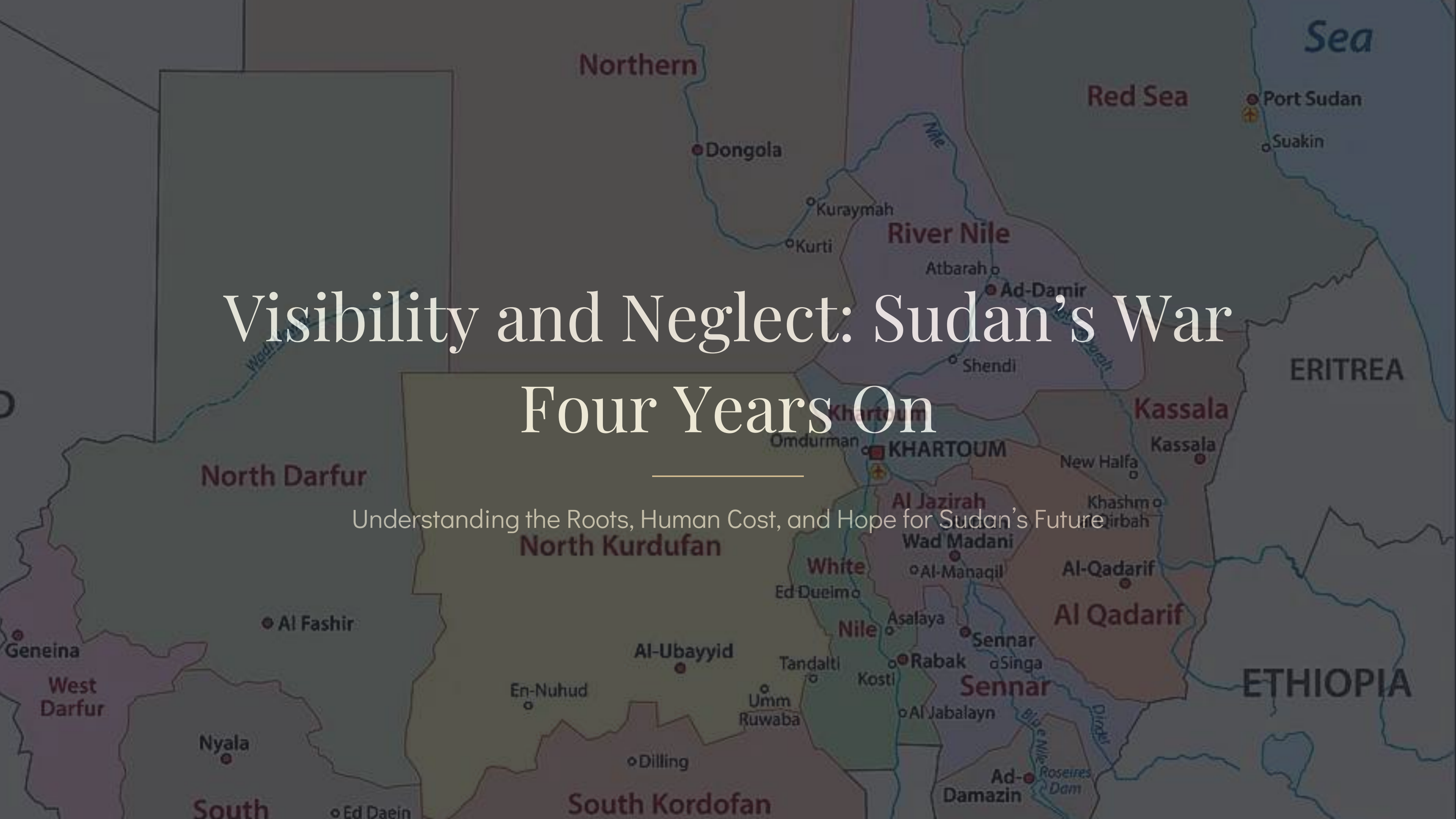




Visibility and Neglect: Sudan's War Four Years On

Understanding the Roots, Human Cost, and Hope for Sudan's Future

Part I — Sudan in Context

Land, people, resources, Nile, diversity

Colonial legacy, military rule, civil wars

South Sudan separation, Darfur, Janjaweed/RSF



Nubian and Egyptian Trade

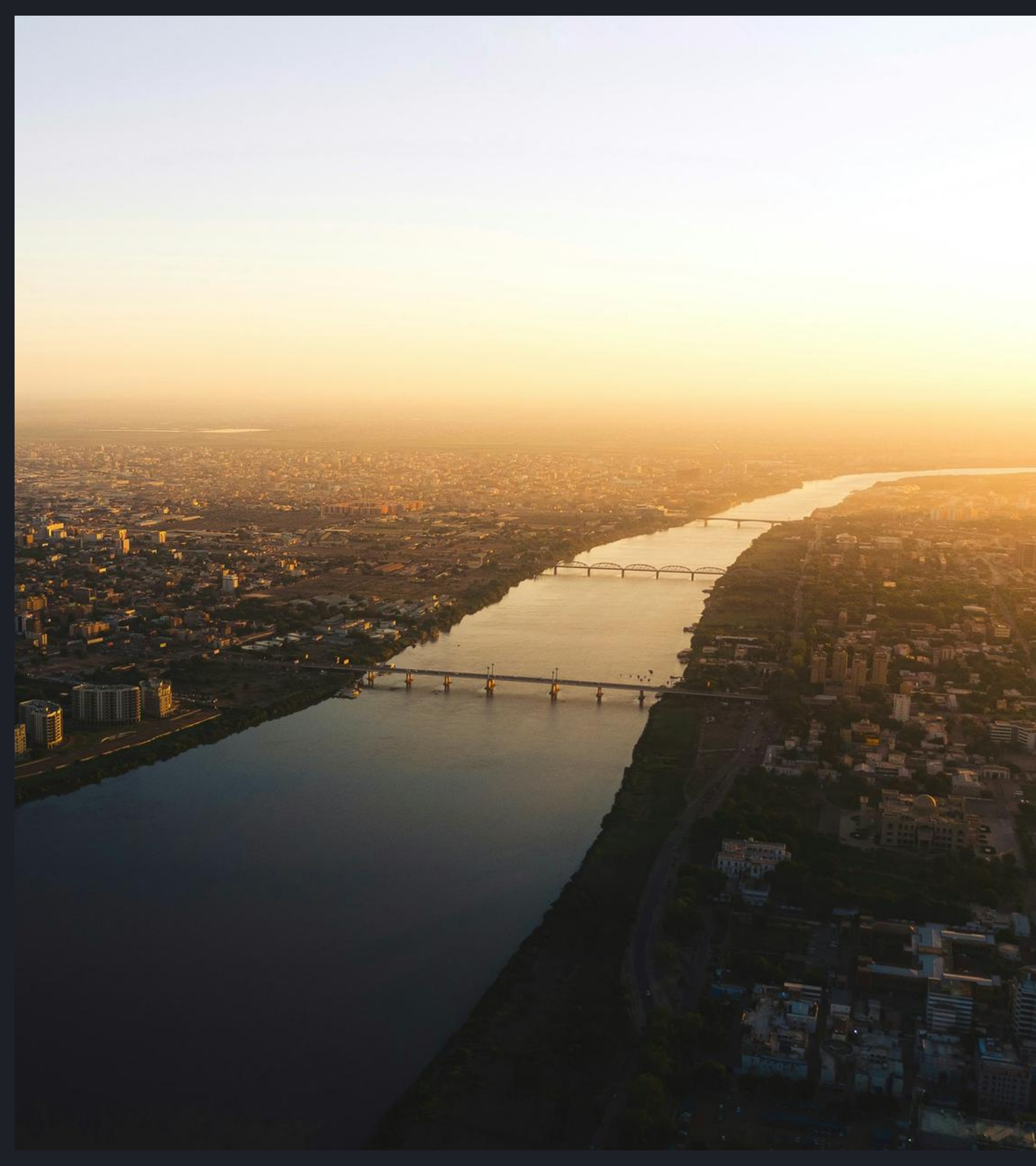
Sudan — A Land of Diversity and Contradictions

- Located between Africa and the Middle East
- Historically one of Africa's largest countries
- Independence: 1956
- Population: around 50 million
- More than 500 ethnic groups and many languages

Rich resources:

- Nile River
- Agricultural land
- Gold
- Livestock
- Gum Arabic
- Oil (before South Sudan separation)

Sudan has never been a poor country in terms of resources. The challenge has been how power and resources were distributed.

An aerial photograph of Khartoum, Sudan, taken at sunset. The Nile River flows through the center of the city, with several bridges crossing it. The city is densely packed with buildings, and the sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The river reflects the warm light of the setting sun.

The Nile and Sudan

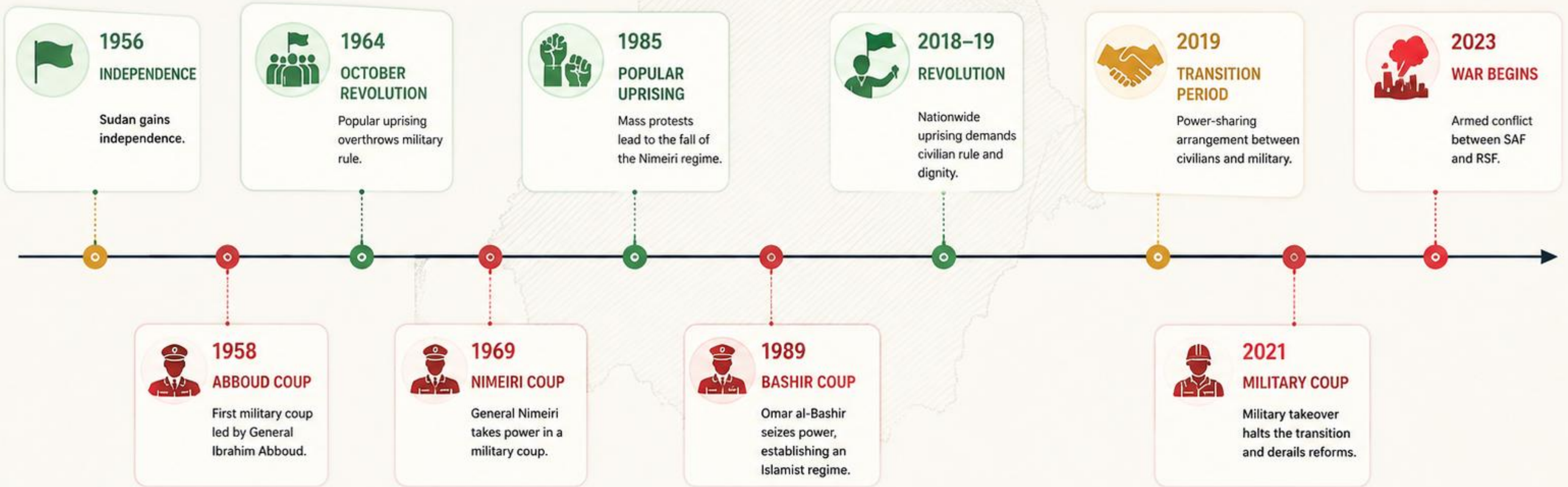
Source of Life and Politics

- Sudan is where the Blue Nile and White Nile meet in Khartoum.
- The Nile shaped agriculture, settlement, and political power.
- Fertile lands along the Nile became the center of economic and political influence.
- Other regions (Darfur, South Sudan, East Sudan, Nuba Mountains) experienced historical marginalization.

SUDAN'S POLITICAL HISTORY

A Cycle of Hope and Military Rule (1956–2023)

- Popular resistance / civilian hope
- Military takeover / authoritarian rule
- Transition / unresolved power struggle



KEY MESSAGE

Sudan's history is not only a history of coups — it is also a history of repeated civilian resistance. The unresolved struggle over power, governance, and accountability continues to fuel today's conflict.



CIVIL WARS AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

When a diverse country struggled to build an inclusive state



WHY CONFLICTS EMERGED

Beyond ethnicity or religion, the roots are deeper.



1. POLITICAL EXCLUSION

Limited representation and participation in national power and decision-making.



2. UNEQUAL DEVELOPMENT

Large gaps in infrastructure, services and economic opportunities between the center and marginalized regions.



3. IDENTITY & CITIZENSHIP

Questions of belonging, culture, language and whose identity defines the nation.



4. LAND & RESOURCES

Competition and unequal control over land, water, minerals and national wealth.

A HISTORY OF RECURRING CONFLICT



KEY MESSAGE

Sudan's wars were not simply ethnic or religious conflicts. They reflected deeper struggles over political inclusion, identity, and the unequal distribution of power and resources.



Darfur Conflict — The Forgotten War 2003–

Darfur means “the land of the Fur,” but it is home to many communities.

Background:

- Conflict escalated in 2003
- Rebel movements accused Khartoum of neglecting Darfur
- Government responded by supporting local militias

Impact:

- Mass killings
- Displacement
- Destruction of villages
- Millions forced into IDP camps

THE 2018 REVOLUTION AND THE INTERRUPTED TRANSITION

From collective hope to renewed military control

2018–2019

THE REVOLUTION

A national demand for

FREEDOM • PEACE • JUSTICE



YOUTH

- Led resistance committees
- Organized communities
- Built a new political imagination



WOMEN

- Central actors in protests
- Mobilized communities
- Pushed for equality and change

“

The revolution showed another Sudan — a Sudan built on solidarity, creativity, and collective hope.

”

2019–2021

THE TRANSITION

A fragile opening for change



April 2019

Omar al-Bashir removed after 30 years in power.



Civilian–Military

transitional government created.



Hope for democratic transition, peace and accountability.



A path toward democracy, but challenges remained unresolved.

2021

INTERRUPTED TRANSITION

Military power blocked the democratic path



Military control remained strong.



Justice for past crimes unresolved.



Security sector reform stalled.



Civilians excluded from real power.



ROAD TO 2023 WAR

Power struggles between armed actors over the state and the future of Sudan.



KEY MESSAGE

The revolution opened a vision for a different Sudan, but unresolved struggles over power and military control prevented a full democratic transition.



THE QUESTION

Who controls Sudan's future — civilians or armed actors?



Part II — From Revolution to War

April 15, 2023 — War Begins

Actors:

SAF

Sudanese Armed Forces

Leader: Abdel Fattah al-Burhan

RSF

Rapid Support Forces

Leader: Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti)

Main Causes:

struggle for power

disagreement over RSF integration into national army

competition over economic resources

failure of political transition

Characteristics of the War:

- Urban warfare as a defining feature
- Collapse of basic services
- Gendered impacts
- External involvement
- War economy and resource control



A WAR AGAINST SOCIETY

Millions Displaced: The World's Largest Displacement Crisis

DISPLACEMENT INSIDE SUDAN

Millions have been forced to flee their homes within Sudan.



KHARTOUM

Fighting in the capital has pushed hundreds of thousands to flee to safer areas.



DARFUR

Longstanding conflict and new violence have caused massive displacement across Darfur.



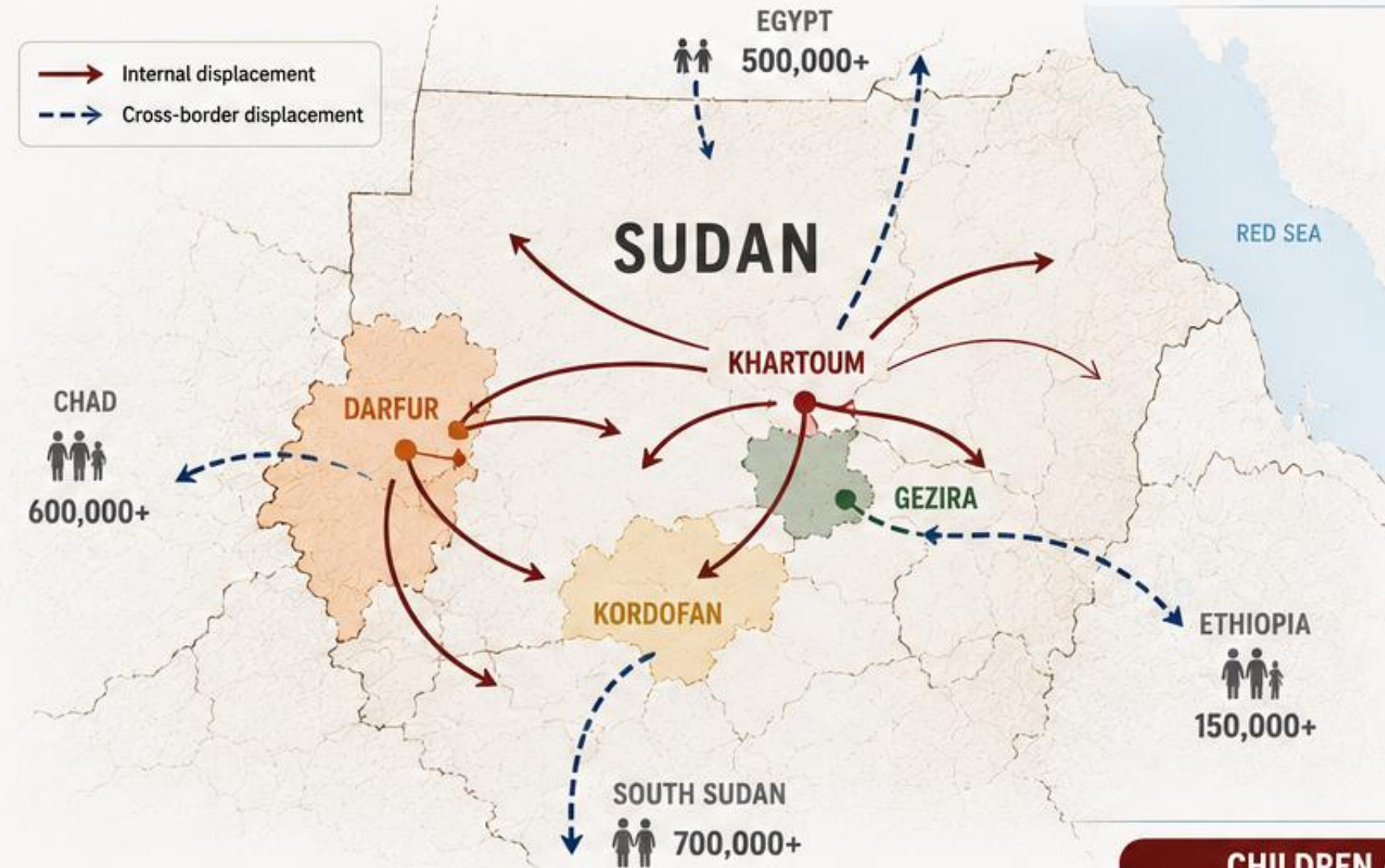
KORDOFAN

Escalating attacks have forced communities to abandon their homes and livelihoods.



GEZIRA

Violence in the region has displaced families from towns and rural communities.



OUTSIDE SUDAN

Millions have crossed borders seeking safety and protection.



EGYPT

People fleeing violence in northern Sudan have sought refuge in Egypt.



CHAD

Eastern and western routes have brought hundreds of thousands to Chad.



SOUTH SUDAN

Families have crossed into South Sudan in search of safety.



ETHIOPIA

Thousands have found refuge in eastern Ethiopia.



OUR MESSAGE

Sudanese people are not only losing homes; they are losing **social worlds, memories, and communities.**



CHILDREN AND THE LOST GENERATION



MILLIONS OUT OF SCHOOL

Education systems have collapsed. Millions of children cannot learn.



DISPLACED CHILDREN

Children are uprooted, separated from families and communities.



TRAUMA

Exposure to violence, fear and loss is affecting children every day.



RECRUITMENT RISKS

Boys are at increased risk of being recruited into armed groups.



CHILD MARRIAGE

Crisis and displacement increase the risk of early marriage for girls.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ENTIRE GENERATION GROWS UP KNOWING ONLY CONFLICT?



Homes destroyed.



Communities shattered.



Memories scattered.



Futures at risk.

The cost of this war will be felt for generations.

The Collapse of Social Life

Communities, Neighborhoods, and Social Fragmentation

War did not only destroy homes; it fragmented the **social fabric** that sustained everyday life.

WHAT WAS LOST



Neighborhoods and communal life

Spaces where people shared support, trust, and belonging.



Social trust and collective safety

A sense of security built on relationships and solidarity.



Everyday routines and belonging

Daily life, traditions, and cultural practices disrupted.



Women's support systems

Networks of care, childcare, and emotional support lost.



Shared spaces of care and solidarity

Markets, gathering places, and community institutions weakened or destroyed.



WHAT WAR PRODUCED



Displacement and fragmentation

Families scattered, communities broken apart.



Isolation and insecurity

People left without protection, trust, or familiar support.



Breakdown of community structures

Local institutions, leadership, and social ties collapsed.



Fear and uncertainty

Constant threat of violence reshaped how people live and relate.



Militarization of everyday life

Public spaces, mobility, and social interactions became controlled and dangerous.

“Women experienced war not only through physical violence, but through the collapse of social worlds, relationships, and community networks.”

» When social life collapses, survival becomes harder—and women carry the heaviest burden. »

The War on Women

War is not only fought on battlefields. It is also fought on women's bodies and lives.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence

Rape

Abduction

Fear and insecurity

Economic Violence

Loss of livelihoods

Women becoming sole providers

Social Consequences

Early marriage

Interrupted education for girls

Displacement burden

Yet Sudanese women are not only victims; they are agents of survival.

Part III — Four Years On: The Cost of War

Displacement, hunger, destroyed cities

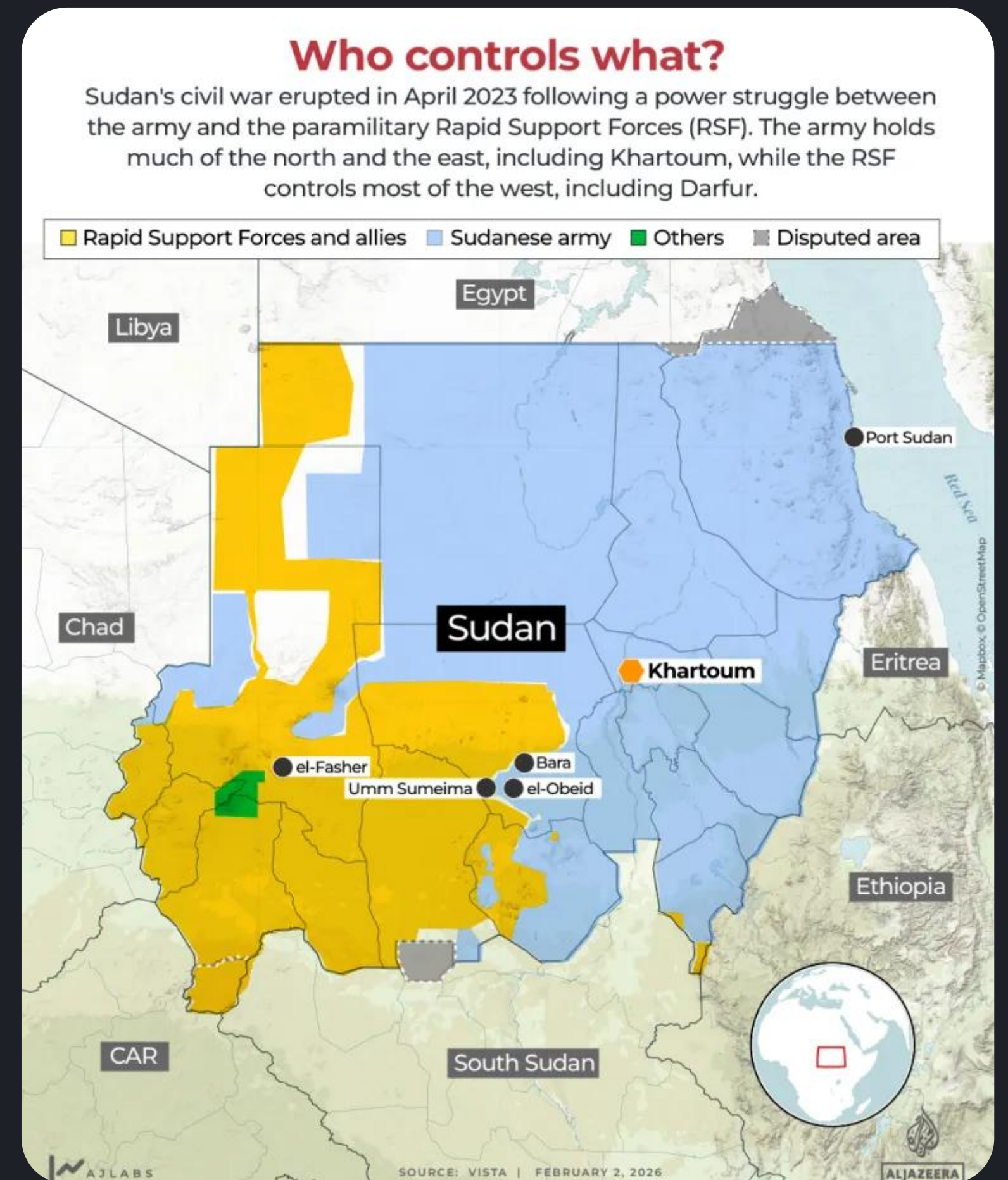
Collapsed health and education systems

Drones, children, women, gender-based violence

Loss of social life

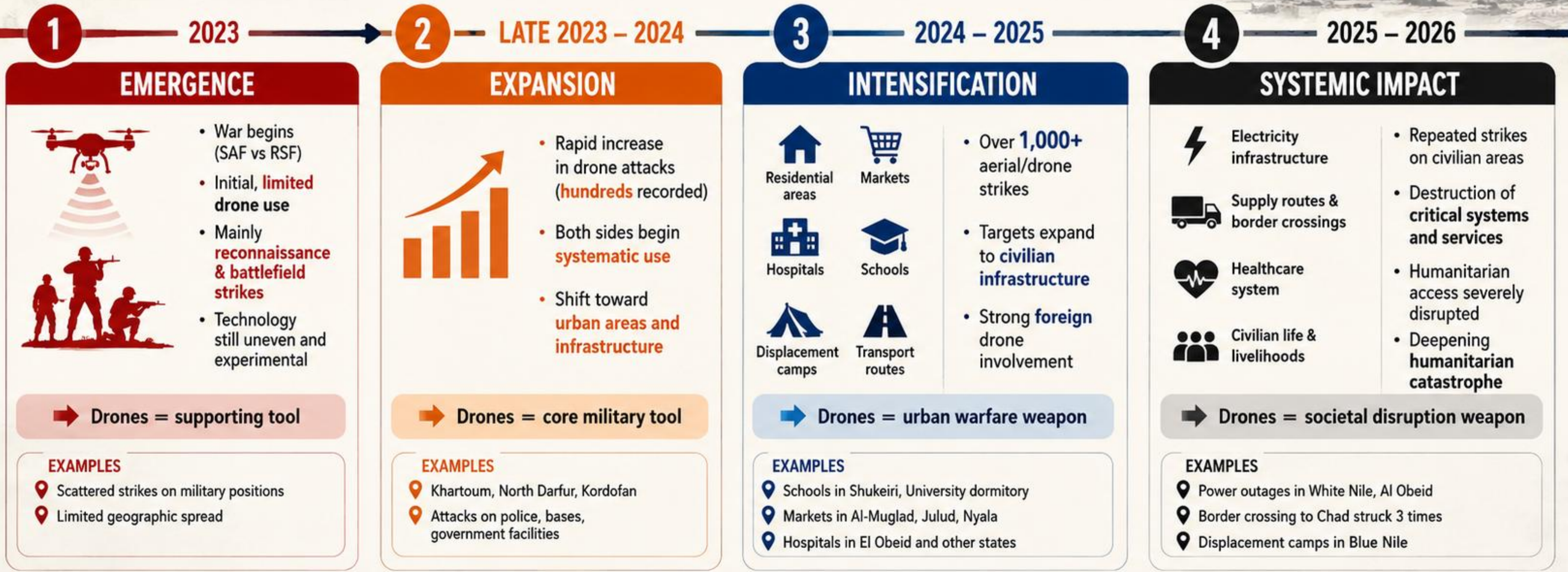
Fragmentation of the State

Sudan is no longer a single, coherent conflict zone. Control is fragmented:
Sudanese Armed Forces holds parts of the north, east, and strategic cities
Rapid Support Forces dominates much of Darfur and parts of central Sudan
Sudan Local militias and armed groups exercise de facto governance in some areas



THE EVOLUTION OF DRONE WARFARE IN SUDAN (2023-2026)

From battlefield tool to system-wide weapon affecting civilian life



Sources: ACLED (2024-2025), Al Jazeera (Jan 2025), OHCHR (Feb 2025), INGO Forum (Mar 2026), MSF (2025)

Part V — Hope and Resistance

Women's solidarity, youth resistance committees

Community survival, Sudanese civil society

Everyday peacebuilding

Solidarity as Feminist Political Practice

- Despite violence, displacement, and economic collapse, women continued to create networks of care, support, and survival.
- In **Abu-Shouk camp**, women shared resources, supported displaced families, cared for vulnerable community members, and rebuilt social relationships damaged by war.
- These solidarity practices became essential forms of collective survival under conditions of economic collapse and institutional absence.

Women's solidarity therefore functioned not only as emotional support, but also as a social and political practice that resisted fragmentation and sustained community life during conflict.

In this sense, solidarity became a form of everyday resistance and social transformation.

Feminism Beyond Institutions:

Women moved beyond survival to actively rebuilding relationships, communities, and social cohesion.

- The ability of women to nurture **social cohesion and peace** in the Abu-Shouk camp is profoundly influenced by the armed conflict, which has impacted women in diverse ways.
- From the interviews with women I found that engagement in peace activities stems from their direct experiences during the conflict.
- For instance, Sheikh Amira, a camp leader, describes her transformation, stating:

"In the past, I was not brave. The war made me brave and my heart strong. I wanted to become a sheikh because I wanted to help my people, as most men died in the war. And if war breaks out again, we will fight and protect ourselves."

Youth and the Future of Sudan

Resistance committees:

- Organized neighborhoods
- Provided services
- Documented violations
- Imagined new political systems

Visibility and Neglect

The question is not whether Sudanese people have hope — they have shown it repeatedly.
The question is whether the world will stand with that hope.