

Sudan's "Deep State" War Could Have Far-Reaching Geostrategic Consequences If It Continues

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Seeing as how Egypt, Ethiopia, Russia, the UAE, and the US all have important interests in Sudan, it's clear that this latest African conflict could indeed have far-reaching consequences if it continues and especially if its "deep state" war descends into a civil war. In that event, this geostrategic country could suddenly become an object of intense competition in the New Cold War, which could catalyze uncontrollable processes that culminate in destabilizing all of Africa. All responsible stakeholders must therefore do their utmost to prevent that from happening.

Fierce fighting broke out [all across Sudan](#) this weekend between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), with each blaming the other for starting this. Seeing as how this conflict remains limited for the time being to two military factions, it can therefore be described as a "deep state" war and not a civil one like the conflict that ultimately resulted in South Sudan's independence. This doesn't mean that it won't turn into a civil war, but just that it hadn't yet by Sunday evening.

Sudan's "deep state" war was inevitable though since these factions have been competing with each other over who'll remain the country's most powerful force amidst its continually delayed transition to democracy that began after [2019's military coup](#). The SAF is led by Chief General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan while the RSF is run by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who's also known as Hemedti. Both men are part of the Transitional Sovereign Council, the first as president and the second as deputy chairman.

A new prime minister and institutions of the transitional authority were [supposed](#) to have been announced by last Tuesday, but that obviously didn't happen. "Deep state" tensions started becoming uncontrollable around that time, perhaps due to one or both parties calculating that they can make their long-planned power play against the other on the pretext of presenting it as a "defense of democracy" against their allegedly "anti-democratic" opponent.

It's difficult to discern exactly what's happening right now and who controls what due to the "fog of war" so the present piece will avoid touching upon unconfirmed information in analyzing Sudan's "deep state" war, instead focusing on the consequences of this entirely predictable development. For starters, this conflict reflects very poorly on the military since it shows how deeply divided it's become over the years that two clearly distinct competing centers of power were able to emerge within it.

Depending on how long they war with each other, this institution might become depleted enough to the point where separatist forces reemerge along its periphery as a potent threat to Sudan's territorial integrity, which could turn it into the next Yugoslavia. Former President Omar Al-Bashir even [warned](#) his Russian counterpart about this during their meeting in 2017 when he requested assistance in averting what he said was "the US desire to divide Sudan into five states".

That scenario hasn't yet unfolded due to the military remaining a formidable force despite its growing divisions since then, which culminated in Sudan's inevitable "deep state" war this weekend, but everything could quickly change if their conflict continues raging on. The longer that these factions fight, the more likely it is that some level of foreign intervention could occur as well, particularly the possibility of Egypt supporting Burhan and the UAE backing Hemedti, who they're each considered close with.

Even though Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ) just met his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo last week, those two could quickly turn to propping up their respective partners if the conflict continues dragging on in order to give them an edge over the other. Regarding Egypt's role, the RSF [captured](#) some of its troops in the country, which Cairo claims were there to conduct joint training. They'll be returned, but few even knew they were there in the first place until this happened.

Neighboring Ethiopia, with whom Egypt and Sudan are embroiled in a [bitter dispute over a dam](#) on the Nile that runs through each of their territories, will certainly take note of this as well as [footage](#) on social media claiming to show Egyptian fighter jets in Sudan too. There have been concerns for a couple years already that Egypt is plotting a so-called "preemptive strike" against Ethiopia in order to stop Addis from filling that aforesaid dam, the speculation of which was now extended credence by this revelation.

Ethiopia and Sudan are also in a dispute over a region known as Alfashaga, which led to [clashes last summer](#), so it's possible that Addis could make a military move there in support of its claims should it sense that Khartoum is too divided and weak to retain control over it. To be absolutely clear, there aren't any signs that this is being considered, but it's still worth mentioning in the larger context of the consequences that could unfold if Sudan's "deep state" war continues.

This latest conflict is also of interest to Ethiopia because its optics very closely resemble the [recent dispute](#) between the federal government and some elements in the Amhara Region over the country's military reorganization. Chief of General Staff Birhanu Jula [announced](#) on Saturday that "Starting from today, the regional special forces structure is no longer there. Our work has been finished", so federal supporters might claim that this successful operation [prevented](#) a Sudanese-like "deep state" war.

It's not just the US, Egypt, the UAE, and Ethiopia whose interests are affected by this

conflict, but Russia too, who's [grown extremely close](#) to both warring military factions after building upon the ties that former President Bashir established during his previously mentioned trip to Moscow in 2017. It plans to open a naval base in Port Sudan sometime soon, the two sides reportedly cooperate on mining and security, and Sudan facilitates Russian access to the neighboring Central African Republic (CAR).

The Kremlin doesn't care which side wins as long as the victor retains their strategic ties, the last dimension of which is immensely important since any potential impediment to Russia's trans-Sudanese access to the CAR could have disastrous consequences for that country's security. Moscow helped Bangui restore its sovereign writ over large swathes of the country with Wagner's help, but the capital could once again be threatened by rebels if the Kremlin can't adequately resupply those two's forces.

The possible collapse of Russia's "Democratic Security" project there would have massive implications for its [newfound appeal to African countries](#), which is due to the combination of it effectively bolstering its partners' sovereignty via the means pioneered in the CAR and its [attractive multipolar worldview](#). The possible reversal of its [first "Democratic Security" success](#) on the continent as a result of the Sudanese "deep state" war would represent a significant symbolic setback that the West would certainly exploit.

With these five states' interests in mind, it's clear that this latest African conflict could indeed have far-reaching consequences if it continues and especially if Sudan's "deep state" war descends into a civil war. In that event, this geostrategic country could suddenly become an object of intense competition in the [New Cold War](#), which could catalyze uncontrollable processes that culminate in [destabilizing all of Africa](#). All responsible stakeholders must therefore do their utmost to prevent that from happening.

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