Emir Hamad resorted to adopting policies of status and role in defining foreign relations. He redefined a new policy that established a new approach to dealing with internal and external issues, manifested in adopting the option of political openness — a move that failed after a short period. He also emphasized the role played by media power in Qatar's foreign relations on both regional and international levels, especially amid globalization and the information and communications revolution.

Therefore, the establishment of Al Jazeera channel came as one of the most important diplomatic tools relied upon by Qatar's foreign policy to enhance its regional and international standing. The channel is used to promote Qatar's political goals, grant it a wider global presence, and provide an effective and low-cost platform to disseminate its perspectives on the internal and external policies of its adversaries.

Despite Qatar's claim that Al Jazeera operates independently, reality indicates that it implements the foreign policy of the ruling regime and does not deviate from the requirements of this policy. This was clearly evident in its coverage of the events in Libya, Egypt, and Sudan in recent years.

In parallel with that, he moved at the regional level to gain access to the international level. Regionally, he established relations with Iran, which has tense relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, in order to neutralize its threat. At the same time, he benefited from his relationship with Iran by using its regional proxies, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Shia in Iraq, to help him implement his regional agenda.

On the international level, Emir Hamad viewed Israel as a gateway to access the world's sole superpower, the United States of America. He established relations with Israel based on two realities: first, that he could not independently compete with Saudi influence in Washington; and second, that he could convince the United States of his potential role as its proxy in the Gulf region—a functional state in exchange for his regime being under the umbrella of American protection. Washington might accept this given the strategic importance of the Gulf region, its vital resources for the world and the global economy, as well as the geographical factors that add significant strategic value.

In addition, long-term military partnerships were established with the United States, materializing in permanent military bases funded by Qatar.

Diplomatically, the Qatari government has marketed itself as a mediator in various regional and international conflicts, thanks to Qatar's substantial financial resources that enabled the regime to engage with conflicting parties. The "principle of promoting the peaceful resolution of international disputes" is part of the Qatari constitution, adopted in April 2003. Article 7 explicitly states that Qatar's foreign policy "is based on the principle of promoting international peace and security through encouraging the peaceful resolution of international disputes."

Although this diplomacy differs significantly from the foreign policy of many Arab countries, the Qatari government emerged as a mediator in numerous regional and international conflicts, including in Sudan. This external behavior has raised many questions about its true agenda and the nature of its moves in Sudan. It is unusual in foreign policy for a small state to engage so intensively in a chaotic world as Qatar has done or to intervene in the affairs of other countries, suggesting it is playing a role larger than its actual weight.

In this regard, Qatar has faced much criticism regarding the nature of these interventions, with doubts that they are driven by the interests of Sudan and its people. Instead, the goals are far from seeking fundamental solutions to the issues of this geographically distant Arab-African country. Rather, these interventions come within a larger policy aimed at enhancing Qatar's influence in the region, aligned with the interests of major powers.

Qatar's role is often seen as limited to implementing the interests of these powers, such as the United States or European countries, which seek to strengthen their position in the region and maintain the stability of certain political regimes that may be their allies in broader conflicts or to destabilize others, in line with the policies of these countries, which may not always serve the interests of the people of the region.

This was recently exemplified by the mediation Qatar led between Hamas and the Israeli entity, at a time when ten Republican senators in the U.S. Senate, including Marco Rubio—currently U.S. Secretary of State when he was then President-elect Donald Trump’s nominee—signed a letter urging the U.S. State Department to end its policy of allowing Qatar to mediate. Sometimes, mediation may be merely a means to expand Qatar’s influence on the international stage, amid its competition with other countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Through this approach, the Qatari government forged strong relations with Omar al-Bashir’s regime, who was an ally of Qatar. However, after the fall of former President Omar al-Bashir’s regime and the rule of the Sudanese military council, there was a significant shift in Khartoum’s regional policies. The most important factor was the decline of Qatari influence, unlike in previous years when Doha was a key pillar and active player in Khartoum’s policies.

Many observers believe that Qatar’s foreign policy is formulated and implemented by decision-makers in closed circles that possess substantial financial resources, and nothing prevents them from making decisive decisions. However, at the same time, they lack a strategic vision to shape such decisions at both the regional and international levels.

Despite the ability of Doha’s leaders to make swift decisions regarding foreign policy due to the infrastructure at their disposal, they lack the qualifications to effectively translate these decisions into reality. For example, Qatar was able to provide financial and political support to al-Bashir’s regime and some armed groups loyal to it, but it did not have a clear strategic framework that would enable it to influence the course of events in Sudan.

After the fall of President al-Bashir’s regime, Qatar lost its most important sources of influence and foothold on the African continent. As a result, Qatar’s role, which seeks to enter the scene, remains that of a player without control over the situation or political directions in Sudan.

# Chapter One: An Overview of Sudan



Sudan (the Republic of Sudan) is an Arab country located in northeastern Africa. It is bordered by Egypt to the north, Libya to the northwest, Chad to the west, the Central African Republic to the southwest, South Sudan to the south, Ethiopia to the southeast, Eritrea to the east, and the Red Sea to the northeast. Sudan's population is estimated to be around 50 million people (2024 estimate), and its area covers approximately 1,861,484 square kilometers (718,723 square miles), making it the third-largest country by area in Africa and in the Arab world.

Before the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan was the largest country in both Africa and the Arab world by area. The Nile River divides Sudan's territory into eastern and western parts, and the capital, Khartoum, is located at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile rivers, the two main tributaries of the Nile. Sudan lies at the heart of the Nile Valley basin.

## 1. History

The history of the region that constitutes present-day Sudan dates back to ancient times, witnessing many ancient civilizations that contributed to the development of human culture and influenced the region's history. Among these was the Kerma civilization (circa 1500 BCE), which later came under the control of the New Kingdom of Egypt for nearly five centuries. This was followed by the rise of the Kingdom of Kush (circa 785 BCE), which in turn controlled Egypt for almost a century.

After the fall of the Kush civilization, the Nubians established three Christian kingdoms: Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia. The latter two kingdoms lasted from 800 BCE until 350 CE. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, Arab nomads settled much of Sudan.

From the 16th to the 19th centuries, the Sultanate of Sennar ruled central and eastern Sudan, while the Sultanate of Darfur governed the west, and the Ottomans controlled the far north. During this period, Islam spread widely throughout Sudan.

From 1820 to 1874, Sudan was fully conquered by the Ottoman-Egyptian Alawite dynasty. Between 1881 and 1885, the Alawite rule was met with a successful revolution led by Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, who declared himself the awaited Mahdi and established the Mahdist state. This state was eventually destroyed in 1898 by the British, who then ruled Sudan.

In 1953, Britain granted Sudan self-government, and independence was declared on January 1, 1956. Since independence, Sudan has been ruled by a series of unstable parliamentary governments and military regimes. The most notable was the rule of Jaafar Nimeiry, who introduced Islamic Sharia law into the judiciary. This exacerbated the conflict between the Islamic North, where the government was based, and the Christian and other communities in the South. Differences in language, religion, and political power led to a civil war between government forces, heavily influenced by the National Islamic Front, and southern rebels, the most influential faction of which was the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). This eventually led to the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Between 1989 and 2019, Sudan experienced a 30-year military dictatorship under Omar al-Bashir. Due to his actions, a war erupted in the Darfur region in 2003. Bashir was accused of ethnic genocide, which resulted in between 300,000 to 400,000 deaths. In late 2018, protests erupted demanding Bashir's resignation, leading to a successful coup on April 11, 2019. Since then, Sudan has been embroiled in a civil conflict between two rival factions: the Sudanese Armed Forces and the semi-military Rapid Support Forces rebels.

## 2. Geography

Sudan is located in northeastern Africa and covers an area of 1,865,813 square kilometers. It is thus the third-largest country in Africa after Algeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the third-largest in the Arab world after Algeria and Saudi Arabia. Globally, it ranks sixteenth in size. (Before the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan was the largest country by area in both the Arab world and Africa, and ranked tenth worldwide, with an area of approximately 2 million square kilometers.)

### 3. Economy

The Sudanese economy is considered one of the developing economies. It has been severely affected by internal wars and economic sanctions, despite some signs of slight improvement in certain economic sectors such as mining and agriculture.

- **Agricultural Sector :**

The Sudanese economy relies heavily on agriculture, and Sudan is one of the largest producers of many agricultural crops. Among the most prominent crops cultivated in Sudan are sesame—where Sudan is one of the world's largest producers—corn, wheat, cotton, and peanuts.

- **Oil Sector:**

Oil was one of the main sources of government revenue before the secession of South Sudan in 2011. After this separation, Sudan lost most of the oil fields that were located in South Sudan.

- **Minerals:**

Sudan is rich in mineral resources, including gold, which became the main source of non-oil revenues after the secession of South Sudan. The country also contains other minerals such as phosphate and chromium.

- **Economic Challenges:** Sudan suffers from major economic problems, including high inflation, a shortage of foreign currency, and crises in certain regions. After the revolution, Sudan entered a phase of economic reform, signing agreements with international organizations to obtain financial support.

### 4. Ethnicities, Languages, and Religions:

- **Ethnic Diversity**

Sudan's population is estimated at around 46 million people and is considered one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries. It includes several different ethnic groups, the most prominent of which are:

- **Arabs:** Represent the majority of the population in the northern and central regions.

- **Nubians:** Found in areas of northern and southern Sudan.

- **Fur:** Located in western Sudan, especially in Darfur.

- **Beja:** Reside in eastern Sudan.

**- African Tribes:** There are many African ethnic groups living in the southern and western regions.

- **Languages:**

**- Official Language:** Arabic is the official language of Sudan and is used in media, education, and official fields.

**- Local Languages:** There are many local languages spoken in different parts of Sudan, such as Nubian, Beja, Fur, and many other African languages.

- **Religions:**

**- Islam:** Muslims form the vast majority in Sudan, with more than 95% of the population adhering to Islam, primarily Sunni Islam.

**- Christianity:** There is a Christian minority in Sudan, especially in southern areas influenced by Christian missions.

**- Other Religions:** Some minorities practice traditional religions.

## 5. Climate

Sudan has a tropical climate characterized by high temperatures throughout most days of the year, with variations in temperature depending on the seasons and regions. The central and eastern regions experience the highest annual temperatures, ranging on average between 35 and slightly over 40 degrees Celsius. In contrast, temperatures are lower in the western regions, with averages generally not exceeding 35 degrees Celsius.

Rainfall rates also vary: while rainfall is rare in the far north, the central and southern areas receive seasonal rains that increase the further south you go. In the south, annual rainfall averages between 500 and 750 millimeters. The climate along the eastern coast resembles a Mediterranean climate, with rainfall occurring mainly during the winter season.

## 6. The History of Conflicts in Sudan



A picture of members of the Janjaweed militia from the United Nations website

The African continent, in general, has experienced decades of violence and instability. Discussing the reality of conflicts in this continent requires a deep understanding of the complexities of international dynamics, regional considerations and fluctuations, and the geopolitical realities of each country in Africa. Sudan, with its cultural and demographic diversity and abundant resources, is a microcosm of Africa, which suffers from numerous conflicts. Among the foremost of these are internal and international conflicts that have become a defining feature of many African countries and regions in the post-Cold War era.

Since its independence, Sudan has suffered from internal conflicts that have drained its capabilities and resources.

The most prominent of these is the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, which eventually led to its secession and the declaration of its independent state in 2011. Additionally, there are conflicts in eastern Sudan, as well as the ongoing conflict in the Darfur region in western Sudan between the Khartoum government and rebel movements. This conflict has cast its shadow on the entire world.

- The history of conflicts in Sudan is long and complex, with ethnic, religious, political, and economic factors intertwining to shape these conflicts. Despite the signing of numerous peace agreements, Sudan still faces major challenges in achieving comprehensive political and economic stability. Currently, Sudan is witnessing many armed conflicts and internal strife, which have resulted from a combination of political, economic, social, and religious factors, the most prominent of which are :

- **The Conflict Between Northern and Southern Sudan**

The conflict between northern and southern Sudan dates back to the British colonial period. The South had significantly less autonomy compared to the North, and there was a large disparity between the North and South in education, development, and economic opportunities. This disparity led the British colonial administration to focus primarily on the Islamic North, while the South was home to a majority of Christians and practitioners of traditional religions. These cultural and religious differences contributed to deepening divisions between the North and South, leading to ongoing tensions and creating a significant gap between the two regions.

The conflict ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Naivasha between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). The agreement stipulated the formation of a transitional government and granted the South the right to self-determination, which led to a referendum in 2011. Despite the South's independence, tensions between the North and South persisted over several issues such as borders and resource sharing, especially oil, since most oil reserves were located in South Sudan. Additionally, there were problems related to refugees and security.

- **The Conflict in Darfur:** The war in Darfur ignited in a region that is home to more than thirty Muslim ethnic groups with a long history of competition over land and grazing rights. The armed conflict in Darfur began in 2003 when two rebel groups—the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)—rebelled against the Sudanese government, accusing it of oppressing non-Arab residents of Darfur under President Omar al-Bashir's regime, claiming they were marginalized.

One of the key causes of the armed rebellion was the 1994 decision by President al-Bashir's government to divide Darfur into multiple states instead of a single region. The ongoing war has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians and displaced over a million people from their lands and homes.

- **The Conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan Regions (2011–Present):** After the secession of South Sudan, conflicts erupted in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan regions, which lie along the border between the North and South. These conflicts intensified due to some ethnic groups in these areas insisting on maintaining ties with South Sudan, in addition to political and social issues related to governance in Sudan. The conflict continues to this day, with military interventions by the Sudanese government attempting to suppress the rebellion.

- **The Conflict After the Overthrow of Omar al-Bashir:** Widespread protests erupted in December 2018 due to deteriorating economic conditions, including high inflation and rising food prices. The demonstrations demanded the resignation of President Omar al-Bashir after his nearly 30-year rule. The protests led to the overthrow of the regime in April 2019, following a month of massive demonstrations. This resulted in the formation of a transitional government composed of both civilian and military representatives. Despite Bashir's removal, the country continues to face ongoing economic challenges and political conflicts.

## 7. The Strategic Importance of Sudan to the Qatari government



A picture of the strategic Suakin Island in the Red Sea from the BBC website.

Sudan holds great strategic importance for the Gulf countries, including Qatar. This importance stems from a combination of historical factors, geographical location, natural resources, and demographic and cultural depth. Historically, Sudan is one of the oldest centers of civilization in the world, as the Kerma civilization emerged on its land between 2500 and 1500 BCE, making it a country with a deep civilizational heritage within its Arab and African surroundings.

Geographically, Sudan occupies a pivotal location as the third-largest African country by area, bordering several strategically important countries such as Egypt, Libya, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Central African Republic. This makes it a natural gateway linking the Gulf region to the Horn of Africa and the heart of the African continent. Demographically, Sudan has a population of about 52 million, representing a vital human resource in agriculture, trade, and pastoralism. Sudan also possesses vast natural resources, including significant

water resources represented by the White and Blue Nile, giving it the potential to be a “breadbasket” for the Arab world.

Compared to its Arab regional depth, Sudan enjoys vast natural resources that qualify it to become a center for a new model of regional international division of labor. Approximately 40% of the agricultural lands in the Arab world and its geographic neighbors are located in Sudan, although less than 10% of these lands—estimated at about 200 million acres—are cultivated. Due to this significant economic resource, Sudan has the full capacity to make major contributions to Arab economic productivity.

Additionally, Sudan is rich in livestock, gum Arabic (used in over a hundred global food products), cotton, grains, and minerals such as gold. Educationally, Sudan boasts a relatively advanced educational heritage in its region, which contributed to the emergence of early political awareness since the 1950s. Sudan also experienced a relatively mature democratic experiment, despite later facing military coups.

Geographically, Sudan overlooks the Red Sea through a strategic coastline that includes the port of Suakin, which has become a site of international competition between the United States, Russia, China, and Turkey to establish naval bases. This reflects the importance of Sudan’s location in securing vital maritime trade and energy routes. Sudan also overlooks the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which holds historical significance due to its strategic position on maritime routes connecting Europe to the Indian Ocean. Moreover, it is an important strategic route for oil trade between the Middle East and European countries, as well as a navigation route for non-oil vessels moving between the Middle East and Mediterranean countries.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait has maintained special importance over the centuries, especially with the construction of the Suez Canal, the rise of the British Empire, and Europe’s reliance on Gulf oil to meet its energy needs. This strait has been the subject of conflicts among many countries, as closing it would force oil tankers coming from the Gulf to navigate around the southern tip of Africa northwards to reach European Union countries, resulting in significant losses in time and cost.

Although this location increases Sudan’s vulnerability to external incursions, its geographic position has made it useful for Gulf Arab countries for purposes of economic and cultural expansion within the African continent.

All these factors make Sudan a potentially vital partner for the Qatari government and the Gulf states, whether in matters of food security, regional security, or geopolitical influence in East Africa and the Red Sea.

## Chapter Two: The Political and Historical Context of Qatar–Sudan Relations



Chairman of the Transitional Council receives the credentials of the Qatari ambassador – from the website of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Diplomatic relations between Sudan and Qatar began in the 1970s, following Sudan's independence. However, these relations did not initially take on a clear strategic character. At that stage, Qatar focused its relations primarily on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and its relationship with Sudan followed a traditional pace, centered on diplomatic exchange and cooperation in educational and cultural fields. Qatar also hosted a number of qualified Sudanese workers, especially in the education and health sectors.

However, the relationship between the two countries deepened rapidly after Qatar opened up to its Arab surroundings and following the coup led by Omar al-Bashir in the late 1980s. Qatar saw in Sudan an opportunity to strengthen its ties with a country that held regional influence, particularly in supporting Islamic movements that aligned with Qatar's foreign policy.

This marked the beginning of a new phase, characterized by one of the most prominent bilateral relations in the Arab world built on strategic foundations, blending economic, political, cultural interests, and regional roles over decades. The relationship experienced periods of deep harmony and others of tension, all amid rapidly evolving regional and international dynamics.

The Arab nationalist perspective has long shaped the diplomatic framework between Qatar and Sudan. Given the importance of Arab countries to Qatar, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs designated the Department of Arab Affairs to manage relations with Africa. The Qatari government viewed Africa as fragmented, distinguishing between Arab North Africa and the rest of the continent. This view was influenced by American geopolitical interests and the enduring impact of Arab nationalist narratives, especially those promoted by Gamal Abdel Nasser.

However, Sudan represented an exception to this rule, as diplomatic relations with it were established due to the growing number of migrant workers moving to the emirate. Nevertheless, the relationship remained limited until the beginning of the new century..

## 1. The Phase of Strengthening the Alliance During Al-Bashir's Era



A photo of the Emir of Qatar during a visit to Sudan, from the Alnilin website.

Qatari-Sudanese relations witnessed a significant shift during the era of former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, particularly in the early 2000s. Qatar became one of Sudan's key regional allies amid the international isolation faced by the Sudanese regime due to U.S. and international sanctions. During al-Bashir's rule, the relationship was marked by its multidimensional nature—spanning political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian fields—where Qatar consistently acted as a supporter of al-Bashir's regime in its efforts to overcome the economic crisis. Among the most notable manifestations of this rapprochement during this period.

## 2. Political Support



Al-Bashir during a visit to Qatar following the outbreak of protests in Sudan, from Al Jazeera website.

The Qatari government provided strong political support to the former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's regime, especially during periods when it faced international and regional isolation. This support took several prominent forms, foremost of which was breaking the international isolation after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Bashir in 2009. The Qatari government invited him to participate in the Arab Summit in Doha that same year and officially received him, in clear defiance of the international community, which enhanced his legitimacy. Qatar also played a pivotal role in sponsoring peace negotiations in Darfur, hosting dialogue rounds in 2011, which helped Bashir's regime appear as a seeker of peace. Additionally, Qatar provided Bashir with a media and diplomatic platform through Al Jazeera to present his positions and break the Western media blockade. It maintained strong relations with him at a time when some Gulf countries pressured him because of his regional alliances, thus providing a strategic balance. The Qatari government also used its influence in regional organizations such as the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to support Bashir's regime's positions and defend it, especially regarding the crises in Darfur and the South.

From the very first protest that called for Bashir's departure, the Qatari government was quick to express its support for the president and its readiness to provide whatever was needed to overcome what it then described as a "crisis." As demonstrations intensified, surrounding the presidential palace and demanding Bashir step down, Doha welcomed the Sudanese president, and Emir Tamim bin Hamad renewed his full support for him.

Qatar's support for Bashir's regime was seen as a clear challenge to the will of the people. However, many viewed Doha's interests with Bashir-who shared a similar ideological background-as taking precedence over the interests of the Sudanese people, who had grown weary of rampant corruption and dire economic conditions.

In the face of the sweeping popular uprising, Doha stood firmly by Bashir's regime in an effort to save it from a revolution that erupted as a result of three decades of accumulated grievances. Emir Tamim's efforts were not driven by a desire to improve living conditions in Sudan to prevent the protests from spreading, but rather to rescue one of his most important allies on the African continent.

### **3. Economic Support**

Qatar provided significant economic support to the regime of former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. This support primarily took the form of bank deposits and financial grants worth billions of dollars, which contributed to boosting the reserves of Sudan's Central Bank and stabilizing the national currency. This had a notable impact on the Sudanese economy, offering much-needed liquidity to the banking sector and temporarily improving the value of the Sudanese pound. However, it did not represent a long-term solution to the country's broader economic challenges.

Despite the substantial financial aid, the Sudanese regime under al-Bashir faced widespread criticism regarding the impact of these funds on the country's economy. Some economic analysts argued that Qatari support was insufficient to resolve the structural crises facing Sudan's economy and served merely as a temporary relief. Sudan, they contended, needed fundamental economic reforms rather than continued reliance on foreign aid, which failed to provide lasting solutions. Moreover, Qatari aid was often tied to political and strategic conditions, which many experts believe primarily served Western agendas and aimed to expand Qatar's political influence in Sudan raising concerns about the independence of Sudanese policymaking.

## 4. Qatari Investments

Qatar began significantly expanding its investments in Sudan at the beginning of the second decade of the millennium, focusing on sectors such as agriculture, industry, and energy, in addition to infrastructure projects. One of the most notable examples of this was the agricultural investment agreements that included vast areas of Sudanese land, allowing Qatar to gain control over a large portion of Sudan's agricultural territory.

Although these investments contributed to the Sudanese economy, many analysts believe they were primarily aimed at serving Qatar's long-term interests, rather than benefiting the Sudanese people. These deals were seen as agreements made by former President Omar al-Bashir with the Qatari government in exchange for political and financial support—at the cost of ceding Sudanese land and resources under the guise of investment and redevelopment, as was the case with Suakin Island on the Red Sea.

## 5. Tension in Relations After the Ousting of Omar al-Bashir



A photo of the Sudanese Minister of Defense reading the statement announcing the removal of Omar al-Bashir, from AlKhaleej website

The Qatari government suffered a major blow following the announcement by Sudan's Minister of Defense of the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir, after thirty years in power. This marked a dramatic turning point in the popular uprising that began on December 19, 2018, and signaled the fall of one of Doha's most important allies in the region, ushering in a new phase in relations between the two countries.

Relations between the ruling Sudanese military council and the Qatari government have experienced noticeable tension since 2019, following the fall of President Omar al-Bashir's regime. This tension stems from the council's refusal to engage with the Qatari government, thereby avoiding what would have been seen at the time as a betrayal of the Sudanese revolution and the popular will, which sought a complete break with the former regime and its allies. The tension escalated further when the military council refused to receive a high-level Qatari delegation led by Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in June 2019. This move was interpreted as a political message reflecting a new direction for the transitional authority in Khartoum, distancing itself from Doha. Although Qatar's Foreign Ministry denied the incident, the Deputy Head of the Military Council later confirmed it, describing the act as a diplomatic mistake.

Despite this tension, Qatar took the initiative to send official congratulatory messages to the military council, in which Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, expressed his desire to open a new chapter with Sudan. However, relations did not regain their former warmth, as caution continued to dominate official interactions between the two sides. Additionally, pressure from regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates contributed to complicating the situation, amid the military council's efforts to strengthen its traditional Gulf alliances.

Although there had previously been military cooperation between Khartoum and Doha—particularly during al-Bashir's rule—this relationship did not develop under the military council. Since then, the relationship between Sudan and Qatar has remained in a state of stagnation: no official break, but with a clear absence of genuine political trust or effective rapprochement.

# Chapter Three: Tools and Mechanisms of Qatari Intervention in Sudan

The multiple tools employed by the Qatari government in Sudan reveal a comprehensive pattern of intervention that extended beyond mere political relations to include media and economic dimensions. This intervention was not innocent; rather, it represented an attempt to reengineer the Sudanese landscape in a way that aligned with the interests of the Qatari government and its regional political agenda — backed by Western powers that have used Qatar as a vehicle for advancing their own objectives.

Understanding these tools cannot be separated from the broader context of Qatar's regional policies, which rely on soft power cloaked in the rhetoric of support and mediation, while in essence representing a clear breach of national sovereignty and independent decision making.

Qatar's presence in Sudan was not merely a case of traditional bilateral relations. Instead, it relied on a diverse package of soft power instruments, strategically employed by Doha to expand its influence within Sudan's internal affairs. These tools included political mediation, financial aid, media influence, economic investments in sensitive areas, and the building of ideological alliances. Together, they helped entrench Qatari influence and, to varying degrees, impacted Sudan's sovereign decision making — until Qatar's project collapsed with the fall of the al-Bashir regime.

## 1. Political Mediation

Qatar's mediation style is characterized by its highly personal nature, with mediation efforts closely tied to the Emir himself. This reflects the personalized nature of Qatari foreign policy. What further reinforces this mediation approach is the financial resources allocated to it and the material incentives offered to entice the parties involved. As a result, such efforts rarely lead to lasting solutions to Sudan's crises, despite the signing of agreements that are often fragile and prone to collapse.

Additionally, Qatar's presence on the United Nations Security Council between 2006 and 2007 gave its diplomacy a boost in prestige and visibility. Mediation in regional conflicts has become one of the key operational tools of Qatari foreign policy. Several analysts suggest that Qatar has shaped its foreign policy based on two strategic pillars: survival and the pursuit of regional prominence, relying heavily on mediation diplomacy between conflicting parties.

Through this strategy, Qatar has sought to bolster its regional standing by cultivating the image of a "neutral mediator" — a reliable actor committed to peace and stability in the region. To that end, it has spared no effort, using financial inducements to secure any success — even symbolic — in its mediation efforts. This includes enticing disputing parties to accept Qatari mediation or at least to issue statements praising its role, thereby allowing Qatar to score diplomatic points. These gestures are then leveraged to gain diplomatic capital and reinforce the Qatari government's role in a region marked by instability.

Thus, the Qatari government played the role of mediator in Sudan through soft power — or what is often referred to as "carrot diplomacy" — capitalizing on its wealth and time, while striving by all means not to show any clear bias toward any party. This enabled it to act as a mediator both regionally and globally. In addition to Qatar's tools of soft power, the shifting nature of global conflict meant that great powers could no longer manage all crises alone. These responsibilities were increasingly delegated to smaller states within their sphere of influence.

The world has witnessed a sharp increase in the number and scale of conflicts, a reality acknowledged by the UN General Assembly, which stated that today's major global conflicts have become too large for any single power to handle alone. Traditional powers — such as the United States and the European Union — that possess genuine leverage and can pressure conflicting parties through threats of sanctions are no longer solely in charge.

Qatar's mediation efforts were further facilitated by its cultural ties with Sudan, particularly shared language and religion. These factors helped Doha assume a leading role in mediating some of Sudan's internal conflicts. However, observers argue that Qatar's mediation in Sudan followed a difficult and controversial path. The regime faced sharp criticism and a strong backlash due to its close relationship with the al-Bashir regime, as well as accusations concerning the credibility of its mediation efforts.

By leading these mediations, Qatar was able to identify and exploit loopholes that allowed it to penetrate Sudanese politics and influence developments on the ground — effectively enabling the major powers that had delegated this task to Doha to steer events in Sudan. But with the fall of al-Bashir's regime, Qatar's influence in the Sudanese political scene declined significantly. Moreover, the mediations themselves had a negative impact, often lacking a comprehensive vision or addressing the structural root causes of conflict — such as political and economic marginalization — instead focusing narrowly on the division of power and wealth.

## 2. The Media Apparatus



A picture from Al Jazeera's site during its coverage of the closure of its office in Khartoum by the Sudanese authorities.

The Qatari government utilized its media apparatus to influence foreign policy, although it sought to do so indirectly. In 1998, it issued a law abolishing the Ministry of Information, redistributing its responsibilities and transforming some of its departments into independent bodies. Qatar came to possess a powerful media machine, represented by the Qatar Media Corporation, Qatar News Agency, Al Jazeera Network, the Doha Centre for Media Freedom, and Qatari press outlets.

Al Jazeera, in particular, stands out as one of the most prominent soft power tools wielded by the Qatari government. Qatar invested vast resources into the network, which brought about a qualitative shift in the world of communication and information globally, through its significant influence at the Arab, regional, and international levels. However, in recent years, Al Jazeera has struggled to maintain the same level of influence and has lost a substantial portion of its audience.

Nevertheless, it remains one of Qatar's most notable modern ventures in the field of media and communication since its establishment in 1996. The network successfully expanded from a single channel to a global news network, comprising multilingual channels, hundreds of online platforms and social media accounts, a research center, and an academic institute for training.

Al Jazeera is often accused of selective coverage, as the channel rarely publishes anything about Qatar and never addresses the country's internal affairs. It maintains complete silence on the state of human rights in Qatar, while heavily focusing on the human rights records of Qatar's rivals. Al Jazeera's various television channels almost daily broadcast discussions about human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE, with an abundance of reports on these issues.

In its coverage of events and mediations led by Qatar in Sudan, Al Jazeera adopted an editorial policy marked by polarization. It focused on discrediting Qatar's political and ideological opponents in Sudan while ignoring the abuses committed by Qatar's allies. This was evident in the network's blatant promotion of al-Bashir's regime and policies, avoiding any content that could harm his image—whether related to human rights violations committed by his government or by its loyalists.

The Qatari government used Al Jazeera as a bargaining tool against certain parties in Sudan, employing media distortion if they rejected or criticized Qatari mediation efforts and their effectiveness. This was confirmed by several reports indicating that Qatar has consistently used Al Jazeera as a means of blackmailing states. This practice was revealed in U.S. diplomatic cables leaked by WikiLeaks and published by the British newspaper The Guardian, which indicated that Qatar used the Al Jazeera satellite channel as a bargaining chip in its negotiations with certain countries.

In one leaked cable, a U.S. diplomat noted that, despite the channel's emphasis on editorial independence, it is 'one of Qatar's most important political and diplomatic tools.' Another cable released by WikiLeaks stated that Qatar uses Al Jazeera as a tool for leverage in foreign policy, contradicting the network's claims of editorial independence.

One such cable mentioned that Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani had offered Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak a reduction in Al Jazeera's criticism of Egypt in exchange for a shift in Egypt's stance on the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Regarding Qatari-Saudi relations, another leaked cable stated that the U.S. Embassy in Doha reported that relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia were generally improving after Qatar reduced its criticism of the Saudi royal family on Al Jazeera.

### **3. Financial and Economic Aid**

Qatar used financial funding and support as a key tool to influence Sudanese policies,

providing both direct and indirect support to the regime and Islamic movements within Sudan. Direct support included funding banks and companies owned by the Qatari government, such as Qatar National Bank, in addition to channeling funds into service projects that benefited the Sudanese government. Indirect support involved financial transfers to charitable organizations aligned with the Qatari government, as well as funding conferences and intellectual workshops that promoted its agenda.

Moreover, Qatar used humanitarian aid as a means to build political influence in conflict zones such as Darfur, where aid was often tied to strengthening its tribal and political presence in those areas.

On the economic front, during al-Bashir's rule, Qatar injected millions of dollars into various investments in Sudan—ranging from agriculture and mining to infrastructure and port development. The Qatari government adopted a strategic investment policy targeting vital locations, such as the development of Port Suakin, which was viewed as an attempt to build a sphere of influence on the Red Sea. This move raised concerns among other countries, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Qatar also invested in large-scale agricultural projects in regions like White Nile and Al-Jazirah, aiming to bolster food security, despite allegations of a lack of transparency and limited benefits for Sudanese citizens. Additionally, there were investments in conflict areas such as Darfur and Eastern Sudan, often directed toward supporting tribes or political forces loyal to the Qatari government.

## Chapter Four: The Effects of Qatari Intervention on the Sudanese Situation

Qatari intervention in Sudan's internal affairs has been a highly influential factor in shaping the political, economic, and security developments over recent decades, especially since the early 2000s. This intervention has gone beyond the boundaries of normal diplomatic relations to deeper levels, manifested in clear political support for certain regimes, fueling internal divisions, and employing financial and media tools to enhance its influence.

Many Sudanese politicians view the Qatari intervention not as directed at the Sudanese state itself, but rather targeted at the Bashir regime, even though it was cloaked in the guise of mediation and support. In essence, it contributed to undermining the political process, fueling conflicts, and obstructing democratic transition. This intervention continues to pose an obstacle to building a stable state with true sovereignty, forcing Sudanese actors to reassess Qatar's role and confront it with a national foreign policy.

### 1. Internal Impact

The Qatari intervention in Sudan's political affairs has emerged as one of the most significant challenges threatening the country's sovereignty and the independence of its national decision making. This intervention, both direct and indirect, has influenced the internal political landscape by supporting specific political factions or ruling regimes, thereby weakening the state's ability to make decisions based on its own national interests. This influence is evident in the deepening of internal divisions, as Qatar's support for certain political or armed groups has bolstered the dominance of factions loyal to it. Such actions have obstructed opportunities for peaceful democratic change and fueled internal conflicts. At times, this support is viewed as a means of making Sudan subordinate to Qatari policies, ultimately undermining its national sovereignty.

Politically, Qatari intervention in Sudanese affairs represented one of the most prominent forms of indirect regional influence within Sudan. It was not merely political or investment support but extended to affecting the political structure, media landscape, and internal balances among various forces. Qatari support was directed specifically at the regime of former President Omar al-Bashir rather than the state institutions.

This support helped him withstand internal and international pressures by providing massive financial backing and fostering alliances both domestically and abroad. This weakened the civilian opposition and gave the regime the ability to circumvent demands for democratic reform. Furthermore, the Qatari government encouraged strengthening the presence of its allies within key state apparatuses, which deepened ideological divisions within Sudanese society.

Rather than contributing to building state institutions, Qatar's support was used to reinforce security agencies loyal to the regime at the expense of state institutions, leading to political fragility and a lack of trust between civilian and military forces. This, in turn, prolonged the rule of the Bashir regime, which was accused of corruption.

Qatari mediations played a significant role in exacerbating the political situation in Sudan, particularly in the Darfur file, which remained complex and unresolved. Despite the signing of the Doha Peace Agreement in 2011, the lack of inclusivity in addressing the root causes of the crisis and dealing with some factions while excluding others turned the mediation into a factor that prolonged the conflict rather than resolving it.

Qatar faced widespread criticism for its bias toward specific factions. The Sudanese opposition has long been skeptical of Qatari mediations and has repeatedly accused the Qatari government of attempting to divide the opposition in Darfur and overlooking war crimes committed by the Bashir regime. In a statement regarding the Darfur Donors Conference held in Doha under Qatari auspices, the opposition described the conference as merely fragmenting solutions, thereby entrenching the regional crisis instead of providing a comprehensive resolution to a major part of Sudan's overall crisis.

The opposition argued that the groups that signed the Doha Peace Agreement in Darfur did not represent the opposition in the region but were splintered factions isolated from the Justice and Equality Movement, serving the regime's agenda and lacking political or military influence on the ground. The Qatari government was accused of using mediation as a tool to enhance its influence rather than genuinely resolve the conflict.

Some opposition parties went further, accusing Qatar of participating in the Darfur genocide by channeling funds through the Sudanese branch of Qatar Charity and constructing housing complexes in remote areas to serve as safe havens and training centers for groups loyal to Qatar.

On the media front, Qatar utilized its media tools, primarily Al Jazeera, to influence Sudanese public opinion. It helped promote political forces loyal to Qatar while marginalizing others, which deepened polarization among Sudan's various social groups, especially after the December 2018 revolution, where the media discourse appeared biased toward some parties over others.

The Qatari media machine continued to support the Bashir regime, particularly Al Jazeera, which worked to highlight the political and economic achievements of his government, such as achieving security stability in certain areas and generally presenting a positive image of his regime. The channel also covered some of Bashir's activities, portraying them in a supportive manner.

At the beginning of the revolution, the Qatari media machine sought to obscure and downplay the events of the Sudanese revolution. The Qatari government's stance on the Sudanese revolution was a continuation of the Bashir regime's narrative, placing it outside the context of the so-called Arab Spring uprisings. However, as the revolution gained momentum and its public scope widened, the Qatari media machine was forced to confront this new development in Sudan — a development it struggled to comprehend because it was fundamentally different.

Al Jazeera, Qatar's main propaganda tool that had covered and supported all other Arab Spring revolutions, could not ignore the Sudanese revolution as it was rapidly gaining international media attention. This lack of Qatari media support left the Sudanese revolution relatively isolated, especially from Al Jazeera, which had been a key media force in promoting other Arab Spring movements but notably sidelined the Sudanese uprising.

Following the success of the Sudanese revolution and the overthrow of General Omar al-Bashir's regime, with the military council taking power, all coverage on both "Al Jazeera Main" and "Al Jazeera Mubasher" focused on hosting Sudanese figures associated with the Bashir regime in their Doha studios and via satellite from Khartoum. The coverage concentrated mainly on questioning the intentions of the Sudanese military council headed by General Burhan and trying to incite the Sudanese public, especially those protesting at the General Command sit-in, against the transitional council, accusing it of refusing to hand over power to civilians.

However, a close observer would note that General Burhan and members of the military council intensified their meetings with Sudanese political forces and reached an agreement on the form of the transitional period, which would culminate in the formation of a civilian transitional government and a full transfer of power from the military council to civilians.

Al Jazeera also supported remnants of the Bashir regime by covering their small protests or through its muted silence on certain necessary aspects of the Sudanese revolutionary movement's coverage. The channel even exploited this situation for propaganda purposes. For example, Al Jazeera saw the U.S.-conditioned deal for Sudanese normalization (with Israel) as an extension of a new phenomenon in the stance of some Arab countries.

## 2. External Impact

The Qatari government provided financial and political support to the Al-Bashir regime, but this support came at the cost of concessions that affected Sudan's foreign relations. It was often accompanied by negative repercussions, particularly in relations with other Arab countries—especially the Gulf states—contributing to Sudan's diplomatic isolation. This, in turn, complicated its ties with some regional and international powers at a time when Sudan was in desperate need of strong alliances to overcome its ongoing economic and political crises.

One notable example of this controversial support was the Suakin Island Agreement, signed between the Qatari government and the Al-Bashir government. The agreement aimed to develop the port of Suakin on the Red Sea coast, with a value of \$4 billion. According to the deal, Doha would enter as a partner with a 49% stake in the project. The agreement included rehabilitating the port's infrastructure, constructing new ship docks, providing modern equipment, and increasing cargo handling capacity. The Sudanese Ministry of Transport committed to connecting the port to a railway line and establishing sea routes between Qatar's Hamad Port and Sudan's Suakin Port.

This agreement sparked wide controversy and was seen as an unfriendly message to Sudan's neighbors, especially Egypt. Former Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister Gamal El-Shawaadfi described the deal as a "real shock" to Egypt, accusing Khartoum of disregarding Egyptian interests and threatening Egypt's national security in the Red Sea. He warned that Sudan's alignment with the Qatar-Turkey axis would reignite tensions between Cairo and Khartoum, revealing that Egypt had summoned the Sudanese ambassador to formally protest what it viewed as a dangerous deal.

Moreover, some economic experts warned of the risks of facilitating Qatari presence in the Red Sea region, citing concerns over undermining new economic ambitions in the area and threatening the strategic role of the Suez Canal. Former head of Egyptian Military Intelligence's reconnaissance unit, Major General Nasr Salem, considered the Qatari-Sudanese agreement over Suakin Island an attempt to

pressure Egypt and threaten its national security and strategic interests along the Red Sea coast.

### **3. Infiltration into the Sudanese Economy**

Qatari intervention cast a shadow over the Sudanese economy through controversial investment projects, some of which were located in security-sensitive areas such as Darfur. Despite the declared developmental support, some of these projects were seen as attempts to impose political and economic agendas without considering the priorities of sustainable development or national sovereignty.

Economically, Qatari support for development projects in Sudan was seen as a short-term blessing, but it carried significant risks. Sudan faces major challenges in achieving sustainable development and diversifying its economy away from dependence on natural resources like oil. Nevertheless, Qatari intervention reinforced reliance on a single partner for development, which increased the fragility of the Sudanese economy after the political stance of Qatar toward Sudan shifted.

Furthermore, many observers believe that the conditions attached to Qatari investments granted to Sudan are unbalanced, which has strengthened Qatar's influence in vital sectors of the Sudanese economy. Some of these conditions include granting Qatar significant concessions in the exploitation of Sudan's natural resources, without Sudan receiving the expected benefits from these resources.

On the other hand, Qatari investments have contributed to increasing Sudan's public debt, as Sudan is often forced to borrow Qatari funds to develop certain projects. If these projects fail or their value declines, Sudan will find itself trapped in a vicious cycle of debt, hindering its ability to meet essential developmental needs.

Many observers believe that Qatari intervention in the Sudanese economy undermines Sudan's sovereignty, especially regarding the Suakin Island agreement, as the Red Sea coast is considered a region of national security and strategic importance for Sudan. This prompted the military council to threaten reviewing all agreements signed by the Bashir regime with Qatar and Turkey in line with Sudan's national interests.

The military council clarified that the agreements signed by Bashir and his Qatari and Turkish counterparts were based on shared ideological interests rather than Sudan's interests. It considered the agreements signed with the Qatari and Turkish regimes in 2017 to be null and void, and affirmed the transitional government's

right to terminate all agreements signed by the previous regime, as these served Bashir, his family, or his political organization rather than Sudan.

The official spokesperson of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan, Mohamed El-Faki Suleiman, stated that following Sudan's reintegration into the international community, a new and comprehensive strategy regarding the Red Sea region has been developed. This strategy will be discussed soon among government components before its official announcement. El-Faki Suleiman hinted that the new strategy might cancel previous agreements with Turkey and Qatar, amid widespread demands within Sudan for such action. This stance led to the Turkish Cooperation Agency halting the Suakin rehabilitation project after the fall of the Bashir regime.

## Chapter Five: Mediations Led by Qatar in Sudan and Their Outcomes

Henry Kissinger once said: *“It is not in America’s interest to solve any of the world’s problems, but rather to keep control over the threads of those problems and manipulate them according to its own interests.”*

This statement largely reflects the nature of Qatari mediation efforts in Sudan – especially considering that the United States is the driving force behind these efforts. The approach adopted by the Qatari government in mediating various conflicts in Sudan suffers from a fundamental flaw: it reduces the conflict to a mere dispute between a military faction and the government, and seeks a fragile settlement by offering gifts and incentives to warlords in exchange for diplomatic gains for the Qatari government.

This is done without genuinely exploring the broader and more complex dimensions of the Sudanese crisis, nor addressing the real causes behind the outbreak of the conflict. There is a failure to tackle the deep-rooted issues of the crisis, such as the political, economic, and cultural disparities that have fueled conflicts in Sudan for decades. Without broad political representation that includes all components of society, any agreement reached will remain weak and fragile – potentially leading to further exclusion and public anger.

Qatari approaches have long contributed to worsening the situation in Sudan and prolonging the war, rather than resolving it. These mediations have exacerbated the suffering of marginalized communities, who have endured exclusion and neglect for nearly a century – putting Sudan at increasing risk of fragmentation at an alarming pace.

# 1. Mediation between Sudan and Eritrea – 1999



- **Causes of the Crisis**

The roots of the crisis between Sudan and Eritrea stem from a complex mix of political, security, and historical factors. One of the main causes of tension between the two countries was the mutual accusations of supporting opposition movements. Sudan accused Eritrea of harboring and training armed groups hostile to it, especially in eastern Sudan, while Eritrea accused Khartoum of supporting Islamist groups opposing Isaias Afwerki's regime.

Regional alliances played a significant role in escalating the crisis, particularly amid the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict, where Sudan sided with Ethiopia at certain stages, which Eritrea considered a threat to its interests. Additionally, recurring border disputes and the closure of crossings between the two countries increased tensions, damaging trade and local communities on both sides of the border.

Relations further deteriorated due to mutual accusations of espionage and interference in internal affairs, leading at times to the expulsion of diplomats and the freezing of diplomatic relations. Despite these tensions, the relationship between the two countries witnessed periods of détente, especially when their interests converged in facing common regional challenges. This underscores that

the relationship between Sudan and Eritrea has oscillated between conflict and rapprochement depending on regional and international developments.

During the Gulf War, Sudan and Eritrea held a common stance supporting Iraq, which contributed to a temporary alliance between the two countries.

### • **Qatari Mediation**

In May 1999, Qatar announced the signing of a reconciliation agreement in Doha between the Presidents of Sudan and Eritrea, Omar al-Bashir and Isaias Afwerki. The agreement included the following points:

- Resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- Respect for international laws and norms governing peaceful coexistence and good relations between states and peoples.
- Respect for the political choices of both countries and their peoples, refraining from adopting policies of exporting ideologies or attempting to impose them.
- Refraining from hosting or organizing regional or international conferences aimed at adopting policies or coordinating actions that threaten the security and stability of the two countries.
- Working to resolve the remaining disputes between the two countries through peaceful means.
- Establishing joint committees between the two countries to study outstanding issues, especially those related to security, and to implement what was agreed upon in this agreement.

The Qatari mediation between Eritrea and Sudan failed to endure for long because the agreement reached did not comprehensively address all points of conflict. The memorandum signed by the parties contained some gaps that served as weaknesses, preventing the full and effective implementation of the agreement. These gaps related to issues such as borders and some security arrangements that were not clearly settled, making it difficult for both parties to reach a permanent and comprehensive solution.

## 2. Mediation in the Darfur Conflict



- **Causes of the Crisis**

Darfur is located in western Sudan and covers an area of approximately half a million square kilometers — about one-fifth of Sudan's total area. It is known for its diverse and rich geography, with many mountainous regions, the most famous being **Jebel Marra**, a prominent natural landmark. Once considered one of the greenest regions in coastal Africa, Jebel Marra is dotted with waterfalls and volcanic lakes.

However, during the last few decades of the 20th century, the region suffered from severe environmental degradation due to recurring droughts. This led to a significant decline in the natural resources on which the region's population relied, along with severe desertification. These environmental challenges deeply affected the livelihoods of the local population, prompting waves of displacement toward less drought-affected areas.

Tensions arose over access to water, pasture, and land — creating conflict between nomadic groups who depended on livestock herding and settled communities who relied on agriculture. Since then, the region has witnessed recurring tensions and conflicts, with historical roots dating back to colonial times and the post-independence era.

The conflicts between tribal groups in Darfur evolved through two main phases:

- **Minor and limited-scale conflicts**, such as intertribal skirmishes and occasional clashes, mostly occurring from the 1950s to the 1970s. These rarely extended beyond the geographical scope of the directly involved groups.
- Prolonged and intense conflicts, which began in the mid-1980s and continue to the present day.

The issue of civil conflicts in the Darfur region is one of the most complex crises in Sudan's modern history. The complexity of this crisis stems from a combination of overlapping factors—natural, economic, political, and social. These factors are not limited to being local or specific to Darfur alone; rather, they extend to include historical and cultural dimensions that further complicate the crisis. As a result, it has become difficult to contain or resolve, to the extent that it has taken on an international character.

All attempts and measures taken at both the local and central levels to stop or mitigate the crisis have failed, largely due to misguided approaches that lacked accurate diagnosis, as well as superficial remedies that accompanied most solutions. Consequently, the problems would repeatedly resurface, taking on different forms — political, economic, regional, or ethnic.

The conflict evolved from small, localized disputes into complex, multi-layered struggles. Due to the absence of timely and appropriate solutions by the ruling political elites across successive governments, the crisis deepened and expanded — both in natural and human dimensions—until it exploded in 2003, when a group of Darfurians took up arms against the state.

In general, the phenomenon of conflict in Darfur is a recurring one, rooted in both natural and human causes. However, these causes are largely interconnected and can be summarized as follows:

## **Natural Causes**

Natural factors are among the primary drivers of conflict in the Darfur region. The area has witnessed a significant decline in rainfall levels from 1949 to 2024, which negatively impacted agricultural productivity. This environmental decline led to the emergence of new adaptation strategies such as agricultural and pastoral expansion, which in turn increased competition between herders and farmers over limited resources.

As a result of this growing competition, disputes over grazing lands became more frequent. The region also experienced three major drought waves between 1970 and 1994, causing significant environmental changes and triggering population movements from the north to the less-affected southern areas.

Over time, conflicts emerged between the migrating tribes from the north and the indigenous landowners, due to competition over natural resources and land use. Additionally, declining soil fertility prompted an expansion of agricultural activities at the expense of grazing lands. This agricultural expansion led to the conversion of areas previously designated for grazing into farmland, which in turn blocked traditional migration routes for herders—further increasing friction and clashes between them and the farmers.

### • Human Factors

Human factors are among the most significant contributors to the conflict in Darfur, given their complexity and diversity. One of the key factors is the **population growth** that the region has witnessed over the past decades, which has affected production patterns and increased competition over resources.

This population increase has also led to a rise in the number of livestock, contributing to overgrazing and putting additional pressure on already limited grazing lands. Moreover, the lack of balanced development in the region has worsened economic and social problems, leaving Darfur largely isolated from modern development projects and infrastructure.

### • The Qatari Initiative for Peace in Darfur



An image of the official ceremony for the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement from the Gulf Online website.

In 2008, the State of Qatar announced its readiness to contribute to finding a lasting solution to the Darfur crisis. Doha began organizing the **Doha Peace Forum**, which became the launching point for negotiations between the Sudanese government and the Darfuri movements.

The **Qatari initiative** was embodied in an invitation to the various parties to engage in negotiations under the supervision of Qatar, which played the role of **chief mediator** in the talks. The Qatari government invested heavily in promoting its image of neutrality through Al **Jazeera Network**, striving to appear balanced by attempting to include all parties—**not just** the Sudanese government or the rebel movements—in order to gain credibility among the involved sides.

However, some parties initially questioned Qatar's intentions and doubted its seriousness in establishing peace in the region, leading them to refuse participation at the outset.

- **Provisions of the Doha Agreement**

The Doha Agreement [5] consisted of approximately 106 pages. In addition to definitions of terms, the preamble, and final provisions, it included seven chapters, which can be summarized as follows:

## Chapter One: Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

The first chapter of the agreement emphasizes the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the people of Darfur, in accordance with the Interim National Constitution and international instruments.

The Government of Sudan and the Darfur authorities commit to providing an environment where citizens can enjoy their rights without discrimination. These include civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights, with consideration given to gender equality and inclusiveness of all community components.

The agreement guarantees protection from violence, the right to a fair trial, and freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, including the right to form political parties and unions.

The government is also committed to providing basic services, improving infrastructure, creating employment opportunities, and empowering women and youth. Public participation in reconstruction efforts is encouraged, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The agreement calls for the establishment and activation of independent human rights commissions, and cooperation with international bodies and civil society to ensure the monitoring, protection, and enforcement of equality and justice in Darfur.

## Chapter Two: Power Sharing and the Administrative Status of Darfur

The second chapter of the agreement emphasizes fundamental principles for power sharing in Sudan, ensuring the unity and stability of the country.

The agreement states that sovereignty belongs to the people, and that cultural and religious diversity is a source of strength that must be managed with balance and justice.

Power sharing is considered a tool to guarantee the peaceful transfer of power through free and fair elections, monitored both internally and externally.

The agreement stresses good governance, separation of powers, and judicial independence, affirming that citizenship is the basis of rights without discrimination.

It promotes the fair participation of the people of Darfur at all levels of government, ensuring their representation in civil and military state institutions, as well as equal access to education and employment.

The agreement encourages armed movements to transform into political parties and take part in governance, while also establishing special measures to guarantee women's participation in decision-making.

## Chapter Three: Sharing Wealth and National Resources

Article Three of the agreement outlines the criteria for power sharing, emphasizing the necessity of respecting the **principle of proportional representation** of Darfur within the structures of national governance. This ensures **full and fair participation** in political power.

The agreement acknowledges the application of the principle of **positive discrimination (affirmative action)** in favor of the people of Darfur, to compensate for previous periods of marginalization. This includes providing **special opportunities in education, training, and employment** in civil and public services, aimed at empowering them to contribute effectively to Sudan's development.

Representation of Darfur at the national level takes into account the population size of the region after South Sudan's secession, to guarantee **justice and balance** in managing state affairs.

## Chapter Four : Compensation and Return of Displaced Persons and Refugees

Article Four defines Darfur's representation in the national executive authority based on the principle of population proportionality.

Darfur is represented in the presidency and the cabinet in a way that reflects the geographic diversity and political plurality of the region. This includes appointing several vice presidents, assistants, and advisors from Darfur according to the population ratio.

The vice president from Darfur is granted membership in the national cabinet and the national security council and performs specific duties in the president's absence.

Senior presidential assistants and advisors from Darfur are also appointed proportionally within the cabinet.

Current officeholders from Darfur continue in their positions, and additional ministers are nominated by the movements signing the agreement, ensuring their representation is maintained despite any government changes.

## Chapter Five : Compensation and Return of Displaced Persons and Refugees

This chapter addresses the general principles and prohibited activities within the framework of the permanent ceasefire agreement and final security arrangements in Darfur. It emphasizes that resolving the Darfur conflict cannot be achieved through military means alone but requires a comprehensive political process involving all parties.

The chapter stresses the necessity of protecting civilians, especially women and children, in accordance with human rights and international law. It underscores the importance of facilitating the mission of the joint operation to protect civilians and alleviate humanitarian suffering by ensuring humanitarian aid reaches all areas.

It highlights the importance of achieving lasting peace through a comprehensive agreement that addresses the root causes of the conflict, while guaranteeing freedom of movement for individuals, goods, and services. Additionally, it recognizes the conflict's impact on vulnerable groups and includes the establishment of a professional national armed force to protect the state's sovereignty.

Regarding prohibited activities, the chapter calls for an immediate cessation of hostile acts against civilians and the halt of activities threatening the agreement. These include the illegal recruitment of children, the use of landmines, and intimidation against humanitarian workers. Parties must cooperate with relevant mechanisms and fulfill their commitments to prevent any violations of the ceasefire, including prohibitions on deploying forces without authorization or conducting hostile activities against other parties to the agreement.

Chapter Five: Justice and Reconciliation Chapter Five of the agreement addresses justice and reconciliation in Darfur and relies on several principles to ensure lasting peace in the region. These principles include respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and the adoption of transitional justice mechanisms to ensure accountability for crimes committed during the conflict. It also recognizes the victims' right to receive appropriate compensation for the damages they suffered as a result of the conflict.

## Chapter Six : Dialogue, Internal Consultation, and Implementation Methods

This chapter emphasizes the importance of dialogue and internal consultation in Darfur as a means to consolidate peace, promote reconciliation, and strengthen national unity. It highlights the role of civil society in supporting the peace process.

The dialogue aims to broaden popular support, enhance traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, strengthen local governance, support the return of displaced persons, empower women and youth, and achieve political and social renewal in Darfur.

A dialogue mechanism is established, consisting of 20 members chaired by a prominent Sudanese figure. It includes representatives from the parties involved, community leaders, and civil organizations, with assistance from UNAMID and local and international experts. Dialogue sessions are to begin within 30 days of forming the mechanism and will be conducted over three months across all Darfur states, attended by international observers.

UNAMID provides logistical support and develops a media strategy, while the government contributes 30% of the funding. International donors are invited to cover the remaining costs. The dialogue outputs are documented, submitted to the relevant authorities, and preserved as educational references.

A committee is established to follow up on the implementation of the agreement, ensuring timely adherence and providing necessary technical support.

The agreement also includes an annex in the form of a timeline for implementation.

### • **Evaluation of the Qatari Initiative**

Despite the Doha Agreement addressing several demands of the people of Darfur, there was a lack of seriousness in implementing its provisions. The agreement included their representation at all levels of government, including the presidency, and set the 1956 borders as the demarcation between Darfur and other regions of Sudan. Compensation was approved for displaced persons and refugees, with guarantees for their voluntary return to their villages. Measures were also provided for the development of the region, with an allocation of five billion dollars.

The document also affirmed the right of the people of Darfur to participate in central authority according to their population proportion, and called for the reform of state institutions to achieve nationalism and justice. It included agreements on reinstating those dismissed due to the conflict, releasing detainees, and organizing the return of displaced persons through a specialized committee.

Additionally, a compensation and reparations fund and a commission for justice and reconciliation were established. The agreement detailed arrangements for a ceasefire and disarmament, focusing on encouraging grassroots and soldier participation in peace efforts. A comprehensive Darfur forum was held to endorse the agreement by all parties, along with a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with the terms.

- **Disadvantages of the Document:**

1. The Doha Agreement did not receive the consensus of all parties, as some groups opposing the government expressed numerous reservations about what they considered fundamental shortcomings in the document. The document relied on the 2005 Constitution and the January 2005 Peace Agreement as references, despite the expiration of the former and controversy surrounding the latter, which limited the document from the outset. It also reviewed previous ceasefire agreements without addressing the reasons for their failure, even though the same failure factors were repeated in the document. Additionally, the document maintained the National Congress Party's control over the executive and legislative branches without review and reduced the representation of opposition movements, turning them into mere guests—repeating the same mistake made by the Naivasha and Abuja agreements.

Despite the emphasis on judicial independence and neutrality, the document did not address the need to restructure the judiciary to end partisan dominance, even though the 2005 UN Fact-Finding Mission report confirmed judicial bias. The document also highlighted the importance of traditional administration without acknowledging its politicization and transformation into a tool subordinate to the ruling party, which weakened its role and effectiveness.

2. The document maintained the dominance of the National Congress Party over state institutions by preserving its control over both the executive and legislative bodies, while reducing the representation of armed opposition movements. This approach was similar to that of the Naivasha and Abuja agreements, which emptied the agreement of its true meaning. It also overlooked the need to restructure the judiciary despite affirming its independence, ignoring international reports that

proved its bias. Additionally, the document did not address the politicization of traditional administration, which had become a tool in the hands of the ruling party.

3. Although the document acknowledged the necessity for the armed forces to be professional and neutral, it did not include any measures to remove partisan control over them. The same applies to the civil service, which requires reforms to ensure its national character and fair representation. Furthermore, the proposed transitional authority appeared to lack real powers, as it was not allowed to influence either the central or regional governments, making it a symbolic body prone to conflict from the very beginning.
4. The document conflicted between referring to Darfur as a unified region and acknowledging the existing division into states, despite this division being one of the causes of the conflict. What was needed was a return to the system of six regions and 86 localities, given the financial and administrative burdens caused by the division.

On the economic side, the document did not clarify who sets the national policies, nor did it call for holding a comprehensive national economic conference. It also ignored Darfur's right to proportional development based on its population. Although development commitments for Darfur were included, they were not part of a clear national plan, nor accompanied by measures ensuring transparency and accountability—an essential requirement given the widespread corruption in previous projects that went unpunished.

5. The document stipulated the independence and impartiality of the judiciary without proposing any real structural reforms to end politicization. It also failed to address the ruling party's dominant control over local administration. Regarding the armed forces and civil service, the document called for their professionalism and neutrality but did not provide any measures to remove the party's grip on them, rendering these calls merely symbolic.
6. On the political front, the document called for the formation of a transitional authority with weak powers, making it a largely symbolic body prone to either ineffectiveness or conflict, especially given the failure to address previous unsuccessful transitional experiences. Regarding the division of Darfur, the document wavered between referring to Darfur as a single region and maintaining the current state-based system, despite the latter being one of the causes of the conflict, whereas what is needed is a return to the six-region system to reduce administrative and financial waste.

7. The document included provisions that undermined the impartiality of the international judiciary, as it replaced the referral of the accused to the International Criminal Court (Resolution 1593) with a special court, raising doubts about its independence. The document also assumed that security and peace were already established, and it spoke of a general amnesty while fighting was still ongoing and a ceasefire had not been achieved.
8. One of the most serious flaws of the document was the exclusion of national participation, as it made the negotiation results with one faction final and nonnegotiable, repeating one of the main reasons for the failure of the Nairobi Agreement. The agreement also reflected a lack of trust between the parties, which led to an overreliance on international actors, whether in chairing committees, monitoring the ceasefire, or overseeing reconstruction—an approach similar to that of the Nairobi Agreement and the Oslo donors' conference, yet none of these experiences led to effective implementation.
9. The document reflected a profound lack of trust between the two parties, relying heavily on extensive international oversight—from ceasefire committees to reconstruction efforts—making the implementation dependent on external will.
10. The document included clauses that affected rights without ensuring justice, such as converting compensation from individuals to families, which disadvantages large families, and neglecting blood money (diya) for the families of the deceased. It also stipulated Darfur's representation in the presidency without specifying the selection mechanism, and left the issues of disarmament and fighter rehabilitation vague, failing to seriously address the widespread proliferation of weapons and the arming of tribes — one of the biggest challenges threatening community peace in Darfur.

In conclusion, opponents of the document view it as a patchwork rather than a true solution, ignoring that the Darfur crisis is part of a broader national crisis that cannot be resolved at the expense of other regions, nor through an agreement with only one party while neglecting the national dimension.

#### • **Reasons for the Failure of the Qatari Mediation in Darfur**

The failure of Qatari mediation in Darfur is considered one of the topics that sparks considerable debate in political and regional circles. Despite the media hype that accompanied the process and the enormous sums allocated by the Qatari government in its "effort to achieve peace in Darfur through mediation," the initiative was unable to reach a lasting solution that would put an end to the ongoing crisis in the region.

Many observers believe that the failure of Qatari mediation in Darfur was the result of a complex set of local, regional, and international factors. These include the diversity of armed factions and the differences in their objectives, as well as the reservations of the Sudanese government and Qatar's reliance on superficial solutions, which made it difficult to find a comprehensive and lasting resolution. Furthermore, the lack of coordination among the various mediation efforts and the absence of trust-building between the concerned parties further complicated the situation.

The reasons behind the failure of the mediation in Darfur can be summarized through a set of detailed points:

### **- The Historical Complexity of the Darfur Conflict**

The conflict in Darfur is not a recent one; rather, it has deep historical roots linked to ethnic, economic, and political discrimination. Since the establishment of the central state, the people of the region have complained of what they perceive as marginalization, especially in development and basic services. This led to the eruption of ethnic conflicts between different population groups, which in turn resulted in the formation of armed movements demanding justice and equality. This complex background made it difficult to reach a lasting agreement among the various parties, as each had its own demands and objectives that were hard to reconcile.

### **- Doubts Among Some Parties About the Impartiality of the Qatari Mediator**

Qatar faced accusations of using its mediation as a tool to serve its regional alliances rather than acting as an impartial mediator seeking a balanced settlement that satisfies all parties. The armed movements accused Qatar of bias towards the government. This impression stems from what these parties see as political and ideological closeness between Doha and some actors in the conflict, Qatar's support for the Khartoum government on many occasions, the involvement of some Qatari leaders in backing government policies in Darfur, as well as its disproportionate media and economic support during the mediation process. This perception of bias significantly affected the effectiveness of the mediation, as the opposition movements felt unable to negotiate freely with a mediator they considered partial.

### **- Conflicting International Interests**

The international community, including the United Nations and the African Union, did not provide sufficient support to the negotiations. There were divergent interests

among major powers regarding how to handle the Darfur conflict. Additionally, there was a lack of coordination between various international and regional parties. For example, some Western governments preferred imposing sanctions on Sudan rather than seeking solutions acceptable to the conflicting parties through dialogue and negotiation. This divergence in international strategies further complicated the situation in Darfur and contributed to the failure of the Qatari mediation to achieve tangible results.

### **- Multiplicity of Armed Movements**

One of the major challenges faced by the Qatari mediation was the multiplicity of armed movements in Darfur. There were several armed factions each seeking to achieve different goals, with each faction holding a distinct vision on how to address the Darfur issue. This large number of armed groups made it difficult to reach a comprehensive agreement, as it was challenging to bring all the different parties together at the negotiating table, let alone unify their political visions. Moreover, there were internal divisions within the movements themselves, adding further complexity to the negotiation process.

### **- Lack of Political Will**

One of the most important reasons for the failure of the Qatari mediation in Darfur was the lack of genuine political will among the conflicting parties to achieve peace. The Sudanese government often treated the peace negotiations as a tool to strengthen its political position both domestically and internationally, without making real concessions. On the other hand, the armed movements sought to gain political and military advantages, which made them often unwilling to reach a peaceful settlement. This reluctance from both sides to make concessions hindered the peace process and further complicated the mediation efforts.

### **- Regional and International Interventions**

There were interventions by regional and international countries in the Darfur conflict, which directly affected the Qatari mediation. While everyone expressed a desire to resolve the conflict and find a peaceful solution in Darfur, interventions from countries such as Chad, Egypt, and Libya, which had their own specific interests in the region, complicated the mediation efforts. Each party sought to achieve its own interests, making it difficult to reach a comprehensive solution.

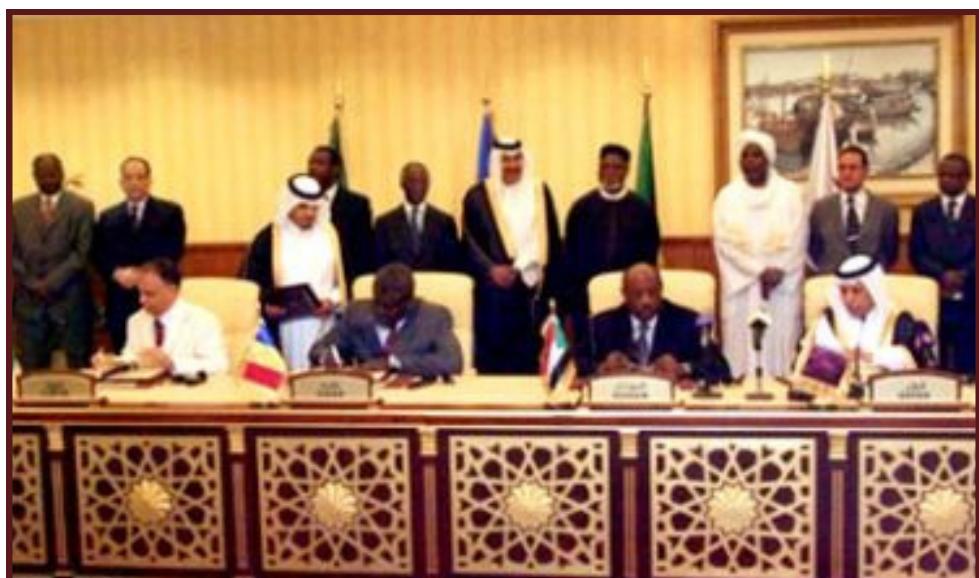
## **- Economic and Logistical Challenges**

Despite the substantial financial support provided by Qatar, economic and logistical challenges were also significant factors in the failure of the mediation. The peace process required massive resources in terms of funding and logistical organization of the negotiations, which posed a major challenge in an unstable environment. Moreover, many efforts were not accompanied by long-term planning to ensure the sustainability of the peace process, leading to a decline in both local and international support for the mediation.

## **- Lack of Trust Among the Parties**

The absence of trust between the conflicting parties was one of the most significant obstacles facing the mediation. The armed movements believed that the Sudanese government had not honored previous agreements and had not made genuine concessions. On the other hand, the Sudanese government doubted the intentions of the armed groups. There was a persistent atmosphere of mistrust from both sides, making negotiations extremely difficult, as every step toward peace faced resistance from both parties.

## **Qatari Mediation between Sudan and Chad**



**Photo of the signing of the peace agreement between Sudan and Chad in Doha  
from Al Jazeera Net website.**

## • Roots of the Crisis

Relations between Sudan and Chad have gone through a long series of tensions and instability, heavily influenced by recurring political changes within Chad since its independence in 1960. Power in Chad alternated between northern leaders of Arab and Muslim backgrounds and Christian groups from the south, leading to internal unrest that spilled over into neighboring Sudan.

During the rule of President Hissène Habré in the 1980s—who came to power through a coup against President Goukouni Oueddei in 1982—tensions with Sudan escalated. Habré accused Khartoum of supporting his opponents, particularly the followers of Oueddei, while his government retaliated by backing rebels in Darfur.

Regional conflicts also played a significant role in worsening relations, such as the Chadian-Libyan dispute over the Aouzou Strip, which ended after French and American intervention in favor of Habré, before the International Court of Justice ultimately ruled in favor of Chad in 1994.

Relations between the two countries remained hostage to these complex political and security factors, amid shifting alliances and chronic internal conflicts.

Despite the ethnic and geographic proximity between Sudan and Chad, their relations have never been stable since their independence. Each side has consistently accused the other of supporting its opponents, and tensions have escalated with the outbreak of internal crises in both countries, such as the Darfur war, the conflict between Chadian opposition groups and Idriss Déby's regime until his death in April 2021, and the Sudanese war that began in April 2023. These developments have widened the divisions and reduced the chances of mutual understanding between them.

## • The Qatari Mediation

In 2009, Qatar hosted meetings to discuss mediation between Sudan and Chad, who were in conflict over allegations that their governments were supporting opposition groups within each other's countries. This dispute had been ongoing since 2005. The agreement signed by both parties stated their commitment to non-interference in each other's internal affairs and to refraining from the use or threat of force in their mutual relations. Both sides agreed to activate the mechanism stipulated in the Dakar Agreement, which Sudan and Chad had signed in the Senegalese capital in 2008. They also requested the Contact Group, formed under the Dakar Agreement, to hold an emergency meeting to develop and implement an

action plan to immediately complete the deployment of observers and a joint protection force.

The Doha Agreement was not implemented because it lacked political will amid ongoing distrust between the two parties, compounded by the stance of rebel groups. Khartoum remained cautious due to Chad's complex ties with Western countries. The underlying causes souring relations between the two countries persisted without a final resolution. These included the ongoing crisis and continuous accusations that each country harbored the other's rebels. Under these circumstances, the problem remained unresolved. Sudan accused Chad not only of inciting armed movements in Darfur against its government but also of attempting to exert control over Darfur as a whole. Conversely, Chad accused Sudan of violating the agreement by continuing to support Chadian rebels.

## Testimonies on the Seriousness of Qatar's Interference in Sudan

- The **Sudan Liberation Movement in Darfur** accused the Qatari government of participating in the genocide in the region. [6]
- The **Eritrean government**, in a statement by the Eritrean Ministry of Information dated November 28, 2019, accused the Qatari government of using Sudan as a launching platform to destabilize Eritrea. [7]
- **Sudanese researcher Salah Khalil**: The Qatari government seeks to destabilize Sudan after the fall of the Bashir regime. [8]
- **Khalid Al-Fahl**, Sudanese researcher and politician: The Qatari government works to destabilize Sudan and acted as the main cover for Bashir's regime and its corruption. [9]
- **Sudanese academic Abdullah Al-Wahid Ibrahim**: The Qatari government has a proxy in Sudan whom it funds and uses to execute its agenda and destabilize any regime not loyal to it. [10]
- **Sudanese writer Fayed Al-Salik** criticized Qatari mediation in Darfur, describing the Qatari government as seeking to divide Sudanese opposition in favor of Bashir's regime. [11]
- **Sudanese journalist Abdul Wahid Ibrahim**: The Qatari government shifted from a mediator role in Sudan to imposing sovereignty and plays a regional and international role intersecting with the interests of major powers as a functional state replacing Sadat and Mubarak's Egypt. [11]

- **Sudanese researcher Abubakr Hamed:** The Qatari government contributes to splitting and weakening rebel movements by buying their leaders, recruiting defectors, and hosting them in Doha. [12]
- **African affairs journalist Atiya Eisawy:** Qatar's influence declined significantly after Bashir's fall but tries to return to the Sudanese scene by stirring unrest and supporting some armed groups as revenge against the new Sudanese regime. [13]
- **Sudanese journalist Youssef Said Ahmed Khalifa:** Criticized Qatari policies accusing it of trying to harm regional countries through its media apparatus. [14]
- **Journalist Mustafa Salah,** in an article, stated that the Qatari government aims to obstruct political transition and stability in Sudan by supporting factions, discouraging national dialogue, and imposing foreign agendas. [15]
- **Sudanese writer Zain Al-Abidin Saleh Abdul Rahman:** The Qatari government exploited Sudan within regional conflicts, calling for questions about Qatar's moves and their impact on authority and negotiations inside Sudan. [16]

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# Recommendations: Towards a National and Sovereign Approach to Addressing the Interventions of the Qatari government

In light of the above, it is clear that addressing the consequences of the Qatari government's interference requires adopting a national Sudanese approach rooted in internal sovereignty, transparency, and fair partnership in international relations. The main recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- **Reassess political agreements** signed under the sponsorship of the Qatari government, ensuring they reflect a comprehensive solution that includes all genuine actors in the conflict, not just those favored by regional sponsors.
- **Adopt a balanced foreign policy** that is not subject to regional axes, with openness to diversifying partnerships away from dependency on the agendas of Qatar or any other state.
- **Establish legal regulations** for the financing of political parties and organizations, in order to prevent foreign political money from infiltrating domestic affairs, and impose strict oversight on foreign-funded media outlets.
- **Strengthen the role of Sudanese civil society** as an independent national actor by providing local support, so it is not forced to rely on conditional foreign funding.
- **Launch a genuine national dialogue** on sovereignty and political independence, leading to a charter that clearly defines the state's stance on regional interventions and establishes a national consensus on non-negotiable principles.
- **Exert pressure on regional and international parties** through diplomatic channels to end unbalanced interference in Sudanese affairs, and call for respect for international law principles, particularly non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

## Conclusion

Many observers believe that the ongoing conflict in Sudan is driven by intertwined economic, geopolitical, and ideological motives, and that it forms part of a broader plan to reshape the regiona plan led by global powers, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel. These powers, whose eyes have long been fixed on Sudan since its independence, are seen to have adopted a strategy of gradual fragmentation of the country through a "pulling-the-peripheries" policy supporting rebel movements that have suspiciously multiplied over the past decades.

They have also imposed harsh economic sanctions and blocked fair access to international funding and cooperation, exacerbating Sudan's vulnerability. Undoubtedly, the mediators involved in the Sudanese crisis including the Qatari government are seen by many as mere proxies, executing the agendas of these dominant global forces operating behind the scenes. Each of these players exits the scene once their assigned role has been completed, reinforcing the perception that Sudan's fate is being shaped externally, far from the hands of its own people.

U.S. foreign policy toward global conflicts is often guided by a principle famously articulated by Henry Kissinger, the architect of much of America's foreign relations, who stated: "It is not in America's interest to resolve any problem in the world, but rather to keep hold of its threads and manipulate them according to its own interests."

This perspective helps explain the prolonged duration of Qatari mediation in Sudan and the failure to reach any lasting or comprehensive solutions. The Qatari government has been accused of exploiting internal divisions in Sudan, particularly in Darfur, to reinforce its image as an indispensable regional mediator, without truly adhering to neutrality or respecting the will of the local parties.

This was most evident in the Doha Agreement of 2011, which—despite bringing some limited gains— institutionalized political exclusion by forging agreements with peripheral actors that did not represent the full spectrum of stakeholders in the conflict. As a result, Doha effectively shifted from being a neutral mediator to becoming a stakeholder in the equation, thereby undermining the chances of reaching a truly inclusive and comprehensive settlement.

Despite Doha's promotion of a soft diplomatic discourse centered on peace and development, Qatar's involvement in Sudanese affairs raises numerous concerns, particularly when analyzing its nature and implications. This involvement has gone beyond the boundaries of humanitarian or investment support to assume clear political and security dimensions, including the use of financial and media influence to sway elites and actors within Sudan. This influence extends to supporting political and ideological currents aligned with Qatar's regional project, steering the political process in a way that serves Qatar's regional priorities and the Western agenda entrusted to it, rather than the interests of the Sudanese people.

Qatar's persistent role in this context poses a threat to Sudanese sovereignty and hinders the development of an independent national decision-making project. Even more concerning is that this interference continues amid a regional and Arab retreat from applying pressure to halt such negative interventions. This situation makes Qatar's interference a model for how local crises are turned into tools of geopolitical influence.



**QATAR**



**SUDAN**

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